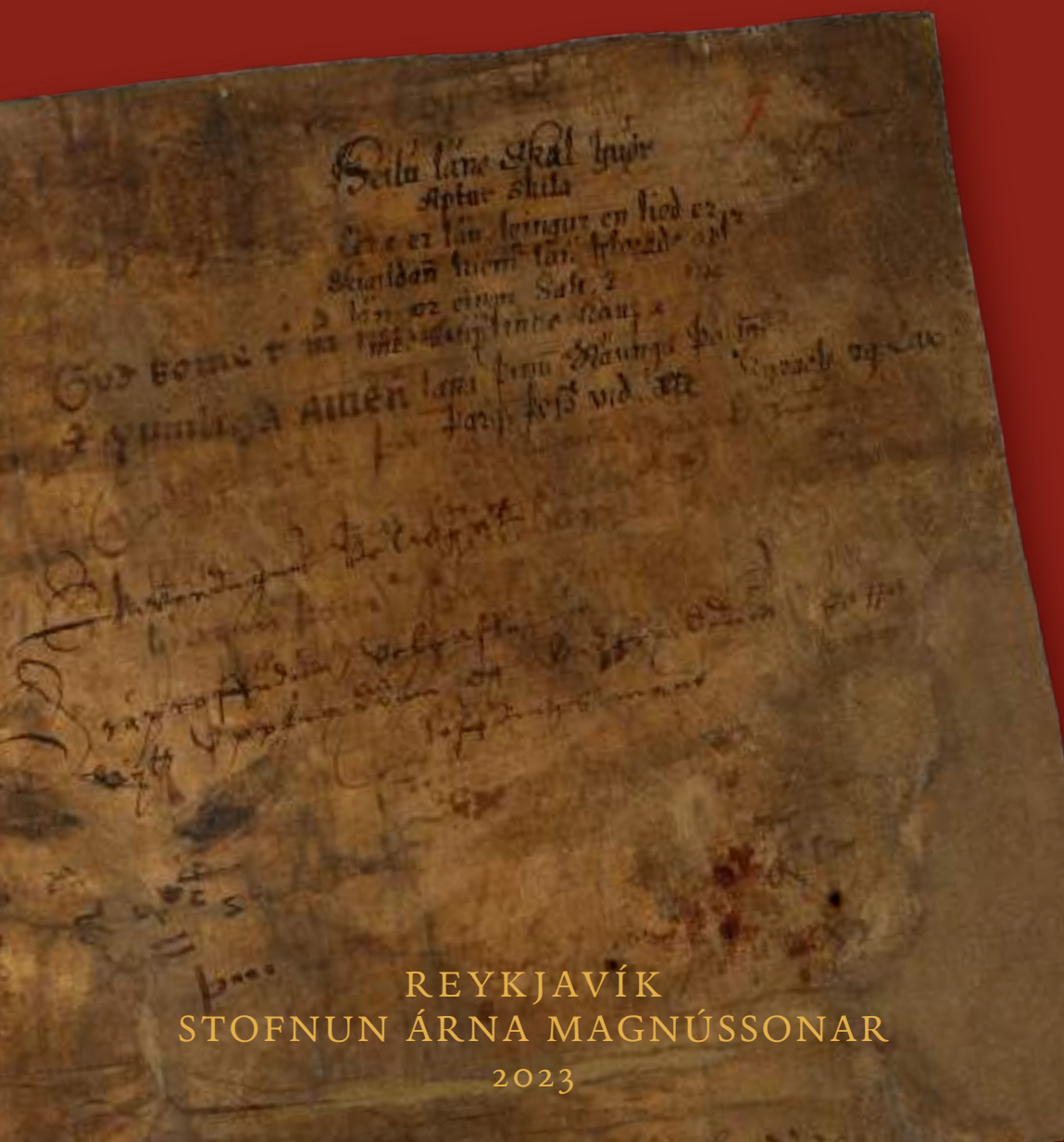


GRIPLA XXXIV



REYKJAVÍK
STOFNUN ÁRNA MAGNÚSSONAR

2023

Myndin á kápunni er úr skinnhandritinu AM 61 fol. sem skrifað var í kringum aldamótin 1400 og geymir Ólafs sögu Tryggvasonar og Ólafs sögu helga. Handritið er talið með Helgafellsbókum sem Lea Debora Pokorny fjallar um hér í *Griplu*. Vitað er að Magnús Björnsson (1595–1662) lögmaður færði frænku konu sinnar, Jórunni Hinriksdóttur (um 1614–1693), handritið að gjöf. Helga í Bræðratungu (1623–1677), dóttir Magnúsar, mun sennilega hafa komist í kynni við það í æsku eins og Katelin Marit Parsons rekur í sinni grein. Á síðunni sjást þakkir frá ónafngreindum notanda til þeirra sem lánuðu handritið og lásu úr því upphátt og loks er áheyrendum óskað góðrar skemmtunar. Jafnframt má sjá áminningu um að fara vel með það sem fengið er að láni og skila því aftur: „Heilu láni skal hver aftur skila“. Þá er tilvitnun í 29. kafla Síraksbókar þar sem fjallað er um lán og endurgreiðslu.

GRIPLA

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Gripla er ritrýnt tímarit sem kemur út einu sinni á ári. Það er alþjóðlegur vettvangur fyrir rannsóknir á sviði íslenskra og norrænna fræða, einkum handrita- og textafræða, bókmennta og þjóðfræða. Birtar eru útgáfur á stuttum textum, greinar og ritgerðir og stuttar fræðilegar athugasemdir. Greinar skulu að jafnaði skrifaðar á íslensku en einnig eru birtar greinar á öðrum norrænum málum, ensku, þýsku og frönsku. Leiðbeiningar um frágang handrita er að finna á heimasíðu Árnastofnunar: <https://www.arnastofnun.is/is/leidbeiningar-um-skil-og-fragang-greina>. Greinum og útgáfum (öðrum en stuttum athugasemdum o.þ.h.) skal fylgja útdráttur. Hverju bindi Griplu fylgir handritaskrá.

GRIPLA

RITSTJÓRAR

GÍSLI SIGURÐSSON

OG

MARGRÉT EGGERTSDÓTTIR

XXXIV



REYKJAVÍK

STOFNUN ÁRNA MAGNÚSSONAR Í ÍSLENSKUM FRÆÐUM

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DECLAN TAGGART

SIDR, RELIGION AND MORALITY¹

For all that Old Norse scholarship over the last sixty years has carefully emphasised the artistry, industry, and intellect of early medieval Scandinavians and Icelanders, even the most generous of scholars can default to a view of them as communities of pirates, a position encapsulated in a comment by John Hines that the Icelander Egill Skallagrímsson's soulful poetry should "warn the non-Viking reader that the Vikings, however barbaric their behaviour, were not mindless barbarians" (Hines 1994–97, 102–3). For some earlier onlookers, this barbarianism stemmed from the northerners' pagan practices (e.g. de Vries 1970; Gehl 1937; Gordon 1957, xxxiii; Sigurður Nordal 1990, originally published in 1942 as *Íslenzk menning*). The majority of modern studies of Old Norse religion simply avoid the topic of morality entirely (a noteworthy exception is Lindow 2020, 479–80).

It is in this context that I address the word *siðr*, which is commonly translated as "custom" (or a variation on that term), though with secondary definitions like "moral life" and, very commonly, "religion" (Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson 1874, s.v. "siðr;" Fritzner 1886–96, s.v. "siðr;" de Vries 1962, s.v. "siðr;" Zoëga 1910, s.v. "siðr");² because of the nature of the corpus of works in which *siðr* appears, that definition is necessarily and mainly based on attestations to the term in early Christian texts. Did *siðr* have a signification like "moral" for Viking Age worshippers of Old

1 Many thanks to both anonymous reviewers for their very helpful commentary on this article and to Valgerður Pálmadóttir for proofreading the Icelandic summary. This research was supported by the Icelandic Research Fund (grant no. 207157-053).

2 No consensus exists on *siðr*'s etymology. The two strongest derivations have their roots in the idea of custom, though the first has connotations of individual habit (related to Sanskrit *svadhā* "particularity, custom:" Orel 2003, s.v. "*seðuz;" Pokorny 1948–69, 883; cf. de Vries 1962, s.v. "siðr"), whereas the other has greater underlying notions of social obligation (Kroonen 2013, s.v. "*sidu-;" Bammesberger 1990, 150, 159). In light of this uncertainty and the potential for the *siðr*'s semantics to have developed over the Viking Age and early medieval period, as Sundqvist advises (2005, 273) usage may be more helpful than etymology as a guide to the word's significance.

Norse gods such as Óðinn and Freyja as well?³ And, if so, what implications might the co-occurrence of “religion” and “morality” have? As far as I am aware, only Olof Sundqvist (2005, 274–75) has properly considered these dimensions of the word before and even then is restricted, by considerations of space, to two short paragraphs on morality and warrior ethics in the entry on *siðr* in the encyclopaedia *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*. The other major study of the word focuses on its religious dimension (Nordberg 2018).

Caveats

Before turning to the two research questions above, it is necessary to consider the sources in which *siðr* is recorded (and the accompanying challenges for investigators) and the direction taken by previous studies of the word.

Beginning with the latter, *siðr* has gained currency as an emic replacement for (or, more typically, a way of problematizing) the concept of *religion* in writing on Old Norse traditions (e.g. André 2005, 106, 125; Blomkvist 2016; Jennbert 2011, 23–24, 164; Raudvere 2005, 196). Annette Lindberg (2009) and Andreas Nordberg (2012, 2018) have rejected this approach and make the following arguments:

- Scholars problematize the term *religion* but rarely apply the same scrutiny to *siðr*, and in fact usage of *siðr* is inevitably based on modern research goals, cultural values, and understandings of early medieval thought, which twists an ostensibly emic concept into an etic one.
- A distinction is usually drawn between non-Christian or popular Christian *siðr* and (more institutional) Christian *religion* that does not reflect how religious traditions before or after the Conversion were conceptualized by their adherents.⁴

3 The label *Viking Age* is used throughout this article, following the traditional (Anglocentric) conception of a period that begins in 793 CE with an attack in Northumbria and ends in 1066 CE with a battle near York. These dates are potentially misleading, given the cultural, economic, and political continuity before and after (see Brink 2008a, 5). The label is used here simply to set practical research boundaries.

4 *Religion* is a loan word in several Nordic languages but only came into general use in the early modern period (see Nordberg 2018, 129). The conversions of different regions of the North

- The juxtaposition of *siðr* and *religion* tends to privilege Christianity by comparing Christian theology with non-theological elements of non-Christian traditions.

Even so, few of the articles cited above or in the work of Lindberg or Nordberg use *siðr* without recognizing the gulf between their conceptions of the world and that of a ninth-century worshipper of Freyja, and the specific term employed (*siðr*, *religion*, or another such as *lived* or *popular religion*) is surely less important than researchers' self-consciousness of its being provisional, their inherent biases, and the imposition that any term places on the model of history being built.

For this article, I have nevertheless chosen to favour Lindberg and Nordberg's reasoning and employ *religion*. As Nordberg argues in his first contribution (2012, 120–22), the term may be used if there is a recognition that it is a construction, not identical with an ever-changing reality but through which reality can be better apprehended and studied, despite the potential for souring analyses by basing them in a modern – potentially WEIRD (i.e. Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) – categorization of behaviour and outlook. *Religion* is a culturally inflected label, but whether I used it or *siðr*, my own biases will inevitably influence my perspective on Old Norse material; as any modern observer unavoidably does, I already come to that material with certain categories both consciously and unconsciously in mind, and while my sources may challenge those categories, they will also be contorted and twisted by them. Using an etic terminology appears to me the most candid response to this problem.

Furthermore, employing *religion* should not imply a belief that all traditions are the same (nor that the moralities of different cultures are). While two as dissimilar as the Old Norse and Abrahamic traditions do emerge from the same ordinary cognitive capacities (cf. White 2021), that cognition is expressed according to disparate cultural, physical, social, and technological environments. A nominally singular religion like Roman Catholicism might find its mythology and doctrines interpreted quite differently in, say, parts of twenty-first-century Spain and Ireland with practical consequences for everyday life; modern and medieval Catholicisms are at further removes from either of these modern counterparts (although, as Lindberg 2009 and

are mentioned in this article, Iceland's most frequently. That is supposed to have occurred in 999 or 1000 CE. On that event, see further Orri Vésteinnsson 2001; for a general overview of conversion and Christianization in what is now Scandinavia, see Brink 2008b.

Nordberg 2018 remark, that rarely presents a problem for scholars' application of religion to early conceptions of Christianity), and Old Norse worshippers have values, abstractions and narratives that are even more dissimilar still. Using a common terminology potentially highlights contrasts between traditions as well as correspondences and can be used to better explicate the object of study, especially in tandem with an investigation of the signification of related emic terms like *siðr*. Crucially for this study, it would be confusing to utilize *siðr* here as a conceptual category when it is the term being investigated.

The label *morality* is also used below; while less controversial in Old Norse studies (presumably because the topic itself has been pondered less), as an etic term its validity could be queried on the same basis as that of *religion*, especially as multiple potential definitions exist. *Morality* is applied here, in the way that *religion* is, as a useful framework for analysis; following Bernard and Joshua Gert (2017), I use it descriptively to mean "certain codes of conduct put forward by a society or a group (such as a religion), or accepted by an individual for her own behaviour."

The corpus of literature attesting to Old Norse religion is fragmentary, which is a major challenge for this study, as it was for Nordberg's survey of *siðr*'s religious connotations (and arguably is for any investigation of Old Norse religion). Another difficulty is the extent to which that corpus has been altered, reinterpreted and partly created by Christians (see further and more generally McKinnell 2005, 37–49). Moreover, even within this relatively small and problematic body of texts, only a fraction utilize the word *siðr*, and the vast majority of these are by Christian authors working centuries after the conversion of their lands – although a few may have been composed by eleventh-century poets who grew up around the worship of Old Norse gods.

To address these issues, I work mainly with skaldic poetry, as it is often attributed to named poets and, comparatively speaking, more easily dated than sources like sagas; I stray most from skaldic poetry when attempting to widen the geographical range of the survey towards eastern Scandinavia. Given the difficulties with the available sources, I do not expect to definitively answer my research questions; nevertheless, the dearth of research on links between morality and religion makes the questions pressing all the same, and my hope is that even the cautious answers below are a useful step towards elucidating both those spheres of Old Norse thought.

The Various Meanings of *Siðr*

Religious

Nordberg (2018, 130) points to Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld Óttarsson's tenth *lausavísa* (*Skj.*, BI, 159) as the earliest appearance of *siðr* with religious semantics;⁵ the complications of that text will be discussed below. The earliest secure use is a work of hagiography from 1153, Einarr Skúlason's *Geisli*, which incorporates a kenning for the Christian god in its third stanza: "siðar⁶ heilags ... solar ... / ljósi" (the light of the sun of holy *siðr*). The adjective *heilagr* "holy" implies that *siðr* has a religious dimension here (as does its use in a divine kenning) but equally leaves open the possibility that the term's semantics are predominantly profane at this stage if a modifier like *heilagr* has to be present to bring out those religious connotations. On that basis, the sense of *siðr* at this stage may be more limited than "religion" and instead denote a behaviour that can (but might not) be religious.

The actual earliest instance of *siðr* may however date from shortly after the Conversion. Some manuscripts of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in mesta*, *Njáls saga* and *Kristni saga* contain an enigmatic *lausavísa* telling of the killing of the Icelandic skald Vetrliði Sumarliðason by a *siðreynir* "siðr-tester" (*Skj.*, BI, 166; cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1954, 260–61; Ólafur Halldórsson 1958–2000, 157; Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson and Foote 2003, 22).⁷ However, there are numerous difficulties with the stanza that make it unreliable as the earliest attestation to *siðr*.

The first is the authenticity of the stanza (hereafter called *GuðLaus*),

- 5 Skaldic poems are cited from either *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* (the poem's name providing the reference) or Finnur Jónsson's *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning* (hereafter *Skj.*, and in which case volume and page numbers are given). Hallfreðr's *lausavísur* are taken from volume BI of the latter, where his name is spelled *Hallfrøðr*. Translations are my own.
- 6 This may alternatively be read as *siðar* "later," but this is rejected by Martin Chase, the poem's editor for *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, on the basis that it is hypermetrical.
- 7 *Reynir* could mean either "rowan" or "tester" here: cf. Snorri Sturluson 1998, 40, 64 with the suggestion of Snorri's editor on p. 192 and the parallels in e.g. *Skj.*, BI, 43, 53, 129, 139, 186, 259, 318. Because a slightly greater number of those examples favour "tester," I have preferred that in my translation, but "rowan" could fit as easily. Neither particularly clarifies the use of *siðr* other than to relate it to a man, although other compounds of *reynir* do imply a sense of being proven and experienced: e.g. "sunds ... / sannreynir" (true-*reynir* of swimming) (*Skj.*, BI, 130); "dreyrgra darra / dómreynir" (judgement-*reynir* of bloody

given its shaky attribution and supposed early date. It is light on details, supplying only the victim's name, and, using verbs in the singular, may be at odds with its prose contexts over the number of attackers and killings (cf. Jón Sigurðsson and Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1858–78, I, 14; Kock 1923–44, §2456; *Skj.*, BI, 166n.; Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1954, 261n.). This discrepancy, however, argues more for the authenticity of the poetry than against it; at least it was probably not composed for one of the sagas in which it is found. It is introduced in *Kristni saga* with the statement “[p]etta var kveðit um Guðleif” (this was composed about Guðleifr) (Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson and Foote 2003, 21). On this basis, some have argued that *GuðLaus* is part of a longer eulogy by a poet of Knútr Sveinsson (995–1035) to Guðleifr Arason, one of the killers named in the prose, mentioned in the Þórðarbók redaction of *Landnámabók* (348n.; Sveinbjörn Rafnsson 1977, 26–8). Jón Sigurðsson and Guðbrandur Vigfússon (1858–78, I, 14) point out that, while a reference in the *lausavísa* to southern Iceland does fit with Guðleifr's origins, the texts otherwise offer little to verify the connection – Guðleifr's name is not given in the poetry – or the eleventh-century dating. The verse is used as testimony by the sagas without affecting the course of their narratives, which is sometimes viewed as an indication of authenticity (based on the cautious discussion in Whaley 1993; cf. Clunies Ross 2005, which partially undermines those arguments). In sum, the evidence is circumstantial but argues for rather than against the early dating of *GuðLaus*, in particular the intimation that it pre-dates its prose contexts.

A second problem is manuscript variation. *Siðreynir* is a widespread reading and echoes a religious kenning for the breast as a “böenar smiðja” (smithy of prayers) in the first *helmingr* in some manuscripts (followed by *Skj.*). The thirteenth-century Gráskinna offers *sóknbeiðir* “attack-de-

spears [i.e. warrior] (*Skj.*, BII, 217); “Mótreyni ... mána / málma braks” (meeting-*reynir* of the moon of the clash of iron [i.e. warrior]) (*Skj.*, BI, 179); and similarly “sannreynd / ... við guð og mann” (proven true to god and man) (*Máriuvisur II*, st. 23). Another possibility is that the target of the kenning is “testing” older customs in a way that is interrogative or hostile: cf. *sökreynir* “dispute-*reynir*” (*Skj.*, AII, 47), referring to an Icelander who is praised elsewhere in the same poem for resolving conflicts, and *gedreynir* “temper-*reynir*” (*Skj.*, BI, 139), concerning the untrustworthy and antagonistic god Loki. If Christians already equated worshipping their god with moral worth, this testing could even have a moral dimension for them, but this is less supported by the semantics of other uses of *reynir*. (It is less likely still that *reynir* “tester” is being used to ironically comment on the morality of a killer, given how positive the *lausavísa* otherwise is about its protagonist(s).)

mander,” Hauksbók presents *sigðreynir* “sword-reynir” (early fourteenth century), and the fifteenth-century AM 466 4to and seventeenth-century GKS 1003 fol. read *sigreynir* “victory-reynir” (on the relationships between some of these manuscripts, see Hall and Zeevaert 2018). Gráskinna is the outlier, but both its elements are common in kennings, and it fits as well with the violent themes of the stanza, as *siðreynir* does with the religious, potentially providing a third warrior kenning to a stanza that already has two. The other (also martial) readings may reflect influence from *sigtólum*, which metrically falls on the previous line of *GuðLaus* but is only two words away and on the same line in all three manuscripts. Nevertheless, *reynir* itself is repeated from the *lausavisa*’s first line, and it is impossible to know if that repetition is intentional or not. *Siðreynir*’s popularity makes it the preferred reading here, but question marks remain. Much the same could be said for the *lausavisa* in general: arguments can be made to the contrary, but the most likely scenario is that it contains the earliest instance of *siðr* with a religious denotation in the corpus.

Along with *Geisli*, the next earliest secure religious appearances of *siðr* appear in the twelfth-century *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar* and *Plácitusdrápa*.⁸ According to stanza ten of the former, Óláfr Tryggvason’s subjects turned “frá sið vǫndum... / ok illum... / goðum *nitti*” (from wicked *siðr* and denied evil gods),⁹ the reference to pagan deities making clear the religious context of *siðr*, while stanza fifteen apposes Óláfr’s offering of “siðir góðir” (good *siðir*) to Norwegians with the hatred heathens have for him, again suggesting that the *siðir* are religious in character. In *Plácitusdrápa*, *siðr* most obviously has a religious dimension in stanza eight, which refers to “siðr heiðinn” (heathen *siðr*). Some scholars use *siðr* as an all-encompassing terminology, embracing some element of myth as well as behaviours and traditions (e.g. Jennbert 2011, 23–24, 164; Raudvere 2005, 196; cf. Sundqvist 2005, 175). This poetry does not support that, but equally it expounds so little that it is difficult to be sure that *siðr* only refers here to tradition-upheld religious praxis. That praxis does have a moral dimension

8 On the dating of these poems, see *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar*, 1031 and *Plácitusdrápa*, 179. *Siðr* also survives in the earliest prose texts, which date to around this period. In the *Old Icelandic Homily Book* from c. 1200 (de Leeuw van Weenen 1993, 12v, 25r, 57v, 65v, 73r), its senses vary, moving from customs, to religion generally, to specific rites. On its use to refer to rites, see Sundqvist 2005, 273–74, and for a broader overview of the term’s religious semantics where it appears in prose and legal texts, Sundqvist 2005, 273–74, 275–76.

9 On the addition of *nitti* to this line, see *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar*, st. 10n.

in the instances from *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar*, but *siðr*'s primary sense is clearly religious.

These texts probably echo wider developments in the semantics of *siðr*, at least in West Norse. Einarr Skúlason, the poet of *Geisli*, spent time in Norway and composed for Swedish and Danish royalty (*SkP*2, 537), while *siðr* also refers to religion in *Jómsvíkingadrápa* (st. 7) by the (possibly Norwegian-born) Orcadian Bjarni Kolbeinsson, in the prose of (the again-possibly Norwegian) *Olafs saga hins helga* (Heinrichs et al. 1982, e.g. 84, 182; cf. Ólafur Halldórsson 1979, 134) and in Norway's early laws (*Eiðsivapingslög* 383; cf. Nordberg 2018, 131), all of which may date from the thirteenth century or earlier. Early references from eastern Scandinavia are harder to come by. Nordberg points to the Old Gnutish law codes of the island of Gotland (2018, 133; *Gutalagen*, 14; cf. *Guta saga*, 8, 10, 12), which connect religion with *siðr* in the early thirteenth century, if the prevailing dating of that law code is correct (Peel 2009, xxxvi–xl). “Religion” is also among the senses of East Norse *siðher* in *Konungastýrelsen*, which was probably assembled in the fourteenth century (Bureus 1964; cf. Ronge 1986), much later than *GuðLaus* or *Geisli* (others cited in Nordberg 2018, 133 are later still). Given how widespread *siðr*'s religious semantics are, however, the suggestion has to be that they were already present across Scandinavia before differences between East and West Norse accelerated in the thirteenth century (cf. Perridon 2002, 1018).

Religious?

Nordberg (2018, 130) turns to *lausavísa* 10 by Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld Óttarsson as the earliest use of *siðr* to refer to religion; if the ascription is correct, the text comes from the tenth century, an earlier *terminus ante quem* for that sense than *GuðLaus*.

The first *helmingr* of the text is especially relevant (*Skj.*, BI, 159):

Sá 's með Sygna ræsi
siðr, at blót eru kviðjuð;
verðum flest at forðask
fornhaldin sköp norna[.]¹⁰

10 Although too tangential to examine in depth, *sköp*, here translated as “fates,” is an intriguing word-choice. Related to the verb *skapa* “shape,” Karen Bek-Pedersen (2011, 17, 34–35, 170–71) establishes that, while it implies personal fates arranged by an external figure, it

That is *siðr* with the king of the Sygnir [Óláfr Tryggvason], that sacrifices are banned; we must shun most of the time-honoured fates of the *normir*.

Two issues present themselves here.

- Was this composed by Hallfreðr or any tenth-century Icelander?
- Does the term *siðr* refer to religion in this instance?

Supposedly concerning the poet's struggle to renounce the Old Norse gods (*Skj.*, BI, 158–59; cf. *Hallfreðar saga*, 153–59), the debate over the authenticity of Hallfreðr's *lausavísur* on his conversion has a long history. The opinion of their chief sceptic Bjarni Einarsson that they are just “too good to be true” (1981, 218; similarly, Bjarni Einarsson 1961; Dronke 1978, 26) is quoted frequently by later investigators (e.g. Abram 2015, 118; Whaley 2003, 237). Diana Whaley conducted the most rigorous investigation of the poetry's credibility, examining it against poetic, circumstantial, and mythological criteria and ultimately concluding that, if they are twelfth-century fabrications, “the Conversion verses represent a remarkably – implausibly? – good attempt to get inside the troubled head of a reluctant convert” (2003, 254); not that the stanzas are “too good to be true,” but that they are too good not to be. Nothing irrefutably connects them to Hallfreðr – the contents and the style could have been imitated by a later antiquarian – yet neither does anything count strongly against tenth-century composition (for further arguments in favour of authenticity, see Gade 2001, 71–74; Males 2017, n.42). The case is as strong as or stronger than that of many other purportedly early *lausavísur*, and on that basis I proceed assuming that the *lausavísa* containing *siðr* was composed by Hallfreðr.

Siðr here could refer to the action of banning sacrifices or to the Christian religion that has prompted that ban. The former interpretation is simpler and as supported by broader usage as religious semantics are,

can also have negative connotations of fickleness. The term may imply that Hallfreðr is leaving behind the *normir*, the supernatural group who supposedly control fate, for a new, less negative fate, set out by another divine figure. Bek-Pedersen does observe (2011, 171) that *skop* is the most common term for describing fate in connection with the *normir*, so perhaps those undertones are inadvertent, but the use of *forðask*, which can mean “escape” as well as “shun,” argues for intentionality.

including in a work by Hallfreðr himself: after recounting Óláfr's bravery in battle, *Erfidrápa Óláfs Tryggvasonar* comments on itself that “frægrs til slíks at segja / siðr” (it is a famous *siðr* to relate such [behaviour]) (st. 1).¹¹ As Ernst Albin Kock proposes (1923–44, §2449), the most straightforward interpretation of *siðr* here is as “practice” or “custom” (referring to poetry-making), an individual action based on the expectations created by a longer tradition. The formulation is similar across Hallfreðr's two poems: roughly, “it is a *siðr* to X.”

Similar too is the implied signification of *siðr* in several verses from the twelfth century. In Gamli kanóki's *Harmsól* (a morally exhortative praise poem for Christ), as people are led into sin, their “døkkvir *siðr*” (*siðr* darkens) (st. 55); conversely, at the start of the century, Gísl Illugason describes how “*siðr* batnaði” (*siðr* improved) (*Erfikvæði* about Magnús berfættr, st. 7; highlighted in Sundqvist 2005, 274), when Magnús berfættr reconciled with a group of rebellious subjects (the poet specifies that they act with *rækðum* “affection” towards Magnús); and a *lausavísa* by Bjarni Kálfsson (2009) criticizes soldiers for not giving up their horses to him and his group as “*siðr* inn vesti” (the worst *siðr*). Bjarni depicts it as an upsetting of the social structure, servants riding while their superiors walk. In each of these cases, the usage refers to human behaviour yet is heavily morally inflected. That behaviour is being judged. Nevertheless, the usage makes more sense as “behaviour” or “practice” than “morals” or “moral norms,” even if it is gesturing in that direction.

In the twelfth century, *Háttalykill* refers to the intensification of effort in battle as a *siðr* created by warriors (st. 12; perhaps with especially strong associations with tradition, if these fighters are being glorified as the originators of the practice) and to generosity as the “*siðr* jöfra” (*siðr* of kings) (st. 80), Óláfr Haraldsson being lauded for fulfilling custom. Perhaps freer from moral implications is the term *lands siðr* “*siðr* of the country” (*Máruvísur II*, st. 10; similarly, e.g. Bureus 1964; Holm-Olsen 1945), although it crops up much later in the fourteenth or fifteenth century.

Sorting through these analogues, Hallfreðr's *lausavísa* has neither the judgemental undertones of some nor the implied contextualization of tra-

11 Manuscripts of *Fagrskinna* render *siðr* as *sudr* and *þiðr*, variants that no editors accept as far as I can tell, although some do manage to read *siðar* (gen. sg.); Kate Heslop, the poem's most recent editor, only finds *siðr* (nom. sg.), as do I: for discussion and references, see *Erfidrápa Óláfs Tryggvasonar*, st. 1n.

dition of others; yet the simple notion of individual action runs through each of them and fits well with the *lausavísa* (even closer parallels exist in prose: e.g. Driscoll 2008, 36; Snorri Sturluson 1911, 528). Given the precedent in Hallfreðr's own work and these comparisons, as well as the extra mental gymnastics required to attach *siðr* to religion in the *lausavísa*, it seems best to understand *siðr* as "(individual) practice."

Even if the primary sense of *siðr* is not "religion," however, Hallfreðr is a sophisticated enough poet that religious connotations could be inferred, given the context of *siðr*'s usage. In a stanza about conversion, those connotations would add extra weight to the push and pull of alliances being described, especially as the first two lines balance Óláfr's personal practice with the social practice of sacrificing to gods; in a *lausavísa* and within a series of *lausavísur* that often sketches the new in conflict with the old, the Christian with the heathen, this opposition could be intentional.¹²

Moral

Sundqvist (2005, 274) refers to the above-cited twelfth stanza of *Háttalykill* and first stanza of *Erfidrápa Óláfs Tryggvasonar* (though following a questionable edition of the text: see fn. 11) to distinguish between the moral semantics of *siðr* and those that are particular to "the warrior ethos and exemplary military conduct." In light of the other examples adduced above as comparison for Hallfreðr's *lausavísa*, relating to the obligations of a poet and a king, Sundqvist's formulation should be expanded. *Siðr* can refer to the expectations of anyone in society, based on their perceived station or function (cf. Taggart 2022a, 441–43, 449; Taggart 2022b, 310–11).

This is already attested in Þórarinn loftunga's *Tøgdrápa* (c. 1028–30 CE), in which the compound *siðnæmr* "siðr-learned" (st. 1) characterizes King Knútr Sveinsson. Matthew Townend suggests that it refers to "Knútr's Christian courtliness" (*Tøgdrápa*, 853), and Knútr was a Christian given to signalling his devotion, yet *siðnæmr* would be unique in the extant stanzas of *Tøgdrápa* in referring to religion; the compliments paid

12 The *helmingr* ends with reference to the "fornhaldin skop norna", and the adjective *fornbaldinn* "time-honoured" may be an understated criticism of Óláfr's practice, which lacks the obligation to tradition that *siðr* can come with elsewhere. The element *forn-* "ancient" may also signal wordplay, the time-honoured fates of the *normir* a metonymy for *forn siðr*, implying that the Old Norse religion was already known by that name during the Viking Age (cf. Nordberg 2018, 131).

to Þórarinn's patron are functional, covering areas such as his talent as a leader (st. 5), skill in battle (stt. 2, 7), and generosity (st. 8). In the Old Norwegian *Konungs skuggsjá* (Holm-Olsen 1945, 42) *siðnæmr* signals a courtier's ability to quickly learn the behaviour demanded by their role (ironized in *Strengleikar*, 216, in which the related *siðnæmiligr* describes a courtly romance). As such, the likelihood is that Þórarinn's *siðnæmr* refers to Knútr's experience in courtly matters without necessitating a prominent religious dimension – and demonstrates how meeting a station's social expectations is considered laudable.

Little, therefore, distinguishes warrior ethics as *siðr* to a greater degree than performances of propriety in other roles. This is likely true across gender and class boundaries as well – the throwaway characterization by Bjarni Kálfsson of his tormentors as servants relies on class protocol; in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, a king is castigated as *siðlauss* “without *siðr*” (st. 43) for dressing up as a woman and milking goats, the domain of women or enslaved people according to Sundqvist (2005, 274; cf. *Skj.*, BII, 295). A chieftain must not act as an enslaved person should; an enslaved person may be treated very differently from other members of society. Such orthodoxies exist in all societies; here, they are to some extent encapsulated in *siðr*.

Several texts from the twelfth century have been cited in which *siðr* implies judgement against social expectations. The oldest surviving work in which those undertones blossom fully is Gamli kanóki's *Harmsól* (later twelfth century). Christ has “fríðir... / siðir” (beautiful *siðir*) according to stanza 60; and *siðabót* “*siðr*-remedy” can be achieved with the aid of the Holy Spirit (st. 3), just as the biblical King David did for his *synðir* “sins” (st. 48). This is the oldest text I can find in which “moral” is the most natural translation for *siðr*. However, the closeness of *siðabót* to Gísl Illugason's “*siðr* batnaði” (behaviour improved) (mentioned above) reflects how fluid the boundaries can be between the term's senses.

Ósiðr, the inverse of *siðr*, appears regularly in prose and delineates objectionable behaviour in Old Icelandic and Old Swedish law codes from the late thirteenth century (*ONP*, s.v. “*ósiðr*,” Schlyter 1830, 23; Schulman 2010, 152), yet it only surfaces four times in extant poetry according to the database of the Skaldic Project. The earliest of these, Markús Skeggjason's *Eiríksdrápa* (composed 1103–7) is clearly moral in its use of *ósiðr*, using

it as a catch-all term for outlawry, piracy, and theft (st. 6). Probably from later in that century, stanza 16 of *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar* describes Óláfr Tryggvason having banned *ósiðr* among warriors who loved *lǫstr* “a fault, misdemeanour, vice,” after telling us that the same king punished thieves. Given that Óláfr’s legend fixates on religious change (the poem has previously depicted him subjugating non-Christians, and *siðr* appears with religious semantics in stt. 10 and 15, as discussed above), that *lǫstr* may be religious in nature, linking immorality with religion, although the stanza does not actively promote this reading (cf. the younger *Hugsvinnsmál*, st. 100 and *FoGT*, st. 33).

The early poetic sources using *siðr* without religious semantics do so in Old Icelandic, although *Tøgdrápa* is for a Danish king and the term is well-attested in such senses in Old Norwegian prose such as the thirteenth-century *Konungs skuggsjá* (Holm-Olsen 1945). *Osidher*, the East Norse cognate of *ósiðr*, also appears in *Östgötalagen* (Schlyter 1830, 23) and *Konungastyrelsen* (Bureus 1964), which ostensibly date to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries respectively (Ronge 1986; Stähle with Holm 1988). Moral semantics were not limited to West Norse. Indeed, *sidher* itself likewise appears in *Konungastyrelsen*, where it can mean both “behaviour” and “moral.” Returning to the point with which I concluded the survey of religious material, if Harry Perridon (2002, 1018) is correct that the North Germanic languages showed relatively little variation by the end of the Viking Age, and that their substantial differences arose afterwards, this implies that these senses of *siðr* were already present across the Germanic-speaking North by the eleventh century. Confidence in that assertion must be limited, however: the lexicons of East and West Norse are little-compared, and research so far has concentrated on phonological divergence (cf. Simensen 2002, 961).

In Summary

Siðr means “(individual) practice” in the tenth-century poetry of Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld Óttarsson.

- The word possesses connotations of judgement, based on the fulfilment of social expectations, in Hallfreðr’s other surviving use (*Erfidrápa Óláfs Tryggvasonar*, st. 1); these are also present slightly later in *Tøgdrápa* (st. 1).

- While *siðr* appears to have moral undertones by the twelfth century, the youngest extant text in which the term could simply denote “moral” is *Harmsól* (stt. 3, 48, 60), probably composed closer to the century’s end – although *ósiðr*, with its own conspicuous moral dimension, first appears in *Eiríksdrápa* (c. 1103–7).
- A religious sense may be first evidenced in *GuðLaus*, unsecurely dated to the early eleventh century; the earliest reliable use of *siðr* with religious significance is in 1153 (*Geisli*, st. 3), though the text appears to refer to the relatively narrow semantics of religious praxis.¹³

These conclusions are cautiously made. The texts’ intentions with *siðr* are rarely clear from the word’s immediate context, and the semantics are often fuzzy and defy my attempts to neatly distinguish between *siðr* as behaviour (measured against a consensus-guided code of conduct) and *siðr* as moral (the code of conduct directing behaviour); would a king who fails to display generosity be accused of a moral failing (and especially in comparison with someone of lower station or with fewer resources)? Perhaps (cf. Taggart 2022b, 310–11). Expectations of etiquette and morality may crossover, at least in view of this article’s definitions; even if the sense “moral” is not attested during the Viking Age, the term is already connected to the judgement of conduct in a way that reflects social and moral norms.

The Lateness of *Siðr*

The earliest extant *siðr* is from the tenth century. According to the Samnordisk runtextdatabas, it does not appear in runic inscriptions from any period, but as *siðr* does not seem to have been borrowed from a contemporary Germanic language (see fn. 2), the word was presumably in use throughout the Viking Age, however seldom.

This prompts two queries: Can modern scholars refer to the semantics

13 Two tenth-century poems called *Hákonardrápa* by Tindr Hallkelsson (st. 4) and Guthormr sindri (st. 5) are excluded from consideration as *siðr* is in both cases a minority manuscript reading. In the first case, the alternative readings are preferable for reasons of alliteration, although in the second the word in question, *siðbætir*, arguably fits better into Guthormr’s narrative and is attested elsewhere (Kock 1923–44, §2743).

of *siðr* to understand Viking Age thought, even though the word only survives in texts from the last years of that period? And why does *siðr* not appear in earlier texts, regardless of its definition? Neither of these have firm answers; the only response can be hypotheses based on later use and current understandings of early northern cultural trends.

Where is the Viking Age siðr?

The scarcity of *siðr* in early texts, regardless of meaning, could be an accident of preservation or signal that the terminology did not gain importance until later. The former is not a radical suggestion, given the low quantity of poetry that has been preserved overall and of instances of *siðr* within that body, as well as the environment in which Old Norse texts were transmitted, in which material addressing non-Christian religion directly is less likely to have survived (Taggart 2021, 286–87). On the other hand, while kennings based on Old Norse mythic tropes fall out of use in the eleventh century (Clunies Ross 2005; Males 2017), some poetry utilizing them does continue to be transmitted. It would seem quite an accident for a comparatively neutral term like *siðr* to be wiped out when those kennings were not.

Attempting to increase the clarity of this picture, I have counted instances of *siðr* (simplex or in compounds but not *ósiðr*) alongside stanzas and fragments of verse that survive from the ninth century until the eleventh (Figure 1), reckoning each stanza and fragment as a unit regardless of length and using the dates given by *Skj.* (BI). Unfortunately, this information can only provide a suggestion of the past reality. A stanza of ten lines has the same weight in these calculations as a fragment with two, and Finnur Jónsson's datings can be queried on the basis that poetry may be inauthentic and that a poet is counted in a single century even when their work spans two (arguably the year 1000 is the only boundary meaningful for its own sake, due to the Alþing's conversion). However, Figure 1 would not be much more dependable even if the dates were painstakingly scrutinized, eddic poems included, and individual lines counted, given that no one knows how many verses have been lost from each century (particularly from non-Icelanders). Likely, proportionately more poetry is missing for every century counted back in time. A total of the poetic units that were actually composed in each century might articulate a very different trend than the quantities surrendered by today's fragmentary corpus.

<i>Century</i>	<i>Extant Poetic Units</i>	<i>Instances of Siðr</i>
Ninth	143	0 (0%)
Tenth	663	1 (0.15%) ¹⁴
Eleventh	889	3 (0.34%)
Twelfth	1268	16 (1.26%)

Figure 1

The volume of preserved skaldic poetry increases greatly century by century: almost fifty per cent more survives from the twelfth century than from the eleventh, and the quantity from the ninth century is far smaller than later years. In fact, 4.6 times the poetry endures from the tenth century than the ninth, yet only one instance of *siðr* is extant in the tenth-century corpus. It should therefore be unsurprising that the term is not preserved from the ninth century.

By the twelfth century, usage of *siðr* has nominally increased; it is used over five times more than in the eleventh. Where the previous three hundred years combined only manage to throw up four instances of *siðr*, the twelfth-century “Golden Age” of Christian poetry, as Katrina Attwood names it (2005, 45), offers sixteen. Arguably, then, *siðr* gained currency while Christianity (and especially Christian literature) exploded, perhaps as the disparity between religions old and new become clearer and/or Christians reflecting on non-Christian culture needed a vocabulary to frame their discussion. The sense of difference that Christians felt looking back was enough that *forn siðr* could mean not only the behaviours and concepts but also the period of Old Norse religion; Þórr and Freyja were worshipped “í fornum sið” (in the olden times) (*ONP*, s.v. “siðr”). Religion is the characteristic change between the two eras.

Several arguments count against this. The first is that the divergence between *forn* and *nýr siðr* must have been obvious much earlier than *Geisli*, for example. Christianization was a long process, and worshippers of Old Norse gods had contact with Christian and other non-Old Norse traditions in the Viking Age and before. Already in the tenth century, Hallfreðr was distinguishing between Christ and the gods “ór heiðnum dómi” (from heathendom) (*Skj.*, BI, 158; similarly, *Hákonardrápa* by Tindr Hallkelsson,

14 Finnur Jónsson deems GuðLaus to be tenth century, and the works of Hallfreðr as eleventh.

st. 7; cf. Whaley 2003, 240).¹⁵ The twelfth century did not see a fundamentally new need that catalysed an increase in *siðr*'s popularity. The second is the existence of *GuðLaus*, already seemingly dealing with religion in the early eleventh century. The third must be that a shift from three to sixteen is not a dramatic increase when set alongside the numbers of poetic units from those centuries – less than a percentage point. It could be an accident that *siðr* survives from later years in greater numbers.

As stated above, these figures do not constitute a reliable guide to past use and cannot be used to calculate a trend with statistical significance. This exercise is a visualization of what modern scholars do not have and cannot know. That being the case, *GuðLaus*'s existence and *siðr* being native to Old Norse should weigh most heavily. Already the term denotes a range of concepts in early medieval North Germanic dialects. Therefore, it was probably more popular before the turn of the millennium than the literature attests, and its absence reflects the loss of culture in general, especially from the early Viking Age.

A Moral Age

The uncertainty over *siðr*'s prevalence and usage during the Viking Age makes for a bad start to answering whether it already had moral semantics in that period. Several additional factors might be called on, nevertheless: the length of the interlude between the end of the Viking Age and the first appearance of *siðr* approximating to Modern English “moral;” the closeness of earlier denotations to “moral;” and the geographical span covered by that sense of the word.

Siðr first appears with moral significance in the 1100s, the earliest instance being *ósiðr* in *Eiríksdrápa* around forty years after the traditional end of the Viking Age and just over a century after the conversion of Iceland (but not the end of the Christianization process there or in the other Nordic countries). In the east, the definition is among the first to appear at all and is prevalent in the fourteenth century (by the standards

15 While there is little that persuasively argues that the phrase *for siðr* was used during the Viking Age (cf. Nordberg 2018, 131; fn. 12), markers such as baptism would certainly have emphasized the distinctions between sets of religious concepts and practices. That early northerners ascribed prestige through the authority of anonymous and ancient tradition (McKinnell 2020; cf. e.g. *Vafþrúðnismál*, st. 1; *Fragment*) also makes it more plausible that Old Norse religion would already have been described as *for* before Christianization began in earnest.

of the small extant corpus). Above, I gave the caveat that lexical variation between West and East Norse (and Old Gnutish) is understudied in comparison to, for instance, phonological deviations; nevertheless, semantic consistency does seem more likely to persist from the Viking Age than arise from later influence of West Norse on eastern languages. Indeed, influence probably travelled in the other direction, especially from the fourteenth century onwards (Herbert 2007). As I also noted above, the more pronounced “moral” denotation of the word is not far from the connotations of judgement, based on the fulfilment of social expectations, already prominent in *siðr* in the tenth-century work of Þórarinn loftunga and Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld (and one of its possible etymologies; see fn. 2). When set alongside the geographical range across which *siðr* “moral” is found, this early date suggests that the term could denote the concept of morality in the Viking Age.

Both poems are addressed to Christian kings and so may have been influenced by how the term was used by Christians. However, Hallfreðr, at least, was brought up as a worshipper of Old Norse gods, and that religion was not immediately extinguished with the conversion of Iceland, so Christian influence is not a better explanation for *siðr*'s meaning in these poems. That meaning could also reflect earlier Christian contact, as many other concepts of Old Norse religion might; unadulterated, homogenous Old Norse religion existed no more than unadulterated, homogeneous Christianity ever has. Whether this is a concern matters only to researchers for whom the (less answerable) question of origins is more important than the relevance of the concept and word to worshippers of Old Norse gods.

Norms and Flexibility

Morality is not much easier to separate from religion than from custom and practice in the extant usage of *siðr*. When the anonymous poet of *Líknarbraut* describes their god as *siðskjótr* “*siðr*-quick” (st. 6), are they praising values that are moral or religious? At times, this ignorance indicates how little context a twenty-first-century researcher has for understanding a word's significance in skaldic poetry; at others, however, it can reflect how morals proceed from Christianity for many of the poets who

use *siðr* (foregrounded in e.g. *Harmsól*, st. 3). Was the same intermingling of senses true for Viking Age worshippers of Old Norse gods? Was Old Norse religion based in (potentially moral) social norms, and, as a result, were those norms less flexible?

A long-standing view is that religion permeated Old Norse culture and society (see further Nordberg 2012). Few scholars expressly extend this into the area of morality, unless honour and masculinity are concerned (for exceptions, see Sundqvist 2005, 276; Lindow 2020, 479). Law and the land's administration, however, have received particular attention, above all a judgement preserved in the twelfth-century *Íslendingabók*, supposedly from the mouth of the lawspeaker overseeing the Conversion: "höfum allir ein lög ok einn sið" (let us all have one law and one *siðr*) (2018, 135–36; cf. *Íslendingabók*, 17; Sundqvist 2005, 275; Nygaard 2021, 156–57). In the texts examined above, there are hints of blending of another type of *siðr* with law as well; according to Hallfreðr's *lausavísa* 10, it is the *siðr* of Óláfr Tryggvason "at blót eru kviðjuð" (that sacrifices are forbidden), *kviðja* "ban, forbid, banish" being a word with legal force (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 193, notes a close echo in the *Gulapingslög*; cf. *Gulapingslög*, 18, and, further, e.g. *Frostapingslög*, 245; *Gulapingslög*, 16; *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar*, st. 16). Óláfr's *siðr* is to modify the law, thereby altering the *siðr* of others.

Sundqvist (2005, 275) points out that, in a text like *Östgötalagen* (Schlyter 1830), *siðr* and *lög* may be close to synonymous yet in another clearly distinct; *Íslendingabók*'s "ein lög ok einn sið," for instance, separates the concepts rather than joining them. Simon Nygaard's suggestion (2021, 156) of conceptualizing one as built on the other seems to capture this relationship. They are related but not the same. As Nygaard goes on to say, "a change in religion means a new law built on this new religion" (2021, 156), and that is surely the impression that *Íslendingabók* wants to give. Even whilst *siðr* excludes the law, it is shown to encompass much of the foundational (potentially religious) ideology of society. *Siðaskipti* "shift in *siðr*," a term first recorded in thirteenth-century texts (*ONP*, s.v. "siðaskifti;" cf. Nordberg 2018, 132), signifies a change in religion but also in perceived norms, behaviour, and rationales for norms and behaviour.¹⁶ Change in *siðr*

16 *Perceived* is worth emphasizing here. Actual behaviours and norms themselves may not change, even though they are thought to have done so by religious proponents, and identity is not the only religious factor that can influence the prevalence of acts like sharing and altruism (see e.g. Preston, Salomon and Ritter 2014; Stamatoulakis 2013).

equates to change in society; change in society entails change in the law, and hence, as discussed briefly above, later texts can break Icelandic history down into the ages before and after Conversion.

However, the actual legal change reported in *Íslendingabók* is (rather famously) a compromise. To maintain peace, the laws become Christian in general but still permit the exposure of infants, eating horsemeat, and “blóta á laun” (to sacrifice in secret) (*Íslendingabók*, 17). Although the last act could be punished if witnesses were produced, on the face of it *Íslendingabók* is implying that more than one *siðr* can co-exist within the same law. Yet *Íslendingabók* immediately undermines this idea by relating that the non-Christian practices were made entirely illegal “síðarr fám vetrum” (a few years later). These exceptions could have been dropped because Icelanders had learned that *siðr* and law could not be separated without impeding the functioning of society, or because Christians had grown to dominate politics enough to force through the change. Certainly, Hallfreðr’s *lausavísur* demonstrate that a Christian could already view their *siðr* as exclusive of non-Christian *siðr* in the tenth century; Hallfreðr’s text carefully but plainly conveys that he is giving up his previous gods because of the demands of his patron Óláfr’s Christianity.

Yet the presentation of the exceptions in *Íslendingabók* is curious and hints at its own biases (on those, see Schach 1982; cf. the parallel accounts in Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson and Foote 2003; Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1954). Recorded over a hundred years after the Conversion, *Íslendingabók* likely does not reflect the events as they occurred, least of all in its quotations of historical speech like “ein lög ok einn sið”. Yet those details may be part of a wider design that (sometimes subtly) condemns Old Norse religion. For example, greater criminality (and shame) is attached to transgressions performed in secret (*Grágás* 1974, 154, 162–64; cf. Andersson 1984, 496–505). Given that, *Íslendingabók* says, non-Christian sacrifice must be conducted in secret and is, practically-speaking, illegal as it can be prosecuted, the text is casting non-Christians in the conversion moment as transgressors practising a *siðr* that was inherently morally compromised.

It seems, therefore, that northern Christians perceived their own *siðr* as inflexible and based on social norms – and may already have done so when Hallfreðr was composing for Óláfr – but the doubtfulness of

Íslendingabók's testimony makes it difficult to say if non-Christians felt the same. Nonetheless, the awkwardness of the events as they are told in *Íslendingabók* may hint that a kernel of fact is at the heart of the narrative; a compromise followed by later abolition is bad storytelling, intimating that Icelandic *siðr* around the Conversion was flexible enough to be separated from law until Christianity attained dominance. In this it is supported by hints from elsewhere that the practice of Old Norse religion was not exclusive of Christianity (Dubois 1999 surveys signs of both co-existence and conflict). Yet the situation likely varied or was more circumstantial than these tendrils of evidence allow for: without looking farther than *Íslendingabók*, one can find a penalty for blasphemy against the Old Norse gods (p. 17),¹⁷ and even if Christianity is the social disrupter bringing legal change in Iceland, the narrative allots considerable resistance to adherents of Old Norse gods as well. Likely there were connections between religion, law, and governance before Christianity began to exert pressure (for examples, see Taggart 2022a; Nygaard 2021; and above all Brink 2002), and in general *siðaskipti* potentially had serious costs for a worshipper of an Old Norse god, alongside alienation from their in-group. Conversion for Hallfreðr, according to his *lausavísur*, meant renouncing sacrifice (*lausavísur* 6, 10) but also the gods' love and favour (*lausavísur* 7, 9), support (*lausavísur* 7, 8), good luck (*lausavísa* 6), skaldic tradition (*lausavísa* 7; see Males 2017 for this in action), and the *skopp* of the *nornir* (see fn. 10). (Further consequences should be expected that were not directly relevant to his poetry.)

Therefore, the flexibility of Old Norse *siðr* is probably sometimes illusory – both as a function of its being reported in later Christian texts and because its praxis was not seriously tested until Christianization began in earnest – and sometimes a sign of individual, circumstantial, or communal variety. The situation remains ambiguous, given the lack of evidence (and the late dating of instances of *siðr*), but certainly there is evidence to suggest that a *siðr* in the Viking Age could embrace a very large sphere of meaning, incorporating an array of norms as well as religion, as much for non-Christians as for Christians, and probably reflecting the links between

17 While *Íslendingabók* does say *goðgá* “blasphemy,” Grønlie 2006, 24 nevertheless suggests it may have been for slander. Parallels are so lacking that it is impossible to discount either possibility.

these various aspects of social life. This makes intuitive sense: following social norms, whether they have a religious rationalization or not, tends to be viewed favourably by the majority of a society. Inevitably, judgement comes with following or not following them – hence the sense of obligation that is connected with *siðr* even in some of its oldest surviving attestations – and while some of those norms may be simple prosocial acts like sharing, others can be intimately connected with religion. For modern worshippers, offering devotion to a god can be as much of a moral act as sharing is, for instance (White and Norenzayan 2022).

Conclusion

The provisionality of the above discussion is inescapable, in terms of dating, semantics, use and development. What statistician would base hypotheses regarding non-Christian usage of a term on a corpus in which the vast majority of attestations to that term come from Christian sources? A very low percentage, I would imagine. The conclusions here are too based on inferences (as most reconstructions of Old Norse religion are) to be sure that they accurately describe *siðr*'s significance in the early North. Equally, however, the possibilities that these conclusions represent should remind scholars to avoid firm beliefs regarding the separation of Old Norse religion not only from law but also from morality.

Siðr had a moral denotation in the Christian era, and it is plausible to extend this backwards into the Viking Age for non-Christian usage, when probably the word was used more than the surviving texts suggest. Some of the oldest extant uses of the term have connotations of obligation and judgement. Old Norse religion and morality may have been linked, whether religious ideology generated or merely reflected moral (and other) norms.

Siðr may not have meant “moral” for any Old Norse speaker in exactly the same way as *moral* does for a speaker of modern English (which itself will vary between individuals and groups); it is not an emic term to be used in modern research to describe a Viking Age or an early medieval code of conduct, especially given the term's importance for scholars of religion. Nevertheless, *siðr* is the surviving word that most captures that concept.

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ÁGRIP

Siðr, trú og siðferði

Efnisorð: siðferði, norræn trú, kveðskapur, *siðr*, *Íslendingabók*, siðskipti, kristnitaka

Fræðimenn hafa á síðustu fimmtán árum mikið rýnt í trúarlega merkingarfræði fornnorræna orðsins *siðr*, en siðferðileg vídd þess hefur nánast ekki hlotið neina umfjöllun. Mögulega stafar það af því að fræðimenn hafa almennt ekki beint athygli sinni að siðferði þeirra sem dýrkuðu norræna guði, nema í tengslum við heiður eða karlmennsku. Markmið mitt er að takast á við þetta og meta hvort siðferðileg merkingarfræði orðsins *siðr* hafi þróast með kristnitöku eða verið til áður.

Í greininni eru greind merkingarsvið elstu dæma um orðið *siðr*, og þau tengd við trúarbrögð, einstaklinga eða siðferði. Síðastnefnda merkingin kemur fyrst glögglega fyrir í kvæðinu *Harmsól* á tólftu öld, þó að siðferðisvíddir komi upp fyrir. Á grundvelli þessara siðferðisvídda, landfræðilegrar útbreiðslu hugtaksins og orðsifjafræði, legg ég til að *siðr* í merkingunni „siðferði“ hafi verið viðtekið og jafnvel vinsælt á víkingaöld.

Greininni lýkur með því að skoða samband siðferðis og trúar í samhengi við orðið *siðr* og lagabreytingar. Vera má að kristinn *siðr* hafi mótast seint á víkingaöld en *siðr* tengdur norrænum guðum kann að hafa verið minna sveigjanlegur en stundum er gert ráð fyrir, í ljósi þess hve stórt hlutverk trúarhugmyndir léku í daglegu lífi fólks til viðbótar við áhrif þeirra í lagalegu og stjórnsýslulegu samhengi. Ef til vill merkti hugtakið *siðr* ekki „siðferði“ í fornnorrænu á sama hátt og *moral* í huga þeirra sem tala nútímaensku (eða *siðferði* í nútímaíslensku), og sönnunargögnin gætu verið of ósamfelld til að styðja við tilgátuna um almenna notkun hugtaksins fyrir siðareglur. Þrátt fyrir það er *siðr* það varðveitta orð sem einna helst fangar nútímahugtakið *siðferði*.

SUMMARY

Siðr, Religion and Morality

Keywords: Morality, Old Norse religion, skaldic poetry, *siðr*, *Íslendingabók*, conversion, Christianization

The religious semantics of Old Norse *siðr* have been heavily scrutinized by scholars over the last fifteen years, yet its moral dimensions have almost not been considered at all. In this, research on *siðr* may reflect the lack of attention paid in general to the morality of worshippers of Old Norse gods, beyond considerations of honour and masculinity. With this article, I aim to fill this gap in scholarship and to assess whether *siðr*'s moral semantics developed with the Christianization of the North or pre-existed it.

To begin, I survey the earliest surviving instances of *siðr* and distinguish a range of denotations from their uses, from “religious praxis” to “individual practice” to “moral”. The last of these senses first clearly appears in *Harmsól* in the twelfth century, although moral dimensions do arise earlier. Despite the dearth of earlier attestation, it is proposed on the basis of those moral dimensions in earlier usage and the term’s geographical spread (as well as its etymological derivation) that *siðr* “moral” was popular and relevant during the Viking Age.

The article concludes by briefly considering the relationship between morality and religion in the context of *siðr*, chiefly through the prism of legal change. Christian *siðr* may be inflexible already in the late Viking Age; however, *siðr* associated with Old Norse gods may also be less accommodating than is sometimes assumed, given how deeply embedded Old Norse religion was in the lives of its adherents and its possible legal and administrative connections. *Siðr* may not have meant “moral” for any Old Norse speaker in the same way as *moral* does for a speaker of modern English, and the evidence is too provisional to promote its use as an emic term for a Viking Age code of conduct. Nevertheless, *siðr* is the extant word that most captures that concept.

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SÆLA OG ÓHEIÐARLEIKI Í HÁVAMÁLUM¹

Túlkun og túlkunarsaga 8. og 9. vísu Gestapáttar

I Inngangur

Um margar aldir hefur Hávamálum verið sungið mikið lof. Sérstaða Hávamála er þó slík að lofið verður oft blendnara en þegar önnur eddukvæði eiga í hlut. Sjálfsagt er að hrifast af listfengi og orðkynngi jafnt í Völuspá og Hávamálum en aðeins hin síðarnefndu eru talin geyma mikilvægan siðaboðskap sem gæti stundum átt erindi við fólk enn í dag. En hver er þessi siðaboðskapur? Er eitthvert vit í honum? Er hugsanlegt að boðskapurinn sem við teljum okkur sjá sé að einhverju leyti okkar eigin tilbúningur? Textinn er okkur fjarlægur bæði í tíma og menningarheimi og því getur túlkun ýmissa orða verið miklum vandkvæðum háð. Einnig er textinn oft birtur með þeim hætti – t.d. með nútímastafsetningu – að mælandinn virðist nær okkar merkingarheimi en líklegt má telja. Þannig er oft kosið að fela framandleika textans frekar en að gera honum hátt undir höfði.

Allsterk hefð hefur myndast fyrir því að túlka siðaboðskap Hávamála í ljósi dyggðasiðfræði Aristótelesar. Vitaskuld eru ákveðnar hugmyndir, t.d. um mikilvægi hugrekki og gjafmildi, sem virðast sambærilegar og þá getur samanburður verið til skilningsauka. En ég vil halda því fram að siðfræði Hávamála sé einfaldari og nokkru bágbornari. Allan siðferðisboðskap Hávamála mætti vel fella undir einfalda *sérhyggju*; að markmið einstaklingsins sé ekkert annað en eigin ánægja, hamingja eða sæla. Flestum ber saman um að þetta gangi gegn dyggðasiðfræðinni vegna þess að hún krefjist þess að dyggðin sé nauðsynlegt skilyrði farsældarinnar,

1 Ég vil þakka Gunnari Harðarsyni fyrir yfirllestur og skemmtilegt spjall um efni þessarar greinar. Ég lærði margt af honum, sérstaklega varðandi almennar efasemdir um siðfræðilega túlkun orðsins *sæla*. Einnig vil ég þakka Gísla Sigurðssyni, Trausta Dagssyni, Vilhjálmí Árnasyni, Þórdísi Eddu Jóhannesdóttur og tveimur ritrýnum *Griplu* fyrir ýmsar góðar ábendingar og hvatningarorð.

en slíks skilyrðis sér ekki stað í Hávamálum. Vissulega er kvæðið mikilfenglegt listaverk og geymir djúpar hugleiðingar um ástand mannsins í heiminum en þar er ekki að finna siðfræðikenningu sem teygir sig út fyrir sérhyggjuna.

Það væri ofmetnaður að ætla sér að sýna með óyggjandi hætti, í einni grein, að Hávamál geymi ekkert nema sérhyggju. Túlkun mín er aðeins eitt skref í þá átt en varpar á sama tíma ljósi á ýmis önnur deiluefni sem útkljáð verða með meiri vissu. Ég beini sjónum að túlkun tveggja vísna – 8. og 9. vísu – sem oft eru taldar gera *sælu* að þungamiðju siðaboðskaparins. Túlkunarsaga vísanna er afar áhugaverð í sjálfu sér og þær eru vissulega mikilvægar til skilnings Hávamála. En ég færi rök fyrir því að þær boði hvorki *dyggð* né *farsæld* í hefðbundnum skilningi. Þær boða ekki dyggð af því að þær leggja of mikla áherslu – samkvæmt minni túlkun – á möguleika einstaklingsins til að ná sínu fram með óheiðarleika. Þær boða ekki heldur siðferðilega farsæld því að sælan sem um ræðir virðist ekki taka nógu mikið tillit til annarra.

Í stuttu máli má segja að niðurstaða mín sé sú að í Hávamálum sé sælan ekki meira en ánægja eða skortur á vansæld. Óheiðarleiki og ódyggð eru ekki í sjálfu sér andstað sælunni því að það sem raunverulega skiptir máli er vinfengi, vinsældir og liðsstyrkur. Enda má þannig halda lífi og þrauka í lagskiptu samfélagi þar sem gott líf veltur mjög á völdum, frændsemi og karlmennsku. Hið sæluríka líf er helst á færi karlmanna sem kunna að draga til sín völd, aðdáendur og ambáttir. Þó er sælan stigskipt hugtak í Hávamálum því að jafnvel fátækir og vanheilir geta fengið í henni einhverja hlutdeild og lífið jafnan talið betra en dauðinn sjálfur.

Í 2. kafla fer ég yfir túlkun og túlkunarsögu fyrri parta vísanna tveggja – köllum þær *sæluvísurnar* til hægðarauka – og þá kemur í ljós hversu umdeild túlkun þeirra hefur verið. Ég sýni þar að fyrri partarnir leggi áherslu á tvær hliðar sælunnar. Hinn sæli verður að afla sér *formælenda* en einnig að geta treyst eigin *dómgreind*. Í 3. kafla færi ég rök fyrir því að orðið *lof* sé tvírætt í sæluvísunum og tákni *athöfn* í fyrri vísu en *ástand* í þeirri seinni. Þetta er mikilvæg vísbending um að formælendur hins sæla þurfi ekki endilega að vera heiðarlegir og því þurfi *lofið* ekki að vera sannleikanum samkvæmt. Í 4. kafla kafa ég dýpra ofan í síðari hluta sæluvísanna. Ég færi rök fyrir því að hefðbundin túlkun fyrri sæluvísu sé röng í grundvallaratriðum. Sú túlkun gerir ráð fyrir orðasambandi (*að*

eiga annars brjóstum i) sem er einfaldlega ekki í textanum þegar hann er greindur rétt setningafræðilega. Orðasambandið finnst heldur hvergi nema í skýringum á vísunni eða orðabókum sem samþykkja skýringuna. Þetta bendir einnig til þess að boðskapurinn snúist aðallega um það að ekki sé hægt að hafa áhrif á *viðhorf* eða *skoðanir* annarra, þótt æskilegt sé að gera þá að *meðmælendum* sínum. Í 5. og síðasta kafla fer ég svo yfir rökgerð vísanna í heild sinni og set fram túlkunarlykil sem veltur á tvenns konar greinarmun sem skáldið virðist gera á *þolanda* og *geranda* annars vegar og *athöfn* og *ástandi* hins vegar. Að lokum færi ég stuttlega rök fyrir því að ekki hafi fundist góð ástæða til að hafna einfaldri sérhyggju sem túlkun á Hávamálum.

II Sæla og sjálfshól

Snemma í Hávamálum má lesa þessar tvær vísur:²

8.

1. Hinn er sæll
2. er sér um getur
3. lof og líknstafi.
4. Ódælla er við það
5. er maður eiga skal
6. annars brjóstum í.

9.

1. Sá er sæll
2. er sjálfur um á
3. lof og vit meðan lifir.
4. Því að ill ráð
5. hefir maður oft þegið
6. annars brjóstum úr.

Sumir ritskýrendur hafa bent á vísurnar til stuðnings þeirri skoðun að *sæla* sé höfuðmarkmið hins góða lífs samkvæmt Hávamálum.³ Guðmundur Finnbogason og Kristján Kristjánsson hafa gert sér mat úr samanburði á Aristótelískri dyggðasiðfræði og siðaboðskap Hávamála.⁴ Óttar M.

2 Hér og annars staðar fylgi ég útgáfu Gísla Sigurðssonar: *Eddukvæði*, útg. Gíslis Sigurðsson (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 2014).

3 Guðmundur Finnbogason, „Lífsskoðun Hávamála og Aristoteles,“ *Skírnir* 103 (1929): 85. Óttar M. Norðfjörð, „Hugtakakerfi Hávamála,“ *Skírnir* 179 (2005), 34. Símon Jóh. Ágústsson, „Hugleiðingar um Hávamál,“ *Lesbók Morgunblaðsins*, 8. maí (1955), 258. Hermann Pálsson, *Hávamál í ljósi íslenskrar menningar* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 1999), 33.

4 Guðmundur Finnbogason, „Lífsskoðun Hávamála og Aristoteles,“ 103 (1929), 84–102. Kristján Kristjánsson, „Liberating Moral Traditions: Saga Morality and Aristotle’s Megalopsychia,“ *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 1 (1998), 408–412.

Norðfjörð hefur gert ítarlegri tilraun til að setja fram kenningu um hið innra hugtakakerfi Hávamála en hann túlkar textann sem svo að sæla sé á færi þeirra sem hafa vit, sjálfræði, vini og vandamenn, og lífsgleði.⁵

Það hefur tíðkast að leita víða fanga í Hávamálum til að freista þess að skilja sæluhugtakið betur. Við þeirri aðferðafræði hreyfi ég engum andmælum í sjálfu sér. Hávamálum er gjarnan skipt í nokkra ólíka parta sem stundum eru taldir ólíkir að efni og uppruna og því talið að villandi geti verið að túlka verkið sem eina samhangandi heild. Á hinn bóginn þykir ekki ótilhlýðilegt að grafast fyrir um fornnorræna heimsmynd með Íslendingasögur að leiðarljósi, þótt afar ólíkar séu innbyrðis.⁶ Sama aðferð hlýtur því að vera gjaldgeng í rannsóknum á eddukvæðum, að einhverju marki. Mitt erindi í þessari grein er aftur á móti af öðru tagi. Það er nefnilega ástæða til að ætla að sæluvísurnar séu miklum mun margræðari og illskiljanlegri en oft hefur verið talið. Góðu heilli tel ég þó að nákvæm túlkun vísanna dýpki skilning okkar á heimspeki og siðaboðskap Hávamála svo um muni. Í þessum kafla mun ég varpa nokkru ljósi á túlkunarsögu sæluvísanna og setja fram tillögu að túlkun þeirra.

Sæluvísurnar tilheyra svokölluðum Gestþætti sem oft er talinn ná frá fyrstu vísu að þeirri 77. eða mögulega tveimur til þremur vísu betur. Fræðimenn virðast langflestir sammála um að sá þáttur sé ein samhangandi heild sem megi þá túlka sem slíka. Því tel ég best að beina sjónum sérstaklega að Gestþætti í túlkun sæluvísanna. Með því móti verða rök mín sterkari og túlkunin að sama skapi sennilegri. Það er að segja, ef Hávamál geyma siðaboðskap er líklegast að hann megi finna í Gestþætti og alltaf mögulegt að aðrir þættir – t.d. Loddfáfnismál – kynni til sögunnar ósamræmi. Ég mun því gefa hvers kyns samanburði *innan* Gestþáttar meira vægi en öðrum. Að sama skapi skyldi gefa samanburði innan Hávamála meira vægi en samanburði á milli eddukvæða eða annarra heimilda. Ég mun því taka sérstaklega fram þegar túlkun mín byggir á vísu eða orðalagi utan Gestþáttar. Að þessu sögðu vil ég þó taka fram að ég tel vera töluvert samræmi í hugmyndaheimi Hávamála, þvert á ólíka þætti.

Í hefðbundnum íslenskum útgáfum með skýringum er venjulega ekki talið að lesandinn þurfi mikla hjálp við túlkun sæluvísanna. *Líkinstafir*

5 Óttar M. Norðfjörð, „Hugtakakerfi Hávamála,“ *Skírnir* 179 (2005), 35.

6 Sjá, t.d., Vilhjálmur Árnason, „Saga og siðferði: Hugleiðingar um túlkun á siðfræði Íslendingasagna,“ *Tímarit Máls og menningar* 46 (2005), 21–37.

eru sennilega góðir dómar, *lof* er þá hrós, *óðalla* þýðir *erfiðara* en oftast er engin skýring höfð með seinni sæluvísu. Við getum kallað þetta *hefðbundna* túlkun orðanna. En hinn hefðbundni skortur á skýringum er markverður af tveimur ástæðum. Annars vegar má leiða rök að því að vísurnar geymi mikilvægan lykil að siðfræði og þekkingarfræði Hávamála, sem áður er getið. Hins vegar einkennist túlkunarsagan sjálf af miklum ágreiningi og ráðaleysi frammi fyrir túlkunum sem virðast oft bæði réttar og fjarstæðukenndar. Ég vil því taka nokkur dæmi úr þessari áhugaverðu sögu.

Textafræðingurinn Karl Müllenhoff (1887, 255) lét þau orð falla að sæluvísurnar pössuðu ekki vel inn í samhengið á milli 7. og 10. vísu.⁷ Hann nefndi reyndar enga sérstaka ástæðu eða rök. Eiríkur Magnússon vísar í orð Müllenhoffs og skilur þau greinilega sem svo að vísurnar hljóti að vera síðari tíma viðbót.⁸ Hann segir þetta vera fráleitt en hefur þó ýmislegt við þær að athuga. Hann hélt því einarðlega fram að í línu 8.4 hefði ritari Konungsbókar gert mistök og skrifað *við* þar sem átti að standa *vit*.⁹ Eiríkur útskýrði ekki nákvæmlega hvað hann taldi ama að línunum 8.4–6 *án* þessarar breytingar enda hefur kenning hans ekki þótt sannfærandi.¹⁰ Þó má leiða af leiðréttingu Eiríks að hann hefur talið eðlilegra að hafa nafnorð á þessum stað. Vel má vera að Eiríki hafi annars þótt fyrri og seinni helmingur 8. vísu passa illa saman því að það virðist vera samdóma álit margra. Guðmundur Finnbogason lýsti þessu meinta misræmi afar vel:

Ef „lof“ merkir hér hrós og „líknstafir“ milda dóma, eins og menn hafa hingað til haldið, þá verða bæði erindin hin versta lokleysa, því að lof og mildir dómar eru einmitt þeir hlutir, er maður verður að eiga „annars brjóstum í“, eða alls ekki, þar sem enginn mun í alvöru halda, að Hávamál telji þann sælan, sem nóg á af sjálfshóli og mildum dómum sjálfs sín um sjálfan sig!¹¹

7 Karl Müllenhoff, *Deutsche Altertumskunde*, 5. bindi (Berlín: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1887), 255.

8 Eiríkur Magnússon, „Second Meeting of the Cambridge Philological Society, Lent Easter, and Michaelmas Term, 1887,“ *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 16/18 (1887), 11, nmgr. 1.

9 Sama grein, 11. Líka Eiríkur Magnússon, „First Meeting of the Cambridge Philological Society, Michaelmas Term, 1884,“ *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 9 (1884), 25.

10 David Evans, *Hávamál* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1986), 79.

11 Guðmundur Finnbogason, „Nokkrar athugasemdir við Hávamál,“ *Skírnir* 103 (1929), 105.

Í ritskýringum sínum við Hávamál tekur David Evans undir þessi orð Guðmundar og segir að það sé ekki samhljómur á milli helminganna.¹² Hann þýðir *lof* sem ‚praise‘ og *líknstafi* sem ‚favour‘ eða ‚warm judgments‘ og bendir á, líkt og Guðmundur, að það séu einmitt fyrirbæri sem einungis fást úr brjóstum annarra.

Ivar Lindquist hefur einnig haldið því fram að sæluvísurnar stingi í stúf ef hefðbundinni túlkun þeirra er fylgt.¹³ Samkvæmt honum gerir hin hefðbundna túlkun þær frekar ástæðulausar og einangraðar í samhenginu (‚ganska omotiverade och isolerade‘), þótt þeim sé óneitanlega ætlað að standa saman því að þær geymi svo augljósar hliðstæður. Guðmundur og Lindquist setja fram afar ólíkar tillögur til úrbóta en Evans, sem vísar til þeirra beggja, virðist hallur undir túlkun hins síðarnefnda. Í raun minnst hann ekki á tilgátu Guðmundar. Hér útskýri ég túlkanir þeirra stuttlega því að lokum mun ég hafna þeim báðum. Samkvæmt túlkuninni sem ég set fram síðar er ekkert því til fyrirstöðu að skilja *lof* sem hrós eða *líknstafi* sem milda dóma.

Túlkun Lindquist er öllu einfaldari svo við byrjum á henni. Hann heldur því fram að *lof* eigi að skilja hér, og í eddukvæðum almennt, í merkingunni *ást* eða *kærleikur*.¹⁴ Hann tiltekur sérstaklega í 52. vísu Gestapáttar; *Mikið eitt / skal-a manni gefa, / oft kaupir sér í litlu lof*. Vissulega er mögulegt að túlka þessi orð þannig að ekki þurfi alltaf að gefa mikið til að áskotnast kærleikur annarra. Síðan færir Lindquist fyrir því rök að *líknstafir* merki hér *orð til að vinna sér inn hjálp (líkn) annarra*.¹⁵ Evans tekur undir með Lindquist í ljósi þess að túlkunin virðist passa vel við notkun orðsins *líknstafir* í 5. vísu Sigurdrífumála (*fullur er hann ljóða / og líknstafa, / góðra galdra / og gamanrúna*).

Samkvæmt Lindquist má því umorða fyrri sæluvísuna nokkurn veginn á eftirfarandi hátt: Sæll er sá sem ávinnur sér kærleik annarra og lærir að nota orð sér til framdráttar, erfiðara er það sem maður verður að eiga í annars brjóstum.¹⁶ Hér er lokleysa Guðmundur ekki leyst nema að hálfu leyti. Við verðum að líta svo á að seinni parturinn (*Ódælla er við það / er maður eiga skal / annars brjóstum í*) eigi bara við um *líknstafina* en ekki um

12 Evans, *Hávamál*, 79.

13 Ivar Lindquist, „Ordstudier och tolkningar i Havamal,“ *SNF* 9 (1918), 8.

14 Sama rit, 9.

15 Sama rit, 12–17.

16 Sama rit, 17.

lofið því að kærleikurinn eða ástin er einmitt þess eðlis að maður á hana óhjákvæmilega í annarra brjóstum. Annars þyrftum við að líta svo á að sæluvísurnar boðuðu *sjálfsást* sem virðist jafnvel fráleitari hugmynd en að þær boði *sjálfsból*. Það virðist því ekki vera ástæða til að fylgja túlkun Lindquists. Í fyrsta lagi ætti hin hefðbundnari túlkun að teljast trúverðugri ef hægt er að halda henni til streitu. Ég mun sýna að það er hægt. Í öðru lagi er vert að benda á að túlkun Lindquist á línunum 2–3 (*er sér um getur / lof og líknstafi*) þegar þær eru teknar saman, er fjarri því árennileg. Sá sæli á að ávinna sér ást *annarra* og *eigin* orðfimi. Það er miklu líklegra, eins og við munum sjá síðar, að túlka línu 3 þannig að hinn sæli sé annað hvort *gerandi* eða *þolandi* bæði lofsins og líknstafanna. Það er ekki svo auðvelt að stökkva á milli þessara tveggja möguleika innan samtengingarinnar. Það væri líkt því og að segja að hinn sæli eigi að geta sér ást og *hugrekki*, sem virðist vera skritin samsetning. Túlkunin sem verður sett fram hér mun gera hinn sæla að *þolanda* bæði lofs og líknstafa.

Hugum nú stuttlega að túlkun Guðmundar. Hún hefur hlotið nokkurn hljómgrunn hjá Hermanni Pálssyni sem virðist taka undir hana að mestu leyti.¹⁷ Guðmundur vildi meina að *lof* þýddi leyfi og *líknstafir* þekkingu eða speki um líkn eða lækningu. Hinn sæluríki verður þá að eiga sjálfur lof – ráða lögum og lofum – í þeim skilningi að hann sé frjál og sjálfráður. Hann getur sér líknstafi einfaldlega með því að öðlast *vit* eða *hyggindi* sem koma að einhverjum notum. Guðmundur vill meina að líknstafir merki því nokkurn veginn það sama og *vit* í seinni sæluvísu. Sæla gefst þá þeim sem þarf hvorki að sækja leyfi eða frelsi til athafna né þekkingu til annarra en sjálfs sín. Seinni parturinn segir svo að varast beri ráð úr munni annarra.

Því miður leysir þessi túlkun engan vanda og kallar yfir okkur aðra svipaða lokleysu og fyrr. Hin nýja lokleysa Guðmundar er sú að enginn mun í alvöru halda að Hávamál telji þann sælan sem lærir ekki af öðrum og hegðar sér ekki samkvæmt lögum og lofum samfélagsins. Vísurnar á undan boða einmitt gestrisni, kurteisi og almenna tillitsemi við náungann. Í því ljósi væri óvænt ef 8. vísa boðaði athafnafrelsi með orðinu *lof*. Svo segir í 57. vísu: *Maður af manni / verður að máli kunnur / en til dælskur af dul*. Samkvæmt Gestþætti lærum við af máli annarra og af samræðum við aðra.

Vert er að staldra aðeins við gagnrýni Guðmundar á hið meinta

17 Hermann Pálsson, *Hávamál í ljósi íslenskrar menningar* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 1999), 33–34.

misræmi í hinni hefðbundnu túlkun. Vitanlega er rétt að Gestapáttur verður seint skilinn þannig að sælan felist í sjálfshóli. En það er engin ástæða til að skilja orðið *lof* í sæluvísunum eingöngu sem *sjálfslof*. Í fyrri vísunni er hugsunin frekar sú að sá sæli þurfi lof annarra (*sér um getur / lof og líknstafi*). Í seinni vísunni er sagt, að því er ég held, að sá sæli geti reitt sig á sitt eigið vit og sína eigin *gildisdóma* eða *meðmæli* (*sjálfur um á / lof og vit meðan lifir*). Hér verður afar áhugaverð ósamhverfa í merkingu, ósamhverfa sem á sér hliðstæðu í seinni pörtum sæluvísunnanna, eins og sýnt verður síðar. Fyrri partarnir eru ósamhverfir með tilliti til *geranda* og *þolanda*. Í 8. vísu (*Hinn er sáll / er sér um getur / lof og líknstafi*) er átt við lof og líknstafi sem hinn sæli hlýtur *af hálfu annarra*. Á nútímamáli mætti ef til vill segja að sá sé sáll sem ávinni sér meðmæli og gott orð *annarra*. Hann á formælendur. Þá er sá sæli þolandi lofsins en einhver annar gerandi. Guðmundi hefur fundist þetta vera lokleysa vegna þess að hann hélt, ásamt öðrum, að línur 8.4–6 (*Ódalla er við það / er maður eiga skal / annars brjóstum í*) gengju í berhögg við þessa túlkun. Enda mætti halda að þar væri því bætt við að *erfiðara* væri að ávinna sér gott orð eða hrós annarra. En hvernig getur verið erfiðara að ávinna sér lof annarra en að ávinna sér lof annarra? Það væri vissulega mikil lokleysa. Sú túlkun Guðmundar á línunum 8.4–6 á hins vegar ekki við rök að styðjast eins og sýnt verður í kafla 4.

Hvað með seinni sæluvísuna? Hver er gerandi og hver þolandi í fyrri hluta 9. vísu (*Sá er sáll / er sjálfur um á / lof og vit meðan lifir*)? Hér má sjá að hinn sæli er orðinn *gerandi* lofs og vits því að hann á að geta reitt sig á sína eigin skynsemi og sín eigin meðmæli meðan hann lifir. Þótt hann þurfi vissulega að læra af öðrum felst sælan í því að geta fylgt eigin ráðum og hlotið gott af. Guðmundur telur hins vegar að *þolandi* (og gerandi) lofsins hljóti að vera hinn sæli sjálfur. En það þarf alls ekki svo að vera. Vísbending um hið gagnstæða er í línu 9.4 (*Því að ill ráð*). Fyrri parturinn á að skýra hvernig sá sæli verður sér úti um ráð sem ekki eru ill. Meiningin er því sú að eigið *lof* og eigið *vit* færi hinum sæla *góð ráð* úr eigin brjósti. Mér þykir nútímaorðið *meðmæli* ná frekar vel utan um þá margræðni sem ég vil eigna orðinu *lof* í vísunum tveimur. Þolandi meðmælanna getur verið hvað sem vera skal; athöfn, hugsun, önnur manneskja eða maður sjálfur. Tilgáta mín er því sú að merkingarhlutverkin sem fylgja orðinu *lof* skiptist á í 8. og 9. vísu:

8.1–3: Sá er sæll sem ávinnur sér meðmæli og gott orð *annarra*.

9.1–3: Sá er sæll sem getur reitt sig á sín *eigin* meðmæli og skynsemi.

Eins og áður sagði er þolandi meðmælanna í línunum 9.1–3 – þ.e. viðfangið sem hlýtur meðmæli – skýrt nánar í síðari hlutanum (*Því að ill ráð / hefir maður oft þegið / annars brjóstum úr*). Ráðgjöf getur varðað hvaða viðfangsefni sem vera skal og *lof* getur einnig falið í sér meðmæli með einhverju öðru en bara þeim sem lofið veitir.

Eitt annað má nefna þessari túlkun til stuðnings. Í Hávamálum, alveg eins og í hinni fornnorrænu heimsmynd sem birtist í Íslendingasögum, er mikið lagt upp úr mikilvægi vinsælda og liðsmunar. Þetta er edlilegt afsprengi samfélagsgerðarinnar, sérstaklega því hvernig framkvæmdavaldið var í höndum fólksins sjálfs. Í Gestabætti er tvisvar talað um ólukku þeirra sem eiga fáa *formælendur* en mæta þó á þing (v. 25) eða í fjölmenni (v. 62). Formælendur eru þeir sem veita gott orð, lof og líknstafi, og eru tilbúnir til að veita stuðning í mæltu máli. Formælandi er því einhver sem veitir öðrum meðmæli sín. Á ögurstundu í samfélagi sem byggist á hefndarskyldu og sæmd geta meðmæli annarra reynst veigamikil. Á þennan hátt má einmitt skilja boðskap sæluvísanna þegar við einblínum á fyrri hluta þeirra; hrós annarra er uppspretta sælu og gleði (8. vísa) en þó verður sá sæli að geta treyst sínu eigin hrósi (þ.e. þegar hann veitir einhverju meðmæli sín).

III Orð og æði

Margar af áhrifamestu vísunum Hávamála sækja dýpt og orðkynngi í frumspekilegan greinarmun á *orði* og *æði* eða *hug* og *hönd*. Maður skyldi segja eitt og hugsa annað, eða hugsa eitt og segja sem minnst. *Þagalt og hugalt / skyldi þjóðans barn / og vígdjarft vera* (v. 15). Önnur merkileg dæmi verða rædd hér á eftir, t.a.m. vísa 45 sem mælir með því að tala fagurt en hyggja flátt við þann sem maður illa trúir, vilji maður af honum gott geta. Sæluvísurnar sjálfar geyma afar mikilvægar vísbendingar um þessa undirliggjandi frumspeki. Ef túlkun mín hingað til er í rétta átt má sýna nokkuð örugglega að í línu 8.3 vísi *lof og líknstafir* til orðs fremur en æðis. Aftur á móti vísar *lof og vit* í línu 9.3 til æðis fremur en orðs. Það er að segja, hinn sæli ávinnur sér ákveðnar *málgjörðir* (e. *speech acts*) af hálfu annarra

en reiðir sig á sínar eigin *skoðanir* og *skynsemi*. Málgjörðir eru athafnir en skynsemi er í raun ástand eða hugarástand.

Þessum greinarmun hefur verið lýst með þeim hætti að annars vegar höfum við *viðhorf* af ýmsu tagi (*skoðanir*, *langanir*, *hugsanir*) og hins vegar getum við framkvæmt ýmsar tegundir *athafna* (t.a.m. tjáningu ýmissa viðhorfa).¹⁸ Munurinn er mikilvægur fyrir margar sakir án þess að það skipti höfuðmáli hér. En hugmyndaheimur Hávamála virðist samræmast þeirri hugsun að athafnir séu vildarefni í mun meira mæli en viðhorf. Þannig er greinarmunurinn einmitt útskýrður stundum. Ef ég sé tré fyrir framan mig mun ég sjálfkrafa mynda með mér þá skoðun að það sé tré fyrir framan mig. Ég hef nánast enga stjórn yfir hugarferlinu sem gerir þetta að verkum. En ég hef nánast fullkomna stjórn yfir þeim málgjörðum sem ég kys að framkvæma til þess að tjá viðhorf mitt gagnvart þessu tré. Þannig get ég auðveldlega sagt ósatt og tilkynnt viðmælanda mínum að ég trúi því ekki að það sé tré fyrir framan mig. Ég get jafnvel logið því sama að sjálfum mér (án þess endilega að trúá sjálfum mér). Aftur á móti geta viðhorf og málgjörðir haft nákvæmlega sama inntakið. Hér er inntakið til dæmis: *að það sé tré fyrir framan mig*. En ég get haft mikla stjórn yfir því hvort ég segi að ég trúi þessu inntaki eða að ég trúi því ekki. Svipað vald hef ég ekki yfir sjálfri skoðun minni; ef ég sé tré þá trúi ég því yfirleitt sjálfkrafa að það sé tré fyrir framan mig.

Hvernig tengist þetta túlkun vísnanna tveggja? Ég vil meina að *lof og vit* (9.3) vísi til hugarástands sem erfitt er að öðlast og er ekki einfalt vildarefni. Til að hafa vit þarf þroska og reynslu (*fjöld um fara, víða rata*, o.s.frv.) og það sama gildir um *lof* í þessu samhengi. Ef *lof* vísar til einberra athafna, þ.e. málgjörða þar sem mælandinn lofar eitthvað, þá er erfitt að skilja hvernig sælan getur verið fólgin í því að *eiga þær sjálfur*. Athafnir eru vildarefni og því á gerandinn þær sjálfur alveg vandræðalaust. Hugsunin á bak við þessar línur er því frekar sú að sælan sé fólgin í því að *hafa sjálfur áreiðanlegar og skynsamlegar skoðanir* um það hvað er best að gera hverju sinni. Aftur á móti vísa *lof og líknstafir*, í 8. vísu, til athafna *annarra*; þ.e. málgjörða formælendanna sem veita hinum sæla meðmæli og góða dóma. Samhengið hefur hér einhver áhrif á túlkun orðanna. Fyrst talað er um

18 Sbr. Elmar Unnsteinsson, *Talking About: An Intentionalist Theory of Reference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), kaflí 3, og Elmar Unnsteinsson, „The Social Epistemology of Introspection,” *Mind and Language* 38 (2023), 925–942.

líkna*stafi* má mögulega skilja *lof* sem mælt mál. Í 9. vísu, hins vegar, má segja að *vit* teygji meiningu orðsins *lofi* átt að hugsun, skynsemi eða viðhorfi.

Samhengi orðs í setningu getur oft verið mikilvæg vísbending um meiningu mælandans. Til að taka einfaldara dæmi má nefna tvær keimlíkar setningar þar sem ein og sama sögnin gegnir mjög ólíku hlutverki.

(1) Lögreglumaðurinn stöðvaði bílinn.

Það er eðlilegt að túlka (1) þannig að löggan hafi gefið bílstjóra merki um að stöðva bíl sinn. En ef mælandinn á í raun við að löggan sé bílstjóri og hafi einfaldlega bremsað, þá verður meining orðsins *stöðvaði* gjörólík.¹⁹ Þessi tiltekna meining er aftur á móti nánast sjálfgefin í samhengi við annan nafnlið, til dæmis *bílstjórinn* í (2).

(2) Bílstjórinn stöðvaði bílinn.

Með öðrum orðum er afar erfitt að túlka (2) þannig að bílstjórinn hafi gefið öðrum bílstjóra merki um að staðnæmast. Þannig má sjá áhrif frumlagsins á það hvernig telst eðlilegast að túlka sögnina *stöðvaði* eða sagnliðinn allan.

Á svipaðan hátt má segja að orðið *vit* geri lofið vitsmunalegt í 9. vísu og að orðið *líkna**stafir* geri lofið að málgjörð. Þetta samræmist álit margra um hlutverk viðskeytisins *-stafir* í þessu samhengi. Ef það bætir einhverju við líknina hlýtur það að hafa að gera með orð og mál manna í milli. Hið sama má segja, til dæmis, um orðið *gamanrúnir* í 120. vísu – sem venjulega er talin til Loddfáfnismála – en þar er sagt að maður skyldi *teygja góðan mann að gamanrúnum*, svo unnt sé að læra af honum galdur. Hér má vel vera að viðskeytið *-rúnir* gegni svipuðu hlutverki. Tilgátan sem ég vil setja fram hér er sú að túlkun fyrri hluta sæluvísna velti á duldum greinarmun á málgjörðum og viðhorfum. Áður en ég fer nánar út í þá tilgátu þarf þó að líta örlítið betur á seinni parta sæluvísna.

IV Þekking og traust

Síðari hlutar vísna beina sjónum að samskiptum okkar við annað fólk. Þessir hlutar geyma mikilvægar vísbendingar um *þekkingarfræði* Gestapáttar því að boðskapurinn virðist snúast um það hvort eða hvernig

19 Dæmið er fengið frá François Recanati, *Truth-Conditional Pragmatics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 41–42.

unnt sé að öðlast þekkingu eða visku af öðrum. Hér mun ég byrja á því að fjalla um síðari hlutana sjálfa, bæði túlkun og túlkunarsögu þeirra, og að lokum setja mína eigin tilgátu í samhengi við það sem áður hefur verið sagt um fyrri hluta sæluvísanna.

8.4–6 Ódælla er við það / er maður eiga skal / annars brjóstum í.

9.4–6 Því að ill ráð / hefir maður oft þegið / annars brjóstum úr.

Fræðimenn virðast nokkuð sammála um að hér kenni Hávamál okkur að gaumgæfa ráðleggingar og orð annarra. Okkur ber að varast trúgirnri enda er áður sagt í línunum 9.1–3 að sælan felist í því að rækta eigin skynsemi svo unnt sé að sækja góð ráð í eigin brjóst (eigin hug). Hingað til hafa álitsgjafar venjulega sagt eða gert ráð fyrir að boðskapurinn í línunum 8.4–6 sé *endurtekinn* í línunum 9.4–6. Stundum er þessi meinta hliðstæða notuð til að auðvelda túlkun á fyrri sæluvísunni því að hún er stundum talin óræð. Sem áður segir taldi Eiríkur Magnússon að skrifa ætti *vit* í stað *við* í línu 8.4, kannski vegna þess að þá yrði hliðstæðan í merkingu enn sterkari.²⁰ Annað dæmi um þessa tilhneigingu má finna í *Lexicon poeticum* Sveinbjarnar Egilssonar. Þar má finna undir flettunni *brjóst* með vísun í sæluvísurnar: „rjóð ór (í) brjóstum annars“, sem gefur í skyn að munurinn á *í* og *úr* sé ekki mikill á þessum stað samkvæmt honum. Guðmundur Finnbogason virðist líka leggja línurnar tvær að jöfnu.²¹ Ursula Dronke greinir reyndar smávægilega merkingarbreytingu og vill meina að munurinn á *í* og *úr* gefi hér í skyn vott af vanþóknun á þeim sem ekki hefur vit til að reiða sig á eigin dómgreind.²² Svo má vel vera. Von See, La Farge og Schulz setja hins vegar fram túlkun sem er í meginatriðum í góðu samræmi við þá sem ég set fram hér á eftir.²³ Þau færa hins vegar ekki rök fyrir túlkuninni og ræða hana vitanlega ekki eins ítarlega og ég geri hér.

Við skulum byrja á að staldra aðeins við fyrri sæluvísu áður en við berum seinni partana tvo saman. Mér vitandi hefur enginn fjallað um mótsagnakennda túlkunarsögu vísupartsins. Í íslenskum útgáfum er afar

20 Eiríkur Magnússon, „First Meeting of the *Cambridge Philological Society*, Michaelmas Term, 1884,“ 25.

21 Guðmundur Finnbogason, „Nokkrar athugasemdir við Hávamál,“ 105.

22 Ursula Dronke, *The Poetic Edda: Mythological Poems II*, 3. bindi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 38.

23 Klaus von See, Beatrice La Farge, Katja Schulz, *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda: Götterlieder*, 1. hluti, 1. bindi (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2019), 518.

sterk hefð fyrir því að skýra orðasambandið *eiga annars brjóstum* í þannig að það merki *eiga undir öðrum*. Hugmyndin er væntanlega sú að línur 8.4–6 þýði að erfiðara sé að vera öðrum háður um *lof og líknstafi* en að geta reitt sig á sjálfan sig um slíkt. Þessi túlkun passar afar illa við það sem kemur á undan, ef túlkun mín hingað til er rétt. Að þessu leyti er ég sammála Guðmundi Finnbogasyni og David Evans. Ef lof og líknstafir eru málgjörðir annarra sem lofa mig og dæma vel, þá er fullljóst að ég er alltaf *óbjákvæmilega* öðrum háður með þessum hætti. Því passar orðið *ódælla* í línu 8.4 illa inn í þessa algengu túlkun.

Þetta er þó alls ekki eina ástæðan til að hafna hinni hefðbundnu skýringu. Að vel athuguðu máli má sjá að orðasambandið *eiga annars brjóstum* í er hvergi til nema í skýringunni. Þetta orðasamband er í raun ekki til staðar í 8. vísu Hávamála og hef ég hvergi fundið dæmi um notkun þess, hvorki fyrir né síðar, í rituðu máli (sjá t.d., Ritmálssafn Orðabókar Háskólans og Dictionary of Old Norse Prose, ONP). Orðasambandið ratar reyndar inn í ýmsar útgáfur *Íslenskrar orðabókar* og er þá merkt *fornt/úrelt*. Skýring orðabókarinnar er þá einmitt sú sama og kemur venjulega fyrir í íslenskum útgáfum af Hávamálum og engu er bætt við.

En hvernig get ég haldið því fram, þótt orðasambandið finnist ekki annars staðar, að það sé ekki einu sinni í Hávamálum sjálfum? Stendur ekki svart á hvítu að eitthvað sé þess eðlis að *maður eiga skal* [það] *annars brjóstum* í? Reyndar ekki, því að sögnin *eiga* stendur hér með orðinu *við* en að öðrum kosti væri örðugt að skilja hlutverk þess síðarnefnda í heildinni. Það er algengt í forn máli að sambandið *eiga við* sé slitið sundur og *við* sett langt á undan sögninni. Í Njálu segir Gunnar á Hlíðarenda: „Við alla vildi eg gott eiga“ (32. kafli). Hér vill Gunnar eiga gott við *alla*. Í Hávamálum er erfitt að eiga við *það* (sem býr) í annars brjóstum. Það má umorða línurnar á ýmsa vegu án þess að bæta við eða eyða orði:

(3) Það er ódælla er maður *eiga skal við* í annars brjóstum.

(4) Ódælla er það er maður *skal eiga við* annars brjóstum í.

Ef þetta er rétt kemur orðasambandið *eiga annars brjóstum* í hvergi fyrir í Hávamálum. Það er hvergi um það rætt að maður *eigi* eitthvað í annars brjósti, heldur að maður *eigi við* eitthvað í annars brjósti. Það er ekki hægt að umorða setninguna, svo vel sé, ef *við* á ekki að vera hluti af *eiga við*. Eina

leiðin til þess er að túlka *við* sem nafnorð og þar kemur sennilega ástæðan sem Eiríkur Magnússon hafði í huga frá upphafi. Hann vildi skrifa *Ódælla er vit það*. Prófum frekar að breyta í *viður sá* því að þannig verður form setningarinnar samkvæmt kenningu Eiríks auðsæilegra:

(5) Ódælli er viður sá er maður eiga skal annars brjóstum í.

Ef *eiga annars brjóstum* í væri fast orðasamband sem merkti *eiga undir öðrum*, þá ætti (5) að vera fullkomlega merkingarbær og skiljanleg setning. Mælandinn meinar þá að erfiður sé sá viður sem maður á undir öðrum því að betra sé að vera sjálfur sér nægur um slíkt. Línur 8.4–6 í sæluvísunum hafa hins vegar annað setningafræðilegt form.

Ef þetta er rétt verður þó að gera ráð fyrir liðfellingu í seinnipartinum, vegna þess að annars þyrfti *eiga við* að vera klofið á milli tveggja setninga.²⁴ En liðfellingin er fullkomlega skiljanleg. Við þurfum að túlka textann með eftirfarandi hætti:

(6) Ódælla er við það [*að eiga*] / er maður eiga skal [*við*] / annars brjóstum í.

Hornklofarnir geyma það sem skáldið fellir niður og ætlar áheyrendum að ráða af samhengi. Erfitt er að sjá hvernig mátt hefði viðhalda bragarhættinum án liðfellingar. Að sama skapi gætum við vel skilið einhvern sem segði, í skáldlegum tóni: *erfiðara er um það, er maður fást skal, annars hugum í*. Annað gott dæmi væri að hafa *amast við* í stað *eiga við*.

Önnur ástæða til að hafna hinni hefðbundnu skýringu er samanburður við seinni hluta 9. vísu. Þar er sagt að maður hafi oft þegið eitthvað *annars brjóstum úr*. Þetta er vísbending um að í hvorugri vísunni sé um *fast orðasamband* að tefla vegna þess að föst orðasambönd eru treg til að hafa semjandi eða samsetjanleika (e. compositionality). Semjandi er sá eiginleiki merkingar stærri orðliða, svo sem setninga, að hún sé ákvörðuð af merkingu þátta sinna og því hvernig þeir eru settir saman. Til dæmis hefur ég fór inn fullkomna semjandi því að merkingin breytist á eðlilegan og fyrir-sjáanlegan hátt ef við skiptum út einum orðlið fyrir annan af sömu tegund: *hún stökk upp*. Aftur á móti eru föst orðasambönd semjandatreg. Við segjum að einhver hafi *tekið djúpt í árinni* án þess að það sé auðvelt að skilja einhvern sem segist hafa *tekið djúpt í hnénu*. Við þurfum að læra merkingu

24 Ég vil þakka ritrýni Griplu fyrir að benda mér á þetta.

fastra orðasambanda beint, hverja fyrir sig, en getum ekki reiknað hana út einfaldlega með því að vita hvað orðin merkja. Það er því líklegt að hvorki *eiga (við eitthvað) annars brjóstum í* né *þiggja annars brjóstum úr* sé fast orðasamband. Hér er lesandanum ætlað að skilja að annars vegar megi *eiga við eitthvað í* huga annars og hins vegar megi *þiggja eitthvað úr* huga annars.

Einhverjum verður sennilega spurn: Hvernig rataði þetta orðasamband, *að eiga annars brjóstum í*, eiginlega inn í skýringar og íslenskar orðabækur? Skásta tilgátan sem ég hef fundið rekur málið aftur til Eiríks Magnússonar, með óbeinum hætti þó. Eiríkur leiddi líkur að því að í Konráðs sögu Keisarasonar mætti finna umorðun á Hávamálum (1884, 25). David Evans segir þetta vera ágætan samanburð og vitnar í sama stað í Konráðs sögu:

[...] þat ræð ek þér, at þú trúir betr þér en honum. Enda segi ek þat, at hallkvæmra þyki mér þér vera þat, er þú berr í brjósti þér, en þat, er hann veit ok þú átt undir honum [...] (Evans, 1986, 79).

Hér er það hallkvæmra, þ.e. nýtilegra, sem maður ber sjálfur í brjósti sér en hitt sem annar veit *og maður á undir honum*. Hér er ólíku saman að jafna. Konráðs saga segir að betra sé að treysta á eigið hyggjuvit en vera undir aðra kominn um þekkingu og góð ráð.

Boðskapur Hávamála í línunum 8.4–6 (*Ódalla er við það / er maður eiga skal / annars brjóstum í*) er ekki alveg svo einfaldur. Meiningin virðist nefnilega vera sú að það sé erfitt að *hafa áhrif á* (eiga við) það sem býr í annars brjóstum. Með þessari túlkun skapast loks samræmi á milli fyrri og seinni parts. Fyrri partur tengir saman sælu og gott orð annarra og seinni partur bendir á að það sé samt erfitt að breyta skoðunum og hugsunum þeirra. Hér er á ferðinni samanburður; það er auðveldara að hafa áhrif á það hvað annað fólk *segir* og erfiðara að breyta því hvað það *hugsar*. Enda segir í 95. vísu, sem þó er ekki í Gestapætti: *hugur einn það veit / er býr hjarta nær*. Sælan felst í því að geta sér góðan orðstír óháð því hvað býr innra með öðrum í leyndum hugarfylgsnum þeirra. Þessi túlkun passar afar vel við almennan boðskap Hávamála og Gestapáttar, sem er alla jafna praktískur og raunsær. Sem áður segir geymir Gestapáttur góð og nytsamleg ráð um það hvernig öðlast megi sæluríkt og ánægjulegt líf. En einföld sérhyggja virðist vera lögð til grundvallar. Til dæmis er mikilvægt að eiga góða vini og hafa þekkingu og vit. Þó er lögð áherslu á að jafnvel vit sé best í hófi. Hér

má sérstaklega nefna vísur 53–56, sem túlka má þannig að best sé að vita hvorki meira né minna en hið sæla líf krefst. Glæðværdin væri þeim utan seilingar sem allt veit og hefur aðeins *snoturs manns hjarta* (v. 55).

Einnig má ræða vísu 45 nánar í þessu samhengi en ég minntist á hana stuttlega hér að framan.

45.

1. Ef þú átt annan
2. þann er þú illa trúir,
3. viltu af honum þó gott geta.
4. Fagurt skaltu við þann mæla
5. en flátt hyggja
6. og gjalda lausung við lygi.

Svipaður er boðskapur 92. vísu, sem býður körlum að mæla fagurt og bjóða fram fé sitt, til að tæla til sín kvenfólk. Í vísunni á undan er gefið berlega í ljós að heiðarleiki er ekkert skilyrði: *Þá vér fegurst mælum / er vér flátt hyggjum, / það tælir horska hugi*. En 92. vísa tilheyrir ekki Gestapætti, heldur vísnað um ástarævintýri Óðins, og má vel leiða að því líkur að nokkur áherslumunur sé á milli þessara þátta. Óháð því er ekki ósennilegt að túlka 45. vísu sem eins konar spegilmynd sæluvísu hinnar fyrri. Ef þú vilt nýta þér kunningsskap þess sem þú treystir ekki skaltu hugsa eitt og segja annað, alveg eins og hann gerir sjálfur. Þú eykur þína eigin sælu ef þú getur af honum lof og líknstafi, jafnvel þótt lofið sé lygi. Boðskapurinn er því að sumu leyti í ætt við stóuspeki fornaldar. Það er best að reyna ekki að hafa áhrif á innstu skoðanir og viðhorf annarra enda er það afar erfitt eða ómögulegt. Orðstír er afar mikilvægur og því er til mikils að vinna ef þér tekst að fá aðra til að veita þér meðmæli sín, jafnvel með óheiðarlegum fagurgala og óháð því hvort þú trúir mælandanum eða ekki. Því skaltu mæla fagurt en hyggja flátt við þá sem þú treystir ekki, ef þú ávinnur þér þannig gott orð.

Seinni partur 9. vísu (*Því að ill ráð / hefir maður oft þegið / annars brjóstum úr*) er auðskiljanlegasti hluti vísnapartsins. Í sem stystu máli er meiningin sú að ráðin sem aðrir gefa séu oft fjarri því að vera góð og þess vegna felist sælan sumpart í því að geta reitt sig á sín eigin meðmæli og sína eigin skynsemi. En túlkunin sem ég hef nú sett fram á 8.4–6 hjálpar okkur

að skilja samhengi línanna betur. Hingað til hafa túlkendur jafnan talið að seinni partur 9. vísu geri lítið annað en að endurtaka það sem áður er sagt í seinni parti þeirrar 8. En af hverju ætti að þurfa slíka endurtekningu? Yfirleitt er endurtekning notuð í fyrri parti vísanna í Hávamálum og svo eru ýmis tilbrigði sett fram sem svar eða niðurlag. Ef túlkun mín er rétt fylgja sælúvísur þessari reglu að nokkru marki sem gerir túlkunina sennilegri. Í 8. vísu er lögð áhersla á tengsl okkar við innri hugarfylgsni annarra og það hversu erfitt er að hafa áhrif á raunverulegar skoðanir þeirra. Í 9. vísu er klykkt út með mikilvægu tilbrigði. Þar er boðskapurinn á þá leið að það sé best að treysta ekki ráðum annarra fullkomlega því að reynslan hefur sýnt að ráðin eru oft ekki traustsins verð.

V Túlkunarlykill og samantekt

Nú væri gott að geta dregið þetta allt saman í einfaldaðri mynd. Sem betur fer má nú hæglega setja fram einfaldan túlkunarlykil til skilnings á sælúvísunum tveimur. Rökleg uppbygging vísanna er nefnilega ströng og hliðstæðurnar býsna sterkar. Fyrri túlkendur hafa tekið eftir þessu, eins og áður er getið, en ekki gengið nógu langt eða ekki borið kennsl á réttar hliðstæður. Ég hef haldið því fram að túlkunarlykilinn felist í tveimur hugtakapörum; *þolanda* og *geranda* annars vegar og *athöfn* og *ástandi* hins vegar. *Hinn sæli* er ávallt miðpunkturinn en hann gerist ýmist *þolandi* eða *gerandi*. Þegar hann er *þolandi* er um athöfn eða málgjörð að ræða en þegar hann er *gerandi* er um ástand eða viðhorf að ræða. Ofan á þessa rökgerð má svo leggja boðskap Gestapáttar um það hvenær má gera ráð fyrir góðum eða slæmum afleiðingum fyrir hið sæluríka líf. Best er að setja þetta fram í töflu:

8.

(A) *Hinn er sæll / er sér um getur / lof og líknstafi.*
= *þolandi, athöfn, gott*

(B) *Ódella er við það / er maður eiga skal / annars brjóstum í.*
= *gerandi, ástand, slæmt*

9.

(A) *Sá er sæll / er sjálfur um á / lof og vit meðan lifir.*
= *gerandi, ástand, gott*

(B) *Því að ill ráð / hefir maður oft þegið / annars brjóstum úr.*
= *þolandi, athöfn, slæmt*

Fyrri hlutarnir segja til um jákvæðar afleiðingar sem hinum sæla hlotnast, sem þolanda athafna annars vegar og sem geranda með ákveðið hugarástand hins vegar. Seinni hlutarnir snúa röðinni við og segja til um neikvæðar afleiðingar. Í fyrri sæluvísu er sá sæll sem þolir jákvæðar málgjörðir annarra en gerir ekki mikið í hugarástandi þeirra. Í þeirri síðari er sá sæll sem gerir vel í krafti eigin hugarástands en forðast neikvæðar málgjörðir annarra.

Það er því engin ástæða til að skilja boðskap sæluvísunnanna sem svo að þeir einir verði sælunnar aðnjótandi sem iðka dyggð eða góðmennsku sem teygi sig út fyrir sérhyggju. Til dæmis virðist hér vera skýr aðgreining á raunverulegum viðhorfum og því sem látið er uppskátt. Því er ljóst að heiðarleiki eða sannsögli eru ekki talin til nauðsynlegra skilyrða sælunnar. Miklu frekar virðast Hávamál boða fagnaðarerindi lygarans; sælan hlotnast þeim sem mæla fagurt en hyggja flátt, en einnig þeim sem geta sér gott orð óháð því hver raunveruleg skoðun mælandans er. Það er vert að minnast á það að þessi túlkun hrynur ekki til grunna þótt kenning mín um seinni hluta fyrri sæluvísu reynist röng. Rök mín væru þá ekki alveg jafn sterk og áður en markverð engu að síður. Það er að segja, jafnvel þótt línur 8.4–6 séu túlkaðar á þann hátt að erfiðara sé að *eiga* eitthvað í huga annarra, þá er túlkunin enn gjaldgeng. Samanburðurinn væri enn á milli þess sem aðrir segja um hinn sæla og þess sem þeir hugsa. Það eina sem hyrfi væri áhersla vísunnar á möguleg *áhrif* hins sæla á viðhorf eða hugsanir annarra.

Líkt og getið var í upphafi vildi ég leitast við að þrengja efnið svo unnt væri að komast að skýrri niðurstöðu um túlkun sæluvísunnanna. Því verki er nú lokið en ég vil ekki skorast undan þeirri ábyrgð að fara nokkrum almennari orðum um samhengi vísunnanna í Hávamálum. Að því er ég best fæ séð er tilgátan um einfalda sérhyggju, í ljósi túlkunar minnar á sæluvísunum, fremur staðfest en hrakin þegar ljóðabálkurinn er skoðaður í heild. Hugum til dæmis að orðinu *sæll* eins og það birtist annars staðar í Hávamálum. Fyrst má geta þess að orðið kemur oft fyrir þegar hinn sæli maður er borinn saman við hinn *vesæla*. Slíkur samanburður er einnig algengur í Íslendingasögum (t.d. 27. kafli Laxdælu). Í 22. vísu er sá sagður *vesall og illa skapi* sem hlær að hvívetna. Í niðurlagi er sagt að slíkur maður ætti að átta sig betur á sínum eigin göllum. Vesældin er þannig fólgin í því að hlæja um of að mistökum annarra og sælan, sennilega, í hinu gagnstæða. Í þessu samhengi er 69. vísa einnig athyglisverð:

69.

1. Er-at maður alls vesall,
2. þótt hann sé illa heill,
3. sumur er af sonum sæll,
4. sumur af frændum,
5. sumur af fé ærnu,
6. sumur af verkum vel.

Hér er boðskapurinn fólgin í ákveðinni fjölhyggju um sæluna. Sælan getur verið fólgin í góðum verkum, en einnig í fjölda sona eða miklu fé. Mér þykir eðlilegt að skilja þetta sem svo að sæla sé hvorki meira né minna en gleði eða ánægja einstaklingsins, þótt hún geti verið bæði hverful og tímabundin. Þá er líka auðvelt að skilja hvernig ríkidæmi, völd og mannaforráð geta aukið sælu. Dyggð, góðmennska eða heiðarleiki virðast ekki vera sérstök skilyrði ánægjunnar. Ef við leyfum okkur að taka dæmi úr öðru eddukvæði, sem þó er ekki endilega samið á sama tíma og Hávamál, væri nærtækt að ræða 16. vísu í *Sigurðarkviðu inni skömmu*. Gunnar Gjúkason reynir að fá Högna bróður sinn í lið með sér til að drepa Sigurð Fáfnisbana að áeggjan konu sinnar, Brynhildar. Til að sannfæra Högna nefnir Gunnar ríkidæmi Sigurðar og lofar honum gulli og grænum skógum:

16.

1. Viltu okkur fylki
2. til fjár véla?
3. Gott er að ráða
4. Rínar málm
5. og unandi
6. auði stýra
7. og sitjandi
8. sælu njóta.

Í þessari vísu kemur vel í ljós að orðið *sæla* hefur ekki, eitt og sér, neina siðferðilega eða dyggðafraðilega skírskotun. Sá er sæll, samkvæmt Gunnari, sem drepur aðra til fjár.

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ÁGRIP

Sæla og óheiðarleiki í Hávamálum: Túlkun og túlkunarsaga 8. og 9. vísu Gestabáttar

Efnisorð: eddukvæði, siðfræði Hávamála, frumspeki og þekkingarfræði Hávamála, túlkun og túlkunarsaga eddukvæða, dyggðasiðfræði, sérhyggja

Margir fræðimenn hafa talið að 8. og 9. vísa Hávamála, sem ég kalla sæluvísur, gefi mikilvægar vísbendingar um siðaboðskap kvæðisins. Þó hefur túlkun og túlkunarsögu þeirra ekki verið nægilegur gaumur gefinn hingað til. Á yfirborðinu virðast sæluvísurnar fremur auðskiljanlegar en oft hefur verið bent á að hefðbundin túlkun þeirra sé afar mótsagnakennd. Í þessari grein nefni ég nokkur dæmi úr þessari túlkunarsögu og færi rök gegn ýmsum óhefðbundnum túlkunum, sérstaklega úr ranni Ivars Lindquist og Guðmundar Finnbogasonar. Ég set fram og færi ítarleg rök fyrir nýrri túlkun. Sú túlkun veltur á kerfi hugtaka – greinarmuninum á *athöfn* og *ástandi* annars vegar og *geranda* og *þolanda* hins vegar – sem varpar nýju ljósi á rökgerð sæluvísanna. Samkvæmt þessum skilningi segir 8. vísa að sá sé sæll sem ávinnur sér meðmæli og gott orð annarra, þótt erfitt sé að breyta raunverulegum skoðunum þeirra. Seinni sæluvísa segir þá að sælan sé fólgin í því að geta reitt sig á sín eigin meðmæli og skynsemi því að ráðgjöf annarra sé oft váleg. Að endingu færi ég rök fyrir því að þessi túlkun gangi gegn þeirri algengu hugmynd að Hávamál geymi dyggðasiðfræðilegan boðskap. Öllu líklegra er að kvæðið boði einfalda sérhyggju sem beinir sjónum að möguleikum fólks til að öðlast sælu eða gleði í hörðum heimi. Merking orðsins *sæla* eða *sæll* gefur enga ástæðu til að lesa annað úr hinum upprunalega texta.

SUMMARY

Sæla and Insincerity in Hávamál: How to Interpret Stanzas 8 and 9 in Gestabáttur

Keywords: Eddic poems, ethics in Hávamál, metaphysics and epistemology in Hávamál, past interpretations of eddic poems, virtue ethics, ethical egoism

Many scholars have assumed that stanzas 8 and 9 in Hávamál, the so-called *sæluvísur*, carry significant information about the poem's ethical message. The history of their interpretation has, however, not so far been afforded due attention. On the surface the *sæluvísur* may appear quite easy to understand; nevertheless, it has often been pointed out that conventional interpretations are riddled with paradox. In this article I take a few illustrative examples from this history and contest a few unconventional interpretations, especially those of Ivar Lindquist and Guðmundur Finnbogason. I also put forward a new interpretation. This

interpretation relies on a system of concepts – especially the distinction between *action* and *state*, and between *agent* and *patient* – which puts the logical form of the two stanzas in a new light. According to this revised interpretation, stanza 8 tells us that being *sæll* (happy) requires praise from others, even if the praise is duplicitous. Basically, we should only try to change what others say about us, not what they really believe, because the latter is too difficult. Stanza 9, on the other hand, tells us that to be *sæll* one must be able to trust one’s own judgement, because the advice given by others can be evil or dangerous. Finally, I argue that this interpretation should make us question the common idea that the ethical message in *Hávamál* is akin to virtue ethics. More likely, the poem affirms ethical egoism and tries to identify ways to experience pleasure or enjoyment in an unfair world. The meaning of the word *sæla* or *sæll*, in and of itself, does not provide a reason to read anything else into the original text.

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GENESIS AND PROVENANCE OF THE OLDEST SOUL-AND-BODY DEBATE IN OLD NORSE TRADITION

The philosophical *disputatio* between two antithetical figures that often confront and find fault with one another on metaphysical matters—such as the tumultuous relationships between vice and virtue, summer and winter, and the soul and the body—enjoyed wide circulation throughout the Middle Ages and inspired the composition of countless Latin and vernacular texts.¹ The oldest known soul-and-body debates are two Latin poems known as *Nuper huiuscemodi* (hereafter, *Nuper*), also known as the *Royal Debate*, and *Visio Philiberti*.² One theory proposes *Nuper huiuscemodi* as the direct source of *Visio Philiberti*, as demonstrated by Eleanor Kellogg Henningham through a lexical analysis of the two texts.³ A second theory views *Nuper* as a sort of imitation of *Visio Philiberti*,⁴ a text that enjoyed a wide circulation, attested by the fact that more than 157 extant manuscripts transmit this text, with a high degree of variation among them. Although a

- 1 On the philosophical *disputatio* as a literary genre, see, for instance, Michel-André Bossy, “Medieval Debates of Body and Soul,” *Comparative Literature* 28.2 (1976): 144–63, at 144. On the variety of its antithetical protagonists, see especially Barbara Pekar, “Discussing Medieval Dialogue between the Soul and the Body and Question of Dualism,” *Ars & Humanitas* 9.2 (2015): 172–99. On the international context of the debate, see Théodor Batiouchkof, “Le débat de l’âme et du corps I–II,” *Romania* 20, 77 and 80 (1891):1–55; 513–78, and Claudio Cataldi, “A Literary History of the ‘Soul and Body’ Theme in Medieval England” (PhD diss., University of Bristol, 2018).
- 2 Alessandra Capozza, “Per una nuova edizione della *Desputisun de l’âme et du corps*” (PhD diss., University of Macerata, 2011), 6–8 (hereafter cited as Capozza).
- 3 Eleanor Kellogg Henningham, ed., *An Early Latin Debate of the Body and Soul, Preserved in MS Royal 7 A III in the British Museum* (New York: published by the author, 1939), 68. The *Nuper huiuscemodi*. London, British Library, Royal 7 A III, fols. 123r–145r will be designated throughout as L.
- 4 George Sanderlin, “Reviewed Work(s): *An Early Latin Debate of the Body and Soul, Preserved in MS Royal 7 A III in the British Museum* by Eleanor Kellogg Heningham,” *Modern Language Notes* 57.3 (1942): 217–19.

reliable critical edition of the *Visio Philiberti* that may elucidate its genesis and early circulation still remains a desideratum,⁵ scholars generally agree that its text was produced in an unidentified English scriptorium.⁶ While the *Visio Philiberti* was translated into numerous European vernacular languages during the Middle Ages,⁷ the sole surviving medieval rendition of the *Nuper* to date is the Old French *Desputisun de l'âme et du corps* (hereafter, *Desputisun*), considered by Henningham as “a free and much abridged translation” of the *Nuper*.⁸ The last editor of the French text, Alessandra Capozza, notes no substantial variation from the main features of the Latin *Nuper* but indicates a simple reorganization of the original material and isolates some new narrative elements in the prologue, such as an abridgment of the *récit* and a transition from third-person narration in *Nuper* to the first person in *Desputisun*.⁹

The *Desputisun* opens with two personifications of an unknown sinner’s soul and body, which appear to an unidentified narrator, on a Saturday night, in a dream vision. The astounded man, who witnesses their dramatic dialogue as a silent spectator, sees the soul of the sinner returning to the body’s burial place and accusing the body of their terrible fate in the afterlife, as a result of a life conducted in sin, which has doomed both of them to the miseries of hell. The soul accuses the body of greed, pride, falsehood, and disobedience. She¹⁰ soon realizes that all the riches accumulated in life have been reduced to dust and that she will be punished by Christ during the Last Judgment for her lack of charity and mercy towards the poor. At the end of her speech, the body rises from his shroud to answer numerous accusations. He stresses how the hellish pains will be

5 Neil Cartlidge, “In the Silence of a Midwinter Night: A Reevaluation of the *Visio Philiberti*,” *Medium Aevum* 75 (2006): 24–45, at 24–25.

6 Cartlidge, “In the Silence,” 26.

7 Cartlidge records translations into English, French, Italian, German, Dutch, Polish, and Medieval Greek as well as an indirect influence on other European vernaculars. See Cartlidge, “In the Silence,” 24 and James Douglas Bruce, “A Contribution to the Study of ‘The Body and the Soul’: Poems in English,” *Modern Language Notes* 5.7 (1890): 193–201, at 200.

8 Henningham, *Early Latin Debate*, 48.

9 Capozza, 35–36.

10 In the following discussion, I will refer to the personifications of the body and soul respectively as masculine and feminine, as is customary in Latin, Old French, and Old Norse, according to these words’ genders in those languages (*corpus*, *cors*, *likam* and *anima*, *âme*, *sál*).

shared by both of them, and while he admits to being the physical agent of sin, he vehemently denies his part as a possible perpetrator of crimes. Subsequently, he draws a parallel between the responsibilities of people's bodies and souls in sinning and the biblical antecedent of Adam and Eve's responsibility in the formation of original sin. The body then builds his defence of contributory guilt and his own condition that is subordinate to the soul, as he acts mechanically. The soul rebuts this defence with a final speech tracing the fundamental arguments of her accusations and reflecting the ontology of evil. The scene ends with the appearance of a devil who announces their condemnation to hell, followed by other devils who, like wolves, pounce on the soul, seizing her and dragging her away while she struggles. Her desperate screams wake up the narrator, thus interrupting his dream.

The text of the *Desputisun* is transmitted in five codices, one of them being now lost: Paris, Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, 3516, fols. 140v–143r, from Saint-Omer, c. 1250–75 (P); Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, 9411–9426, fols. 83v–90r, from Flanders/Northeast Artois/Hainaut, 1230 (B); London, British Library, Cotton Julius A.VII, fols. 72v–77r, from Worcester, c. 1200 (C); London, British Library, Harley 5234, fols. 180r–181v, from Durham, c. 1250 (H); †Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, L.V.32, unknown foliation (†T).¹¹ In turn, the *Desputisun* has served as the direct source of a Castilian translation known as *Disputa del alma y el cuerpo*, which is preserved in a single fragment (Madrid, Biblioteca nacional de España, V.5, núm. 9)¹² and in a Norse version, known as *Viðrøða líkams ok sálar (einn laugardag at kveldi)* [A conversation between body and soul (on Saturday evening)], the subject of this essay. Both texts date back to

11 †T (Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, L.V.32), which was once part of the Savoy royal collection, was lost in a fire at the National Library in Turin in 1904. A partial transcription of the manuscript was made by George-Jean Moucht (1737–1807) in the second half of the eighteenth century. Regrettably, the text of the *Desputisun* was not copied by Moucht, but other texts were. The following are the texts shared with R: *Bible* by Hugues de Berzé; *Voie de Paradis* by Raoul de Houdenc; *Congés* by Jean Bodel; and *Dit du pel, Dit du pélican, Conte du bachelier, Dit du dragon, Dit du Prud'homme, Dit d'envie, Dit d'amour, Dit de la Rose, Dit d'amour fine, Dit de Gentillesse* by Baudouin de Condé. See the discussion in Mauro Braccini, "Unica e esemplari creduti irrecuperabili dopo l'incendio della Biblioteca Nazionale di Torino: Un ulteriore controllo sulla copia settecentesca del cod. L. V.32," *Studi mediolatini e volgari* 47 (2001): 191–204.

12 See Antonio García Solalinde, "La disputa del Alma y el Cuerpo: Comparación con su original francés," *Hispanic Review* 1.3 (1933): 196–207.

the beginning of the thirteenth century. *Viðrøða líkams ok sálar*, edited by Ole Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen (hereafter abbreviated WB),¹³ is transmitted in four manuscripts:

1. Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 619 4to, fols. 75v–78r (N), better known as the *Old Norwegian Homily Book*, written in Bergen between 1200 and 1225, and erroneously rubricated as *Visio sancti Pauli apostoli*.¹⁴
2. Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 764 4to, fols. 30r–v (R¹), often called *Reynistaðarbók*, a large codex that transmits *Veraldar saga* and numerous exempla, transcribed in the Benedictine convent of Reynistaðr (northern Iceland) between 1360 and 1370.¹⁵ The dialogue has no title, but the code transmits a singular attribution of the vision to an otherwise unidentified Auxentius.¹⁶
3. Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 696 XXXII 4to (R²), a fragment most likely also transcribed in the scriptorium of Reynistaðr or the Abbey of Möðruvellir towards the end of the fifteenth century.¹⁷
4. Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, JS 405 8vo, fols. 10r–15v (A), a paper manuscript compiled by

13 Ole Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen, “A Debate of the Body and the Soul in Old Norse Literature,” *Mediaeval Studies* 21 (1959): 272–89, at 278 (hereafter cited as Widding and Bekker-Nielsen).

14 The error made by the scribe causes one to question the knowledge of the *Visio Pauli* in Norway at the beginning of the thirteenth century. See especially Dario Bullitta, ed. and trans., *Páls leizla: The Vision of St. Paul*, Viking Society Texts (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2017), 26.

15 Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, “The Resourceful Scribe: Some Aspects of the Development of *Reynistaðarbók* (AM 764 4to),” in *Modes of Authorship in the Middle Ages*, ed. Slavica Ranković et al., Papers in Mediaeval Studies 22 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2012), 328.

16 The most logical identification would be Auxentius, bishop of Milan (d. 374, Milan), who was later declared a heretic and mentioned in Augustine, *Letter* 238, PL 33:1039a; Augustine was mentioned in the epilogue of the Norse text. However, this attribution seems to be a contradiction since the witness and narrator of this exemplum cannot possibly be a heretic. The most plausible explanation is a scribal error or an incorrect interpretation on the part of the copyist of R¹.

17 Gunnar Harðarson, *Littérature et spiritualité en Scandinavie médiévale: La traduction norroise de De Arria Animae de Hugues de Saint Victor. Étude historique et édition critique*, Bibliotheca Victorina 5 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995).

the farmer Ólafur Jónsson (d. 1800) on the island of Arney (northwestern Iceland) between 1780 and 1790. The text is introduced by a rubric that records another erroneous attribution of the text: “Her Biriast Bernardi Leidsla” (WB 280/382) (Here begins the vision of Bernard).¹⁸

The present essay traces the manuscript filiation and the paths of transmission of *Viðrøða líkams ok sálar*. Through a qualitative analysis of concurrent readings, it has been possible to confirm and expand the stemma hypothesized by Widding and Bekker-Nielsen. Furthermore, from a complete collation of *Viðrøða líkams ok sálar* with variants of the *Desputisun*, the study argues that the presence of readings typical of a so-called “Continental tradition” indicates that the lost manuscript source was a French codex, produced in a Benedictine monastery in Flanders. Subsequently, it was transferred from Flanders to a Norwegian Benedictine monastery, such as Munkeliv in Bergen, via a profitable network that connected Norwegian Benedictine foundations with their Flemish sister houses.

Manuscript Filiation

The relationship between the four manuscripts—**NAR¹R²**—has been studied by Ole Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen, who have postulated the existence of a now-lost archetype of the Norse text, designated in their study by the siglum **Y**.¹⁹ It was soon clear to Widding and Bekker-Nielsen that the *Old Norwegian Homily Book* (**N**) retains the highest stemmatic value within the Norse tradition and that it must be fairly close to the archetype **Y**.²⁰ Two additional branches are derived from **Y**, one which

18 With “Bernard,” the scribe refers to Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153). However, the description that follows does not correspond to the biography of the well-known Cistercian monk. As a matter of fact, the Bernard referred to in **A** is defined on fol. 10r as follows: “Einn Vis oc vellærdr madr Bernhardus ad nafne var i einum Stad á leid á Englande” (WB 280/33–34) (A wise and well-educated man named Bernard was in one location travelling in England). However, this attribution is erroneous: the copist of **A** probably confused the texts of *Nuper* with that of *Visio Philiberti*, which has been often attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux. See the discussion in Jonas Wellendorf, *Kristelig visionslitteratur i norrøn tradition*, Bibliotheca Nordica 1 (Oslo, 2009), 51–42.

19 Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 278.

20 Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 275.

includes only **N**, and **Z**, the common ancestor of the three other Icelandic manuscripts, **405**, **764**, and **696** (see fig. 1).

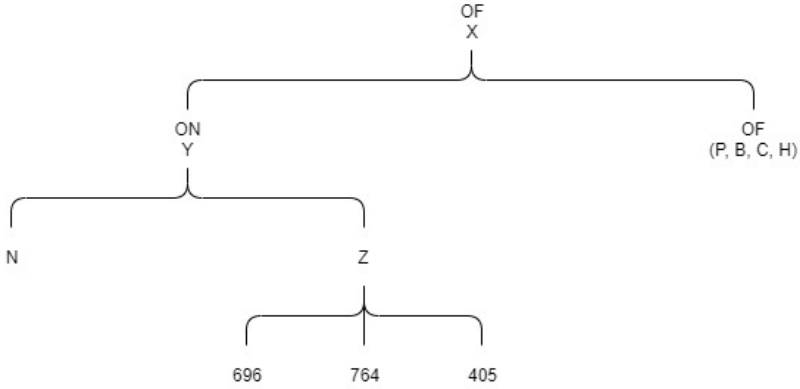


Figure 1. *Stemma codicum of the Viðröðla líkams ok sálar*
(Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen, 278)

The new stemma presented here (fig. 2) partially confirms and partially expands the stemma hypothesized by Widding and Bekker-Nielsen. First, the presence of an archetype **X**, namely, the lost Old French manuscript from which two separate traditions descend, can be confirmed.²¹ The presence of a common archetype **Y** can also be confirmed on the basis of the readings discussed above. Accordingly, **Y** stands behind the four Norse manuscripts, **NAR¹R²**. Two more branches descend from **Y**: a first Norwegian line of transmission that includes **N** alone, and a second Icelandic line, **Z**, characterized by a revision of the original readings of **Y**, from which **AR¹R²** were copied. Furthermore, the presence of **Z₂**, a previously unidentified subarchetype of **Z**, must have given birth to **R¹R²** as evidenced by a number of common errors discussed above.

21 With regard to the direct Old French tradition of the *Desputisun*, Hermann Varnhagen's stemma has been repropoed in the present study without modification in fig. 2. Hermann Varnhagen, *Das altfranzösische Gedicht Un samedi par nuit*, Erlanger Beiträge zur englischen Philologie 1 (Erlangen: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1889), 119. It should be noted that Varnhagen's is still the only stemma available. A new edition and study of the manuscript filiation of the *Desputisun* remains a desideratum.

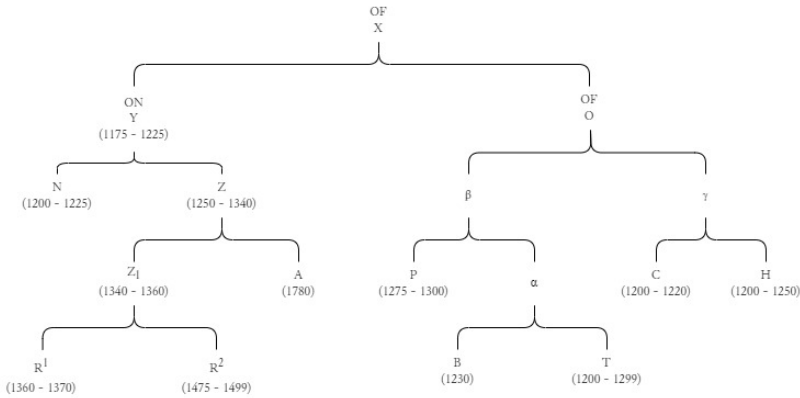


Figure 2. New stemma codicum of the *Vidrøða líkams ok sálar* (by the author)

The high degree of **N**'s formal correctness, compared to the other witnesses, is supported by the presence of only two significant errors, already highlighted by Widding and Bekker-Nielsen.²² The first error is found within the soul's accusation of the body, which is reprimanded for having been an "illr þræll" (evil servant), for not having served her as a "høglect herbyrgie" (comfortable host), and for illegitimately taking control over the soul and thus making her his "ambót" (maidservant). In the corresponding passage of the *Desputisun* in **P**, the body is defined as a "malvais ostal" (evil host), a reading correctly transmitted in **Z₂** (**R¹R²**), where it is rendered by the expression "eligt herbergi" (vile host) and erroneously transcribed as "høglect herbyrgie" (comfortable host) in **N**, possibly through a paleographic confusion of letters. **A** transmits another erroneous reading, "dirdlegt" (honorable), which may have arisen as a semi-synonym of "eligt." In this context "eligt" should be considered the *lectio difficilior*, a rare adjective that is otherwise attested only five times in the records of the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*²³ and that must have been present in the archetype **Y**, subsequently misread in **N** and reinterpreted in **A** (see table 1).

22 Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 277–78.

23 It is attested once in *Spakmáli Prospers "Epigrammata,"* twice in *Stjórn*, and once in the indigenous romance *Viktors saga ok Blávuss*. *ONP: Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, s.v. "éligr, eligr, éligr, eiligr," accessed 15 February 2023, <https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php>.

Table 1.

P (118/163) ²⁴	N (282/11) ²⁵	A (282/43)	R ¹ (282/30)	R ² (282/17)
malvais [evil].	høglect [comfortable].	dírdlegt [honorable].	eligt [vile].	ieligt [vile].

The second significant error is found within the body's speech, in which he admits to behaving "worse than a dog" (eg em verri enn hundr; in R²). The referent for "dog" is attested in all the manuscripts of the Old French tradition (PB and CH), which transmit the noun "chien" (dog); in the *Nuper* with the Latin "cane" (dog); and in Z with the Norse "hundr" (dog). However, N transmits the second-person singular pronoun "þu" (you), a clear paleographic change of the initial letter *h-* to *þ-* and a misreading of the nasal abbreviation of the velar vowel -*ū-* (see table 2). The reading is omitted in R¹.

Table 2.

L (132/686)	P (136/618)	N (286/10)	A (287/28)	R ² (286/32)
cane [dog]. ²⁶	chien [dog].	þu [you].	hundr [dog].	hundr [dog].

Finally, the existence of Y is supported by a non-significant error. In the prologue of *Viðrøða líkams ok sálar*, the narrator reports the dialogue between the soul and the body in his sleep. The Old French tradition specifies the scene with "en mon dormant" (in my sleep), a reading reflected in Z₁ (AR¹R²) as "isuefni" ("in [my] sleep"). N attests a similar, yet not identical, form "i draume" (in [my] dream), which corresponds to the Latin "somnia" in L. The reading "draume" (dream) as semi-synonym of "suefni" (sleep) may have been introduced independently, and its agreement with the Latin text could be coincidental. In this connection, it should be noted that N and Z transmit a dative of place preceded by the preposition *í* (in), as does the Old French text P with

24 All quotations of *Desputisun* are taken from Capozza.

25 All quotations of *Viðrøða líkams ok sálar* are taken from Widding and Bekker-Nielsen.

26 All English translations throughout are my own, unless otherwise specified.

“en” (in), not the accusative preceded by the preposition *per* (**L**), denoting “through” a place, as in the *Nuper* (see table 3). However, this error does not have an indisputable transmission link; since the referents for “sleep” and “dream” are semi-synonyms, the original “sleep” could have been changed into “dream” independently in different traditions. This section of text is missing in **R**².

Table 3.

L (102/7)	P (112/3)	N (280/4)	A (280/34)	R ¹ (280/20)
per somnium [through a dream].	en mon dor- mant [in my sleep].	i draume [in dream].	sem svefn [as sleep].	isuefni [in sleep].

Furthermore, Widding and Bekker-Nielsen provided further evidence in favour of the existence of **Y**. During her speech in the Old French text, the soul stresses her inability to manage the body, in particular in **P**: “refrener” (to curb), “da mal retorner” (to retrieve from evil), “conseiller” (to counsel righteously), and “castier” (to chastise). **N** transmits the verbs “hępta” (to curb) and “fra illu hvęrfa” (to turn from evil), displaying a perfect agreement with “refrener” and “da mal retorner” in **P**. **Z** (**AR**¹**R**²), on the other hand, preserves the verbs “hirta” (to chastise), erroneously interpreted as “hjarta” (heart) in **A** through a paleographic change, and **A** reads “fra illu hverfa” (to turn away from evil), which corresponds perfectly with “da mal retorner” and “castier,” this time mistakenly transcribed by **Z**₂ and transmitted in **R**¹ as “fra villu draga” (to draw from heresy) and in **R**² as “fra villu fęra” (to move away from heresy) (see table 4). According to Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, it is plausible that **Y** included the four Norse verbs that correspond exactly with the Old French text. Subsequently, according to Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, **N** and **Y** may have selected two verbs each, thus omitting the other two.²⁷

27 Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 278.

Table 4.

P (118/183–186)	N (283/3–4)	A (283/35–36)	R ¹ (283/30–31)	R ² (283/17–18)
Ne te poi <i>refrener</i> ne demal retorner, ne te poi conseillier, dolent, ne <u>castier</u> [I cannot curb you, or retrieve you from evil, nor can I counsel, wretched one, or chastise you].	Ec máttu þic æigi <i>hepta</i> oc æigi fra illu hværfa [I was not able to curb you or turn you away from evil].	eg má nú eige þitt hjarta þíða, oc ei frá illu þvi koma edr hverfa [Now I am not able to melt your heart and therefore come or turn away from evil].	ek matta þig eigi <u>hirta</u> ok eigi fra villu draga [I was not able to chas- tise you or draw you away from heresy].	Eg matta þic eigi fra villu færa ok eigi <u>hirtta</u> [I was not able to move away from heresy or chastise you].

Quite trivially, Widding and Bekker-Nielsen exclude the possibility that **A** could represent the Norse archetype.²⁸ Within her speech, the soul compares the body to a “chaisne” (oak) in all of the manuscripts—**PBCH**—of the *Desputisun*, a reading that curiously survives in **A** with the noun “eik” (oak), in contrast to the reading “gron” (pine) in **N** and **R²** (see table 5). However, the agreement of **A** with **PBCH** should not be considered genealogical, since it may well have been introduced independently in **A** at a later stage in order to replace “gron.” Indeed, “eik” is frequently used in poetry and poetic language as a common term for a tree.

Table 5.

P (120/220)	N (283/220)	A (283/44)	R ² (283/25)
chaisne [oak].	gron [pine].	eik [oak].	grein [pine].

28 Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 278.

The Subarchetype Z (AR¹R²)

As already suggested by Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, AR¹R² descend from a common subarchetype designated as Z.²⁹ Through a complete collation of the Norse variants with PBCH, I have been able to isolate all textual variations that separate Z from N, such as frequent trivializations and subsequent additions that testify to the existence of Z.

In view of the ostensible difficulty in interpreting rare or archaic readings of Y (which are preserved in N), Z should be dated approximately between 1250 and 1340–50. The *terminus post quem* could therefore be placed after the production of N, that is, c. 1200–25, while the *terminus ante quem* is provided by the compilation of the oldest Icelandic manuscript R¹, from c. 1360 to 1370. Because of its fragmentary nature, R² does not transmit the same number of readings as the other Norse witnesses. However, due to the close relationship between R¹ and R², when R¹ and A are in agreement, we can be fairly certain that the reading in question was inherited from Z. On the contrary, since R¹ transmits an abridged version of Z characterized by frequent omissions of readings, the variants in agreement between R² and A are used for the reconstruction of Z.

There are two possible cases in which the variants of Z would seem to agree with L and not with PBCH, which in these cases are in agreement with N. However, these two agreements may have arisen independently in Z, and therefore it is not necessary to postulate that Z had knowledge of L. The first variant is found within one of the charges made by the soul against the body. Speaking in the first person, she accuses the body of insincerity towards God and towards herself. N's reading "ne við mik" (not with me) correctly transmits the reading of PBCH "n'envers moi" (not towards me), while Z, "uid men" (with men) is in accordance with L's "hominibus" (with men) (see table 6). However, this reading could be a subsequent error created by Z alone—namely, without having consulted L—and may have arisen through a misreading of the abbreviation *m̄* "mik" (me) with *m̄* "menn" (men).

29 Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 278.

Table 6.

L (105/74)	P (112/26)	N (280/10)	A (280/42)	R ¹ (280/25)
hominibus [with men].	moi [toward me].	mik [with me].	men [with men].	men [with men].

The second case consists of a subsequent addition in **Z** within the body's speech, in which the body compares himself to Adam. While **N** only briefly mentions his name, **Z** adds the Norse formula for *protoplastus* (the first made), "en fyrsti madr" (the first man) in **R²**, a title attributed to Adam also in **L** with "primus hominum" (first of men) (see table 7). However, the presence or absence of a given titulus cannot be considered reliable when critically assessing the text. The reading is omitted in **R¹**.

Table 7.

L (171/1575)	P (136/603)	N (286/8)	R ¹ (286/44)	R ² (286/29)
Adam primus hominum [Adam, first of men].	Adam [Adam].	Adamr [Adam].	Adam hinn fyrste madr [Adam, the first man].	Adam en fyrsti madr [Adam, the first man].

The first case of trivialization is found within the soul's speech, in which she accuses the body of falsehood and of having "gall" in his heart, that is, figuratively being resentful. Here the Norse text demonstrates a typical case of diffraction *in praesentia*:³⁰ the reading transmitted by **N** "gall" (gall) corresponds exactly with the French "fiel" (gall) in **PBCH**, while **A** adds the term "eittr" (poison), and **R¹** transmits this second reading of "eittr." Consequently, **Z** must have contained variants *"gall ok eittr." This section of text is missing in **R²**.

Table 8.

P (116/139)	N (282/7)	A (282/38)	R ² (282/26)
fiel [gall].	gall [gall].	gall oc eittr [gall and poison].	eittr [poison].

30 Gianfranco Contini, *Breviario di ecdotica*, ed. R. Ricciardi (Milan, 1986), 102.

In a following passage, the soul accuses the body of perjury and of not honoring his own oaths. **N** contains the expression “þu for øfdesc eigi æiða” (You did not shy away from your oaths), which represents the sole attestation of the compound verb *forøfa* in the corpus of Old Norse literature and is indicated as a hapax legomenon by the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*.³¹ The reading is then replaced in **Z** with a considerable simplification in **R**¹: “þu fordadiz eigi eida ranga at sueria” (You have not avoided swearing false oaths) (see table 9). This section of text is missing in **R**².

Table 9.

P (116/145)	N (282/8)	A (282/40)	R ¹ (282/27)
doutoies [have fear].	for øfdesc [shy away].	fordadist [have avoided].	fordadiz [have avoided].

Another trivialization is found within the soul’s speech, in which she metaphorically compares the body to a tree and accuses it of tyranny, since it absorbs all the sunlight and leaves the other trees in the shade. The four French manuscripts depict the stern character of the tree with the term “marbre” (marble; in **P**), as customary in the modern French expression “dur comme du marbre,” a metaphor expressed in **N** by the noun “ofriki” (tyranny). **Z** substitutes **Y**’s reading of “ofriki” with **A** and **R**²’s “ofrvexti” (excessive growth), a considerably clearer noun pertaining to the semantic field of the forest but here evoked with its negative sense (see table 10). The reading is omitted in **R**¹.

Table 10.

P (120/228)	N (283/13)	A (283/46)	R ² (283/27)
marbre [marble].	ofriki [tyranny].	ofrvexti [excessive growth].	ofrvexti [excessive growth].

Another trivialization can be found within an admonition of the soul to the body, who is accused of not having created loyal and lasting bonds in life and consequently of not being able to trust the actions of others after

31 ONP, s.v. “for-øfa.”

his death. The temporal clause “eptir hans dag” (after his day, i.e., after his death) in **N** seems to have been misinterpreted in **Z** in Iceland with “góða daga” (good days), possibly because the formula was not widely diffused at the time of its compilation (see table 11). The reading is omitted in **R**¹.

Table 11.

P (124/318)	N (285/6)	A (285/37)	R ² (285/21)
com il est en vie [while he is alive].	eptir hans daga [after his day].	góða daga [when you had good days].	goda daga [good days].

Finally, there is a case in which an archaism is replaced by its more recent and more familiar counterpart. This instance is found in a short narrative interlude in which the soul reacts one last time to the body’s speech. While **N** describes the action with the verb “øymde” (to lament), **Z** employs a semi-synonym “ueina” (to wail) (see table 12). The reading is omitted in **R**².

Table 12.

P (150/967)	N (288/12)	A (288/41)	R ² (288/27)
ert pasmee [faint].	øymde [lament].	veina [wail].	ueina [wail].

Further evidence for the existence of **Z** arises from the numerous additions transmitted in the Icelandic witnesses, which are absent in **N**. The most evident addition consists of an epilogue in which the omniscient narrator intervenes in the first person to define the purpose of this cautionary tale among Christians. Informed of the terrible fate that could await them after death as a consequence of their evil deeds, the audience of **Z** will still have a final chance to conform to the prescribed precepts and reform their lives accordingly (table 13).

Table 13.

A (289/27–37)	R ¹ (289/12–18)
<p>oc með þáð varð skilnadr þeirra slíkr að Sinne, En Drottinn vor synde þessa Syn fyrer vorar Saker, að vier skyldum nockra forsión veita vorum bræðrum af því að oss Stodar ei, þótt vier kennum Sálunum völd af gierda vorra, Líkamer Sálunum oc Sálur Líkōmunum, þvíad eingin völd meigum vier kenna Skapara vorum, er hann hefur á þessa lund mælt við oss, sem hann mælte fyrr við Adam þá er han hafde Skapad hann oc alla Skepnuna, aller hlutir eru fyrer þínar Saker giörfer, Dæðin fyrer óhlíðne, en Líf fyrer Hlíðne, Slíkt hid sama hefur hann oss og gefid sem Adam vit oc s(k)ilning að fordast Dæðann fyrer óhlíðne, enn finna Eilíft líf fyrir varðveislu Guds Heilagra Bo-dorda oc hlióta so með Gudi Dird oc sælu án enda, hvöria að sönnu veiti hann oss með Syninum oc Heilögum Anda, Amen.</p> <p>[And with it (i.e., the devils dragging away the soul), their separation occurred at once. And Our Lord showed us this vision for our benefit, so that we may show this foresight to our brethren, for it would not be useful to us—although we know the consequences of our misdeeds on our souls, the bodies on the souls, and the souls on the bodies—not to recognize any powers in our creator. And he has spoken to us in such a way, when he did speak to Adam when he had created him and all creatures: “All things are made for you: death for disobedience and life for obedience.” In that same way, as he did with Adam, he has given us wisdom and reason in order to avoid death because of disobedience and to find everlasting life because of the keeping of God’s holy commandments and to obtain God’s glory and bliss without end, which he truly grants us through the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen].</p>	<p>ok uard skilnadr þeirra slíkr. en drottinn seger augustinus byskup syndi uitran þessa firi uarar saker at uer skilldum nuckura for-sio ueita bræðrum uorum. þa er gud hafdi skapat adam mælti hann sva se her adam lif þat er þer er hugat firi hlydni. se her ok dauða þann er þer er hugadr firi uhlydni sva id sama hefir drottinn uid oss mællt þvíat uit ok skilning hefir hann oss lied at gera gott en sia uid illu ladi sa oss til eilifrar dyrþar er ollum er betri ok ædri ok lifir einn gud iþreningu utan ennda amen.</p> <p>[And their separation occurred at once. “And the Lord,” says Bishop Augustine, “showed us this vision for our benefit, so that we may show this foresight to our brethren. When God created Adam, he said this: “Here is that life, Adam, which is provided for you for obedience. And here is also that death which is provided for you for disobedience.” In the same way, the Lord spoke to us because he has given us wisdom and reason in order to do good but guarded us against evil. He invites us to the everlasting glory where everything is better and more sublime and one God lives in the Trinity without end. Amen].</p>

The presence of such additions could be motivated by a wish to clarify otherwise obscure concepts or terms on the part of **Z**. During his speech, the body claims to have been created from mud in order to become a host for the soul. **N** transmits the noun “moldo” (nom. mold = soil/dust/mud), to which **Z** adds “jordu” (nom. jorð = earth), thus creating a synonymous couplet which, as is well-known, was one of the most common translation strategies throughout the Middle Ages (table 14).³² The reading is omitted in **R**¹.

Table 14.

P (136/632)	N (286/13)	A (287/19)	R ² (287/32–33)
terre [earth].	moldo [dust].	iördu ... oc moldu [earth and dust].	jordu... ok moldu [earth and dust].

In other cases, the additions are employed to further dramatize the narrative and obtain a greater emotional response on the part of the audience. For instance, in **N** the soul claims that after one’s death the relatives greedily take possession of the deceased’s inheritance in order to lead a life of excess at his/her expense. In this passage, **Z** adds that the deceased in question, whose goods was taken by his/her greedy relatives, will fall into oblivion “en minnaz þin alldri” (They will never remember you) (table 15). This section of text is missing in **R**².

Table 15.

P (116/99–101)	N (281/12–13)	A (281/43–44)	R ¹ (281/27–28)
tot cil qui l’ont ravi, ti parent, ti ami, en feront mais lor preu [All of those who have robbed him—your relatives, your friends—will make this their own profit].	þeir aller er tækit hafa þeir muno gera sér gaman af [All of those who have taken will rejoice].	þeir muna giöra sier gamn af þinum aðæfum; enn minnast þo þin aldre [They will enjoy your wealth, and yet they will never remember you].	þeir allir er tekid hafa þina penga munu gera ser af gaman en minnaz þin alldri [All of those who took your money will rejoice, but they will never re- member you].

32 See, for example, the discussion in Brenda Hosington, “Henry Watson, ‘Apprentyse of London’ and ‘Translatoure’ of Romance and Satire,” in *The Medieval Translator: Traduire au Moyen Age*, ed. J. Jenkins and O. Bertrand, Medieval Translator 10 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 13.

During his speech, the body accuses the soul of having tempted him, of leading him on the path of evil, and subsequently of cursing him. In **Z**, the body further specifies that the soul would have precluded both “sannendum ok eilifri sámd” (the truth and joys of eternal life) due to her evil behaviour (table 16). The reading is omitted in **R**¹.

Table 16.

P (136/599–600)	N (286/9)	A (286–87/45–32)	R ² (286/20–23)
ensement feis tu, maldite soies tu [Just as you do, may you be cursed].	sva æggiaðer þu mik. blotað værð þu [As you tempt- ed me, curse you].	So munde oc ei heldr afskeidis geingid hafa ráð mitt, ef ei hefde ollad Eggiun þín, oc Bölvud siertu, er fyrer mig svo öllum sannindum oc eilifre sámd tapad hefr [That is how my advice would have worked out, if it had not been for all your incitement. And be cursed! Since for me all truth and eternal joy have been lost].	Sva ok mundi eigi afskeidis ganga ráð mitt ef eigi ylli eggian þín. Bauluod sier þu er þu firrer mic sannendum ok eilifri sámd [<i>sic</i>] [That is how my advice would have worked out, if it had not been for all your evil incite- ment. Curse you! Since for me truth and eternal joy (...)].

In another reading, **Z** adds a formula in which it is specified that God knows everyone’s thoughts and actions, perceiving “hugt ok ohugt gort ok ogort” (the thought and the unthought, the done and the undone). It should also be noted that the adjective “óhugðr” in **Z**—then transmitted to **R**¹ as “ohugt” and with the variant “óhugsad” in **A**—is registered as a hapax legomenon in the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* (see table 17).³³ This section of text is missing in **R**².

33 *ONP*, s.v. “ó-hugsaðr.”

Table 17.

P (146/869–70)	N (288/5)	A (288/32–33)	R ¹ (288/23)
li rois Deus seu- lement en sat le iugement [Only God the King knows the judgment].	en guð hann væit þat væl [But God knows that well].	Gud er sá er veit hugsad oc óhugsad, giört oc ógiört [God is the one who knows the thought and the unthought, the done and the un- done].	Gud sa er ueit hugt ok ohugt gort ok ogort [That God is the one who knows the thought and the unthought, the done and the undone].

Another addition attributed to **Z** can be found within the soul's speech, when she evokes the rhetorical question of the so-called *ubi sunt*, in which she asks the body about the fate of all the goods collected throughout his life, listing them: money, silver chalices, cloaks and other robes, and horses donated by kings and by various earls. **Z** adds "haukar" (hawks) to the list of noble gifts. Moreover, there are secondary insertions possibly derived from an intermediate reading, such as "gersimar" (treasures) in **R**¹ and "gimsteinar" (precious gems) in **A**, as well as independent additions such as "gull ker" (golden goblets), which in **A** are coupled with the silver ones. Precious gems are also mentioned in **L**, where the *enumeratio* is considerably larger, resembling hyperbole. With regard to money, while **N** simply describes the habit of "iðulega at tælia" (counting it frequently), **Z** mentions the illicit practice of usury on the part of the body, which was accustomed "at uedia af oþrum" (to lay a wager on another) (see table 18). This section of text is missing in **R**².

Table 18.

P (114/65–80)	N (281/6–9)	A (281/37–40)	R ¹ (281/23–26)
<p>ou sont or li denier que tant avoies chier, que soloies nombrer et tant sovent conter? Et u sont li vaiscel qui tant estoient bel et les copes d'argent a boire le pieument? U sont li bon mantel, li boton e[t] tassel et le vair et le gris et le porpre et le bis? U sont li parlefroi que li conte et li roi te soloient doner por menceignes conter? [Now where are the coins that were so dear to you, which you were accustomed to col- lect and so frequently count? Where are the vessels that looked so beautiful and the silver cups for drinking spiced wine? Where are the fine cloaks, the buttons and buckles and white squirrel fur and gray squirrel fur and crimson and fine linen? Where are the palfreys that earls and kings used to give you as gifts in order to teach me how to count?]</p>	<p>hvar ero nu penningar þinir þeir er þér þóttu iam góðer er þu vart vánr at samca oc iðu- lega at tælia. Hvar ero nu silf kær þæu er þér þotto sva fóggr. Hvar ero scickior þinar oc onnur clæðe. Hvar ero nu hæstar þæir er konongar oc iarlar hofðu gefet þer [Now where are your coins that seemed so good to you, which you were accustomed to collect and fre- quently count? Now where are the silver goblets that seemed so fine to you? Where are your coats and the other clothes? Now where are those hors- es that kings and earls had given to you?]</p>	<p>hvar eru nú peningar þiner er þier þóttu góðer, oc þu varst vanrr ad safna samann oc ad vedia af öðrum mönnum. Hvar er nú silfr gull góts oc gull ker, edr gimsteinar Hestar edr Hakar, er Kóngar gáfu þier, oc Iarlar [Now where are your coins that seemed good to you and that you were accustomed to collect and fre- quently count and lay a wager on other men? Now where are the silver and gold goods, and the gold goblets and the precious stones, the horses and hawks that kings and earls gave you?]</p>	<p>hvar ero nv pengar þiner þeir er þer þottu goder ok uart iafnan uanr at safna saman iduliga telia ok uedia af ofþrum. hvar ero silfr ker þin ok gersimar hestar þiner eda haukar er kongar gafu þer eda jarlar eda adrer tigner menn [Now where are your coins that always seemed so good to you that you were accustomed to collect and frequently count to lay a wager on oth- ers? Now where are your silver goblets and treasures, your horses and hawks that kings and earls and other worthy men gave you?]</p>

Subsequently, within the soul's speech, she accuses the body of having made her his "ambót" (maidservant; in **N**). **Z** adds a temporal range of the action, with "ath vpp hafi" (in the beginning), which is absent in **N**. **Z** subsequently misreads the following causal clause "en þu hefir" (but you have), most likely through the metathesis of the pronoun "þu" with the preposition "up" (table 19).

Table 19.

P (118/170)	N (282/13)	A (282/45–46)	R ¹ (282/31–32)	R ² (282/17–18)
tu me fesis ancele [You made me a maid- servant].	en þu hefir gorfa mic at ambót [You made me a maid- servant].	enn þu hefr mig ambátt giört [but you made me a maidser- vant].	en þu hefir mig illa ambátt gort [but you made me an evil maidservant].	en þu hefer illa ambatt gert [but you made me an evil maidservant].

Another significant error in **Z** is an anticipation. In **N**, the soul accuses the body of never having done anything that was "er mér være til gagns" (that would be of benefit for me), a passage that in **Z** is substituted with the unfulfilment of "guds vilia" (God's will). The *nomen sacrum* "God" is found in the next sentence; therefore, it is plausible that the copyist anticipated it in his transcription, juxtaposing it with "vilia" and thus obtaining a very common sacred expression (table 20). This section of text is missing in **R²**.

Table 20.

P (112/24)	N (280/9)	A (280/41)	R ¹ (280/24)
qui me tornast a bien [that turned out well for me].	er mér være til gagns [that would be of benefit for me].	Guds vilia [God's will]	guds uilia [God's will].

Moreover, two further paleographic changes that compelled the copyist of **Z** to edit the sentences for the sake of clarity are particularly significant. The first case can be found within the soul's speech, in which she emphasizes the body's abandonment of home and family and the inability of the family to come to his aid. The original pronoun "þér" seems to have

facilitated a paleographic change in **Z**, where the erroneous reading of *þ-/h-* resulted in the introduction of the adverb “hér” (here). The formation of this error subsequently produced the deletion of the next reading “eptir þic” (behind you) in **Z**, which in the new context could hardly have made sense. The reading in **Z**, “You have left your home and family here,” thus acquires a new meaning and a substantial divergence of perspective (see table 21). The reading is omitted in **R**¹.

Table 21.

P (122/278–80)	N (284/13)	A (284/44)	R ² (284/29)
ta posession [your property].	þér [to you].	hér [here].	hier [here].

The second occurrence is also found within the soul’s speech, where she claims that during the body’s life—as long as he was in good health—he was esteemed by many, while after his death, he fell into oblivion. **N** describes the previous condition of the body with the adjective “hæil” (whole/healthy), which in **Z** is misread as “heime” (world) due to another paleographic change of the letters *l-/m-*. This new noun induced **Z** to add the preposition *i* to govern the dative of place, “i Heime” (in the world), thus resulting in a meaningful sentence, although one significantly different from the original reading (table 22). The reading is omitted in **R**¹.

Table 22.

P (126/357)	N (285/13)	A (285/42–43)	R ² (285/28)
bel [fair]	hæil [healthy]	i Heime [in the world]	j heime [in the world]

Another error that may be attributed to **Z** is found within the description of the soul in the prologue. In **N**, which transmits the original reading, the soul appears “grǫn sem graslaucr” (green as a chive). **Z** replaces this with the colour “gulr” (yellow).³⁴ **R**¹ is further corrupted; in fact, the

34 The colours of the soul clearly have a symbolic value. The green colour transmitted in **PBCH** and **N**, according to Michel Pastoureau, may represent the vice of avarice, madness, and disorder, which indeed coincide with the soul’s charges against the body. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, the yellow-green (yellow-lemon) colour began to assume a nega-

term “graslaucr” (chive) is erroneously transcribed as “gras maþkr” (grass worm), which appears to represent a hapax legomenon (see table 23).³⁵ This section of text is missing in **R**².

Table 23.

P (109/16)	N (280/7)	A (280/39)	R ¹ (280/22–23)
verde comme chive [green as chives].	grø̃n sem gras- laucr [as green as a chive].	sem guler graslakar [like yellow chives].	sem gras maþkr gulr [like a yellow grass worm].

Within her speech, the soul accuses the body of laziness. In **N**, the accusation is introduced by the expression “þvi segi ec þér” (therefore I say to you), while **Z** transmits the reading “víst segi þier” (truly, I say unto you), a common solemn expression of affirmation echoing the Gospels (see table 24). The reading is omitted in **R**¹.

Table 24.

P (120/203)	N (283/8)	A (283/40–41)	R ² (283/22)
Por ce te di [For this I tell you].	þvi segi ec þér [therefore I say to you]	víst sege eg þier [Truly, I say unto you].	víst segi þier [Truly, I say unto you].

In addition to the errors above, several variants concurrently support the existence of **Z**. For example, whereas **N** employs “dioflinom” (the devil), **Z** chooses “fiandanum” (the enemy) (table 25). This section of text is missing in **R**².

tive value and was thus substituted for the green in connection with the aforementioned vices—to which envy and betrayal were added—along with other charges made by the soul. In particular, in the visual arts, yellow is one of the colours used to represent Judas’s garments, to which the body in our text is compared. See Michel Pastoureau, *Figures et couleurs* (Paris, 1986), 40–42.

35 *ONP*, s.v. “gras-maðkr.”

Table 25.

P (116/123)	N (282/3)	A (282/35)	R ² (282/22)
deable [devil].	dioflinom [devil].	fiandanum [enemy].	fiannданum [enemy].

The Subarchetype Z₁ (R¹R²)

As mentioned above, Widding and Bekker-Nielsen suspected the existence of a subarchetype Z, ancestor of the three Icelandic manuscripts AR¹R². However, based on an analysis of the significant errors, another previously unidentified subarchetype—here designated as Z₁—seems to precede R¹ and R².

The first error is a case of embellishment in Z₁. In her speech, the soul accuses the body of having been a traitor, second only to Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Lord. The original reading “svæic” (betrayed), transmitted in N and A, is corrupted in Z₁ with the verb “selldi” (sold), a New Testament echo of Judas’s vile delivery of Christ to the crowd sent by the high priests and scribes,³⁶ which replaces the well-known betrayal by Judas in Gethsemane (see table 26).³⁷

36 See, for example, Mc 14,10–11: “Et Judas Scariotis unus de duodecim abiit ad summos sacerdotes ut proderet eum illis qui audientes gavisi sunt et promiserunt ei pecuniam se daturus et quaerebat quomodo illum oportune traderet” [And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests, to betray him to them. Who hearing it were glad; and they promised him they would give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him]. Mt 26,15: “Et ait illis quid vultis mihi dare et ego vobis eum tradam at illi constituerunt ei triginta argenteos” [And said to them: What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you? But they appointed him thirty pieces of silver]. All quotations from the Vulgate are taken from *Biblia sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, ed. Robert Weber et al. (1969; 5th ed., rev. 2007). All English translations of the Latin text are taken from the Douay–Rheims Bible, available at <http://drbo.org>.

37 Mc 14,43–46: “Et adhuc eo loquente venit Judas Scarioth unus ex duodecim et cum illo turba cum gladiis et lignis a summis sacerdotibus et a scribis et a senioribus. Dederat autem traditor eius signum eis dicens quemcumque osculatus fuero ipse est tenete eum et ducite et cum venisset statim accedens ad eum ait rabbi et osculatus est eum at illi manus iniecerunt in eum et tenuerunt eum” [And while he was yet speaking, cometh Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve: and with him a multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the ancients. And he that betrayed him, had given them a sign, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he; lay hold on him, and lead him away. And when he was

Table 26.

P (118/154)	N (282/9)	A (282/41)	R ¹ (282/28)	R ² (282/15)
mort [death].	svæic [betrayed].	sveik [betrayed].	selldi [sold].	selldi [sold].

Later, within her speech, the soul laments the insubordination of the body to herself. The modal verb “scyldir” (you should have), used in **N** and **A**, is replaced in **Z₁** by another modal, “ættir” (you may have), with a similar meaning (table 27).

Table 27.

P (118/173)	N (183/2)	A (282/46)	R ¹ (282/32)	R ² (282/19)
services moi [have served].	scyldir [should].	skylder [should].	ættir [may].	ættir [may].

The existence of **Z₁** is further corroborated by the charge of the soul against the body of having been enslaved by him. In **Z₁**, the reading is strengthened by the addition of the adjective “illa” (evil), an anticipation then transmitted in **R¹** and **R²** in the reading “illr þræll” (bad slave), as demonstrated in the sentence in table 28.

Table 28.

P (118/170)	N (282/13)	A (282/45–46)	R ¹ (282/31–32)	R ² (282/17–18)
tu me fesis ancele [You made me a maid- servant].	en þu hefir gorfa mic at ambót [You have made me a maidservant].	enn þu hefir mig ambátt giört [but you have made me a maidservant].	en þu hefir mig illa am- bátt gort [but you have made me an evil maidservant].	en þu hefir illa ambátt gert [but you have made an evil maidservant].

Another error is found within the soul’s speech. As seen above, the soul stresses her inability to manage the body, in particular “fra illu hværfa”

come, immediately going up to him, he saith: Rabbi; and he kissed him. But they laid hands on him, and held him.]

to turn away from evil; in **N** and **A**.³⁸ However, **Z**₁ misunderstands the reading as “fra uillu draga” (draw from heresy) (table 29).

Table 29.

P (118/184)	N (283/4)	A (283/35)	R ¹ (283/31)	R ² (283/18)
demal [evil].	illu [evil].	Illu [evil].	uillu [heresy].	villu [heresy].

Finally, there is a further addition within the speech of the soul, when she is accusing the body of causing her to lose the wealth of heaven due to his own misdeeds. In **Z**₁, the sentence is introduced by the conjunction “þviat” (because), which is otherwise absent in **N** and **A** (table 30).

Table 30.

P (118/159–62)	N (282/10–11)	A (282/42–43)	R ¹ (282/29–30)	R ² (282/16)
por la toie posnee sui dolante esgaree, por ta her- bergerie pert io durable vie [Because of your arrogance, I wander pain- fully through your abode; I lose the ever- lasting life].	fyrir þinar mis- gerningar missi ec himinrikis vist [Due to your misdeeds, I lose the abode of heaven].	þar fyrer brenn eg nú Sárt, Fyrer þinar saker misse eg nú Himnaríkis vistar [Therefore, I now painfully burn in the flames; because of you, I lose the abodes of heaven].	þviat firi þinar sakir missi ek nu himinrikis uistar [Because of your fault, I now lose the abodes of heaven].	þviat firi þinar saker misse eg himinrikis vistar [Because of your fault, I lose the abodes of heaven].

38 This is a clear biblical echo to Ps 33,15: “Deverte a malo et fac bonum inquire pacem et persequere eam” [Turn away from evil and do good: seek peace, and pursue it]; and I Pt 3,11: “Declinet autem a malo et faciat bonum inquirat pacem et persequatur eam” [Let him turn away from evil and do good: let him seek peace and pursue it].

The Old French Source Text

According to Henningham—who was responsible for the discovery of the *Nuper* and the first study of its relationships with the *Desputisun—Viðrøða líkams ok sálar*, as transmitted in **N**, represents either a shortened vulgarization of a now-lost version of the *Nuper* or a hybrid version formed by a conflation of readings of the Latin and French texts.³⁹ Widding and Bekker-Nielsen later speculated that the Norse text may be a direct translation a now-lost French *Vorlage*, which presented a significantly reduced text compared to **PBCH**, with which the now-lost French text shared numerous readings and from which the Norse text diverges through the addition of sporadic innovations,⁴⁰ such as the explanatory clause “þat cællum vér vatncalf” (that we call water-calf) to clarify the adjective “idropicus” (hydropic) (table 31).⁴¹

Table 31.

P (112/33–36)	N (280/13–14)
com a l'idropicus, tant com il en boit plus et il gregnor soif a ia saous ne sera [Like the hydropic, the more he drinks and the bigger his thirst, he will never be satisfied].	þat heitir idropicus. þat cællum vér vatncalf. þess mæir er hinn dræcr er þa sott hefir. þes mæir þystir hann. oc værðr aldri fullr [That is called hydropic. We call that water-calf. The more the one who has this disease drinks, the more he is thirsty and never full].

³⁹ Henningham, *Early Latin Debate*, 62–67.

⁴⁰ Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 273–89. Stefka Georgieva Eriksen recently has endorsed Widding and Bekker-Nielsen's hypothesis without, however, providing new textual evidence in their favour. Stefka Georgieva Eriksen, “Body and Soul in Old Norse Culture,” *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Scandinavia c. 1100–1350*, ed. Eriksen, *Disputatio* 28 (Turnhout: Brepols 2016), 393–428.

⁴¹ The compound *vatnkalf* has only four attestations in the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* (ONP, s.v. “vatn·kalf”) and is in all probability a calque from Old High German *waz-zarkalb* (hydropsy), which is also attested in the form *wassersucht* (hydropsy). See Ingjald Reichborn-Kjennerud, “The School of Salerno and Surgery in the North during the Saga Age,” *Annals of Medical History* 9 (1937): 321–37, at 334 n. 17.

From a preliminary collation of variants, it soon becomes evident that *Viðrǫða líkams ok sálar* preserves numerous idiosyncrasies typical of the Old French tradition. Proof of such dependence is found in two typical additions from the *Desputisun* that made their way into **N** and are completely absent in the *Nuper*. In the first insertion typical of the prologues of the French and Norse texts, the soul is described by the narrator as having a dull green colour, “verde comme chive” (green as chives). This reading, absent in **L**, is instead extant in **N**, where the simile is expressed with an equivalent for “graslaucr” (chive) (table 32).

Table 32.

L (103/21–24)	P (112/13–18)	N (280/7–8)
stensisque luminibus ad corpus & manibus. Inter crebros gemitus his est usa uocibus [With light standing near the body and hands, she used these words among frequent groans].	de petite figure ert cele creature et estoit, la chaitive, si verde comme chive . Del cors se complaignoit [That creature was small in shape and she, the wretch, was as green as chives. She was com- plaining about the body].	oc var sú hin auma grǫn sem graslaucr . oc henne hermdisc við licamenom oc blotaðe honum oc sagðe [And the wretched (soul) was green like a chive. And she was bothered by the body and cursed him and spoke].

Later, during her speech, the soul resorts to the rhetorical question of the *ubi sunt*, in which she lists the material goods accumulated by the living person throughout his life, which were then lost at the time of his passing. The first good is money: **PB** refer to “tant ... sovent conter” (the habit of counting money), a reading that is transmitted in **B** as “usure testoit biele” (usury) (table 33). The reading is absent in **L**.

Table 33.

L (113/241–42)	P (114/65–68)	N (281/6–7)
ubi multifaria tua nunc eraria [Where is your abundant money now?]	ou sont or li denier que tant avoies chier, que soloies nombrer et tant sovent conter? [Where are your coins now, those that you loved so much, which you were accustomed to gather and frequently count?]	Hvar ero nu þenningar þinir þeir er þér þóttu iam góðer er þu vart vánr at samca oc iðulega at tælia [Where are your coins now, those that seemed so good to you, which you were accustomed to gath- er and frequently count?]

In addition to these, the French provenance of *Viðröðla líkams ok sálar* is supported in **N** not only by a very literal translation of the *Desputisun* but also by the very same word order. Given the large number of instances, it is sufficient to refer here to one example that was already noted in Widding and Bekker-Nielsen.⁴² During her speech, the soul describes the condition of the body *post mortem*, which, because of the wickedness of his actions, is isolated from the world of the living and suffers the pains of a life of sin. Through a sentence formed by an adjective, verb, demonstrative pronoun, and noun, the text in **P** expresses “malvais ert li presens” (Bad are those offerings), rendered in **N** as “óleg er su fórn” (Bad is this offering) (table 34). The latter construction of **N** may have been perceived as obscure in the following Icelandic transmission, both because “óleg” is registered as a hapax legomenon in the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*,⁴³ and the entire reading is completely omitted in **Z**.

The Flemish Redaction

The first scholar to investigate the manuscript tradition of the *Desputisun* was Hermann Varnhagen, the only scholar to have prepared a *stemma codicum* of the French text.⁴⁴ Varnhagen hypothesizes a common archetype, identified as **O**, from which two separate branches originate:

42 Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 276.

43 *ONP*, s.v. “ó-ligr.”

44 Varnhagen, *Das altfranzösische Gedicht*, 113–87.

a first subarchetype β , from which **PBT** are derived. Since **BT** share some common errors absent in **P**, Varnhagen postulated the presence of a common ancestor α shared by **BT**. The other subarchetype from which **CH** are derived is indicated in Varnhagen’s stemma by the siglum γ .

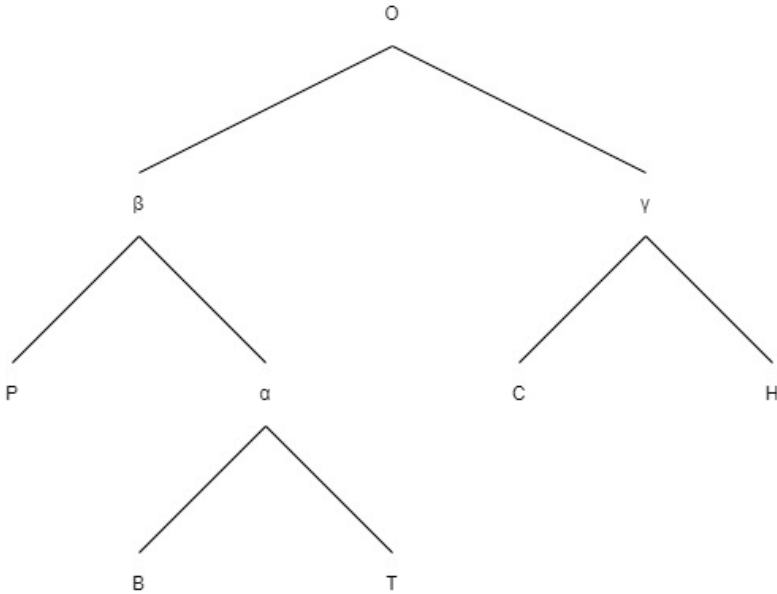


Figure 3. *Stemma codicum of Desputisun de l’âme et du corps* by Hermann Varnhagen (1889)

As mentioned at the beginning, **P** derives from Saint-Omer (c. 1250–75), **B** from the Flanders/Artois/Hainault region (c. 1230), **C** from Worcester (c. 1200), and **H** from Durham (c. 1250); basing her study on Varnhagen’s stemma and confirming his assessment of the manuscripts’ filiation, Capozza labels γ , along with its descendants **CH**, an “Insular” tradition and defines β , along with **PB**, a “Continental” one.⁴⁵ The latter must have also included [†]**T**, which, based on an analysis of the shared texts, must have been fairly close to **B** and was possibly even produced in the same Hainaut/Artois scriptorium. β is characterized by the inclusion of

45 Capozza, 96.

a “Continental” epilogue, which is entirely absent in γ . This includes a final response of the soul, in which she addresses directly to God some theological questions concerning predestination to sin and humans’ moral and spiritual weakness. The soul is well aware that she no longer has access to redemption or to the intercession of the angels. During her speech, some devils arrive and predict her condemnation to hell, and they assault her like hungry wolves grabbing a lamb that is being dismembered, carrying her away amid desperate screams. The cries of the soul awaken the narrator from his sleep and interrupt his dream vision. **N** preserves much of the Continental epilogue, as shown by the collations available in the appendix. However, it should be noted that the Norse text abridges the Continental text, most notably omitting (1) the soul’s unheard cry for help to the angels; (2) the devils’ speech issuing the soul’s condemnation; and (3) the awakening of the narrator.⁴⁶ The dependence of **N** on the Continental tradition is supported by the readings of **N**, which—in addition to agreeing with **PB** throughout the text—are reflected in **P** and **B** individually when one of the two is corrupt. Given the high stemmatic value of **P** within the Continental branch, it has been chosen as the base text with which to collate the readings of the Norse text. Alternatively, the readings of **B** are chosen when **P** is clearly corrupt or incomplete and the readings of **B** are supported by **L**.

One of the rare corruptions in **P** is represented by an erroneous reading within the typological description of the body as a second Adam and the soul as the synthesis of Eve and the serpent of Eden. While the reading of **B** “serpent” (serpent) is supported by **L** “serpens” (serpent) and corresponds with **N** “ormr” (serpent), **P** transcribes “present” (presence) through a metathesis caused by the assonance of the two nouns (table 36).⁴⁷

46 However, it should be noted that **Z** (**AR**¹) adds another epilogue, in which the narrator explains that the vision was shown by God to be an exemplum for the listeners. This ending, however, does not depend on either the Insular or the Continental editorial tradition.

47 The closest possible source I was able to identify is *Carmen XXXVI, De lapsu primi hominis* (On the Fall of the First Man) by Marbodius of Rennes (1035–1123), part of the *Carmina varia*, which presents the same string of charges (Adam < Eve < the serpent). “Eva fefellit eum; sed eum non falleret Eva, Ni decepta foret; serpens deceperat Eva.” (Eve deceived him; but Eve would not have deceived him if she had not been deceived. The serpent had deceived Eve.) Marbodius Redoniensis Episcopus, *Carmina varia*, PL 171:1555d–1634c; this is the only available edition of the collection.

Table 36.

L (172/1581)	P (136/605)	B (222/611)	N (286/9)
serpens [serpent].	present [presence].	serpent [serpent].	ormr [serpent].

The Flemish Connection

The possible origin and history of **X**, the now-lost French manuscript source from which *Viðrǫða líkams ok sálar* was prepared, have been previously discussed by Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, who advanced the hypothesis that the Norse translator may have been a Norwegian cleric trained in France with a good grasp of French, a rather unusual skill for the dawn of the thirteenth century.⁴⁸ As a matter of fact, *Viðrǫða líkams ok sálar* represents the earliest known Norse translation of French material, preceding the well-known Norwegian translations of French *romances*, *chansons de geste*, and *lais* by at least twenty-five years. A French, rather than an English, provenance of the text is further confirmed by the very readings of the Norse text, which—as demonstrated above—closely mirror the two Continental manuscripts of the French tradition, while differing considerably from the Insular subfamily. In assessing the provenance of the now-lost French source consulted for the composition of the Norse text, there is reason to believe that it may have been a codex produced in Flanders toward the end of the twelfth century. By distinguishing Vallonian and Picardian phonetic idiosyncrasies, as well as the presence of a Picardian calendar *Calendrier français* (fols. 1r–2v) transmitted in **P**, Claudia Guggenbühl was able to identify Saint-Omer (Hauts-de-France) as the scriptorium that hosted the production of **P** during the years 1250–75.⁴⁹ Moreover, a linguistic and orthographic survey allowed Julia Bastin to place the preparation of **B** in Flanders or in the neighboring counties of northeastern Artois or Hainaut around 1230.⁵⁰

48 Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 275–76.

49 Claudia Guggenbühl, *Recherches sur la composition et la structure du ms. Arsenal 3516*, *Romanica Helvetica* 118 (Basel und Tübingen: A. Francke, 1998), 36–38.

50 Julia Bastin, “Trois dits du XIII siècle du ms. 9411-26 de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique,” *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 54 (1941): 467–507, at 467–69.

Relations between Flanders and Norway between the Twelfth and the Thirteenth Century

Relations between Flanders and Norway began as early as the twelfth century, as demonstrated by Lars Boje Mortensen, who highlighted a substantial Norwegian influence in France, primarily due to the spread of the cult of Óláfr Haraldsson the Saint (995–1030).⁵¹ With regard to the oldest surviving witness of *Passio Olavi*, the so-called Anchin Manuscript—Douai, Bibliothèque Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (olim Bibliothèque municipale), 295—Mortensen demonstrated that the codex must have been produced in twelfth-century Flanders and highlighted the preservation of Norse proper names and toponyms in their original graphic form (while all other names are regularly Latinized), as well a more sound knowledge of Norwegian geography.⁵² Furthermore, after a careful analysis of the cult of St Óláfr in Northern France, Mortensen proposed the codex's transmission from Flanders to Paris (and not vice versa) and highlighted how the passage from the North Sea to Paris was favoured by the geographical features of both the Anchin area and Flanders, which facilitated the arrival in Paris by ship through the ascent of the Scarpe River.⁵³

The presence of French texts in western Scandinavia around 1150 is further attested by an English palimpsest preserved today in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 618 4to (Britain—Iceland, 1150–1599), which originally contained the bilingual Latin-French *Psalterium Davidis* (fols. 1r–116r) and *Hymni et cantica ex testamento veteri* (fols. 116r–118v). In the early modern period, the French text had been subsequently scraped off and replaced with an early modern Icelandic translation of the Latin text.⁵⁴

Further evidence of a Norwegian interest in northern French manuscript production is attested by two French codices, recently surveyed

51 Lars Boje Mortensen, “The Anchin Manuscript of *Passio Olavi* (Douai 295), William of Jumièges, and Theodoricus Monachus,” *Symbolae Osloenses* 75 (2000): 165–89, at 169–74.

52 Mortensen, “Anchin Manuscript,” 169.

53 Mortensen, “Anchin Manuscript,” 169–73.

54 For a summary description of the manuscript, see “AM 618 4to,” *Skráningarfærsla handrits*, handrit.is, accessed 17 February 2023, <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/da/AM04-0618/0#mode/2up>.

by Synnøve Midtbø Myking, that were exported to Norway during the thirteenth century.⁵⁵ The first manuscript was produced in Paris in 1230 and is known as *Kristina Psalter*, Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, GKS 1606 4to, which belonged to Kristín Hákonardóttir (1234–62), who was the daughter of King Hákon and was married to the brother of the king of Spain, Felipe de Castilla (1231–74). How the manuscript came into Kristín's possession is still the subject of debate: a first hypothesis identifies it as a wedding gift from the king of France, Louis IX, to Kristín; a second hypothesis sees it instead as a gift of friendship to Kristín and alliance with Norway on the part of Louis IX.⁵⁶ It is also significant that, in order to reach the groom in Spain from Bergen, Kristín had to travel through France. After her death in 1262, some of her entourage returned to Norway, in all probability carrying, along with other goods, the *Kristina Psalter*. The travel is described in chapter 356 of the *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* by Sturla Þórðarson (1214–84), in which the bishop of Hamar Peter is said to have travelled through Flanders: "But bishop Peter fared overland into Flanders, and he came somewhat later. Andrew Nicholas' son stayed behind in France then twelve months."⁵⁷

The second manuscript presented by Myking to demonstrate renewed contacts between Flanders and Norway during the reign of King Hákon Hákonarson is Aslak Bolt's (archbishop of Oslo, 1428–50) Bible, today Oslo, Deichmanske Bibliotek (no call number). This manuscript was produced in Paris around 1250, subsequently purchased by Aslak in the fifteenth century, and finally rediscovered in 1710 within Niðaróss's old city walls. This Bible may have reached Norway during the thirteenth century, when numerous clerics were studying in Flanders or Paris, a

55 Synnøve Midtbø Myking, "The French Connection: Norwegian Manuscript Fragments of French Origin and Their Historical Context" (PhD diss., University of Bergen, 2017), 136–45. The study of the two manuscripts is part of a larger project, called FLANDRIA, with the aim of examining the contact between Flanders, Norway, and Denmark in the High Middle Ages and the influence on Scandinavian culture. See "Research," Synnøve Midtbø Myking, University of Bergen, accessed 17 February 2023, <https://bit.ly/46vueRL>.

56 Myking, "French Connection," 139.

57 *The Saga of Hakon and a Fragment of the Saga of Magnus with Appendices*, trans. George Webbe Dasent, *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Ævi Scriptores 4* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1894), 316–17. "En Pétr byskup fór landveg í Flandr, ok kom hann nökkuru síðarr. Andrés Nikulásson var eftir í Franz þá tólf mánaði." Sturla Þórðarson, *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar, Bøglunga saga, Magnúss saga lagabætis*, ed. Sverrir Jakobsson et al., Íslenzk fornrit 31–32, 2 vols (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2013), II, 202.

city that was commonly reached by Norwegians via the aforementioned Flemish route.⁵⁸

Subsequently, proof of the renewed relations between Flanders and Norway is evident in the circulation of the manuscript Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal.lat. 1963, dated 1250–65, a manuscript that transmits the *Histoire d'Outremer*— also known as *L'Estoire d'Eracles*—a French translation of the Latin work *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, which narrated the story of the crusade of William of Tyre (d. 1186).⁵⁹ The manuscript, probably produced in the eastern Mediterranean area, had been in the possession of the Queen of Norway, Isabella Bruce (c. 1272–1358), who had married King Eiríkr Magnússon (1268–99) in 1293; she was the sister of the king of Scotland, Robert Bruce (1274–1329). According to Bjørn Bandlien, Pal. lat. 1963 arrived in Norway with some Norwegians who had left for the Seventh Crusade during the reign of King Hákon Hákonarson (1204–63). It appears, in fact, that Elinard of Seninghem (d. 1273), a Flemish nobleman residing in the vicinity of Saint-Omer, had gone to Bergen in search of a ship and crew to travel to Caesarea (Anatolia), in order to reach King Louis IX of France (1214–70) in 1251.⁶⁰ While this remains one of the possible scenarios, it highlights how the Norwegian monarchy was strongly linked and connected with other European families, and particularly with Flemish ones. The relationships between the Norwegian monarchy and the family of Elinard of Seninghem subsequently intensified during the thirteenth century.⁶¹

In addition to the manuscript evidence, the relations between Norway and Flanders are further attested by the presence in Norway of some French artefacts: three lead crosses bearing a French inscription and a gold ring. The lead crosses, found in Stavanger and in Hardanger, contain inscriptions of French hymns. The two crosses found in the diocese of Stavanger—respectively, Stavanger, Stavanger Museum, Madla 248 and Stavanger, Stavanger Museum, Bru 263—transmit a section of the hymn *Deus pater piissime*, for which Lilli Gjerløw hypothesized two possible traditions. One possibility is that the inscription may ultimately derive from

58 Myking, “French Connection,” 140–42.

59 Bjørn Bandlien, “A Manuscript of the Old French William of Tyre (Pal. Lat. 1963) in Norway,” *Studi mediolatini e volgari* 62 (2016): 21–80, at 21.

60 Bandlien, “Manuscript,” 39–40.

61 Bandlien, “Manuscript,” 60.

an eleventh-century manuscript, today Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, Manoscritti, MS B 63/1–4.⁶² A second hypothesis suggests that the inscription is derived from a twelfth-century manuscript from Corbie in Picardy (Northern France), today Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 12020 (*olim* ancien fonds Saint-Germain 332).⁶³ The hypothesis of a northern French *Vorlage* for the inscription is supported by a second inscription on Bru 263, *Alma chorus domini*, of certain French origin. The third cross, Bergen, Bergen Museum, B6267, found in the Hardanger, transmits an inscription of the hymn *Christe, Salvator*, apparently of Norman origin but already circulating in Corbie in the twelfth century. Therefore, the transmission of the French hymns to Norway most likely followed a route through Picardy, rather than Norman routes.⁶⁴ Madla 248 is dated roughly 1270 and 1315, and provides evidence of renewed contacts between Norway and Flanders in the late thirteenth century.⁶⁵

The gold ring has been dated to the end of the twelfth century and was destined for Norwegian aristocracy. It transmits a French inscription of a declaration of friendship and was discovered in the old trading town of Veøy (Møre and Romsdal County), today Trondheim, Vitenskapsmuseet, Institutt for arkeologi og kulturhistorie, T21673.⁶⁶ According to Helge Nordahl, the location of its forging could be a northern region of France, which would also include Flanders.⁶⁷ Subsequently, the statue of *Notre Dame des Miracles*, located in the Saint-Bertin church (Saint-Omer) and produced around 1230, which depicts a Madonna and Child, has the same polychromy and carving as the Madonnas and Child typical of the churches of Hove (1230–35) and Kyrkjebø (1240–60), of certain Flemish influence.⁶⁸

62 For a summary description of the manuscript, see “Roma, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, Manoscritti, ms. B 63/1-4,” Manus Online: Manoscritti delle biblioteche italiane, accessed 17 February 2023, https://manus.iccu.sbn.it/opac_SchedaScheda.php?ID=16226.

63 Myking, “French Connection,” 133.

64 Myking, “French Connection,” 134–35.

65 Myking, “French Connection,” 135.

66 The inscription reads, “ERI*CENTR*EAMI*SE:*IES*VIDRU*AMIE*AM*,” which has been interpreted as, “Eric entre amis et je suis drue amie, A.M.” (Eric among friends and I am a true friend, A.M.). According to Helge Nordahl, the inscription may be written in a French metre. See the discussion in Myking, “French Connection,” 135.

67 Myking, “French Connection,” 135–36.

68 Unn Plahter, “Norwegian Art Technology in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries:

In the following decades, the close relations between Flanders and Norway were evident in the presence of a Flemish cleric known as Jón flæmingi (c. 1260–1320), in the service of Bishop Jorundr in Niðaróss.⁶⁹ Jón, clearly of Flemish origin, is mentioned as a student of canon law at the University of Paris and Orléans. He was fluent in both Latin and French, yet he had inadequate oral skills in the Norse language, as attested by the Þ-manuscript of *Lárentíus saga byskups* preserved in Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 404 4to (c. 1650). It is highly likely that at the time of the composition of N, other Flemish intellectuals were residing in some of the most prominent cities of Norway. During the second half of the thirteenth century, the close contacts between Flanders and Norway are further testified by the presence of Torfinn, bishop of Hamar, at the monastery of Ter Doest (Bruges), where he had been in exile since 1282. Torfinn's journey to Ter Doest is narrated in a Latin poem by Walter de Muda (fl. c. 1250–1300). Torfinn died in 1285 and was buried at that monastery;⁷⁰ however, he is not an isolated figure but falls within a circle of clerics closely connected to Ter Doest for economic reasons. Archbishop Jón Rauði of Niðaróss (d. 1282) instructed his trusted men to deposit or withdraw money from Ter Doest Abbey around the years 1281–1301.⁷¹ Flanders thus proves to be not only a transit location for Norwegians travelling south but also a factual Norwegian outpost on the Continent.

From the evidence discussed, it emerges that the contacts between Flanders and Norway were active as early as the twelfth century. These were maintained for at least three centuries through the reciprocal exchange of material goods and the transit of Norwegian nobles in Flanders, as well as through the settlement of some Norwegian prelates and their retinues. The acquisition of a specific Flemish *Vorlage* of *Desputisun* in Norway may therefore have been aided by Norwegians passing through

Materials and Techniques in a European Context,” *Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung* 28 (2014): 298–332, at 309–10.

69 Fulvio Ferrari, “*Lárentíus saga byskups*: Between History and Historiography,” in *Saints and their Legacies in Medieval Iceland*, ed. Dario Bullitta and Kirsten Wolf, *Studies in Old Norse Literature* 9 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2021), 168.

70 Synnøve Midtbø Myking, “Money Deposits and Shipwrecked Saints: The Norwegian Presence in Medieval Bruges,” in *Ad Brudgias portum: Bruges’ Medieval Port System as a Maritime Cultural Landscape*, ed. W. De Clercq et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

71 Myking, “Money Deposits.”

Flanders on their return home from journeys on the Continent or by the presence of Norwegian clerics at the cathedral schools of Picardy, Hainaut, and Artois.

The Routes of Textual Transmission from Flanders to Norway

The most recent study on *Viðrǫða líkams ok sálar* was published by Stefka Georgieva Eriksen in 2016. Based on previous studies, she hypothesizes as a possible place of production an Augustinian monastery of canons regular, which may have hosted both the composition of *Viðrǫða líkams ok sálar* and the preparation of **N** in its entirety.⁷² The Norse text may in fact present distinctively “Augustinian” characteristics, such as the use of a typical Augustinian mindset and visionary descriptions. According to Eriksen, such Augustinian traits may be ascribed to some Norwegian clerics who studied in an Augustinian environment.⁷³ However, as already noticed by the author, the philosophical lexicon typical of Augustine’s speculations—such as the distinction between the verbs “vita” (to know) and “hyggja” (to think), corresponding to the Latin *scientia* and *sapientia*—is not employed in the text.⁷⁴ However, as I shall try to demonstrate, historical and textual evidence does not support a possible Augustinian provenance of the text. Among the Norwegian centres of culture active during the early thirteenth century, the Cistercian monasteries of Lyse (Vestland) and Hovedøya (Oslofjord) should be excluded from the possible centres that may have hosted the composition of the vernacular text, since they were closely affiliated with their founding monasteries in England, such as Fountains Abbey (North Yorkshire) and Kirkstead Abbey (Lincolnshire).⁷⁵ Eriksen points out that both *Viðrǫða líkams ok sálar* and **N** in its entirety may have been composed and prepared by a scribe with strong ties to England. However, in consideration of the evidence provided in this study, the most plausible attribution of the Norse text remains, in my

72 Eriksen, “Body and Soul,” 400–406.

73 Eriksen, “Body and Soul,” 395.

74 Eriksen, “Body and Soul,” 403.

75 Henry Goddard Leach, “The Relations of the Norwegian with the English Church, 1066–1399, and Their Importance to Comparative Literature,” *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 44.20 (1909): 531–60, at 540–42.

view, Widding and Bekker-Nielsen's hypothesis, which identifies the translator as a Norwegian cleric trained in France.⁷⁶ Historical evidence of the production and circulation of the Latin text, as well as its subsequent reworkings in French are uniquely circumscribed in a Benedictine milieu. As mentioned above, *Nuper* should be considered a very rare text within the corpus of medieval Latin literature, being transmitted as a *codex unicus* in the aforementioned L, a miscellany of historical and religious character, produced in all probability by Bishop Laurence of Durham (d. 1154) during the first half of the twelfth century.⁷⁷ Approximately a century later, manuscript H of *Desputisun* was also produced in Durham at the Benedictine priory of St. Cuthbert (634–87), where it was kept for about four hundred years until the seventeenth century.⁷⁸ Approximately in the same years, codex P of *Desputisun* was being prepared at the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Bertin in Saint-Omer in Flanders.⁷⁹ According to Emily Jean Richard, manuscript C of the Insular version of *Desputisun* could also be located within a Cistercian or Benedictine monastery in the city of Worcester.⁸⁰ It can thus be assumed that the *Desputisun* text reached Norway due to the close connections between the Norwegian Benedictine monasteries and their Continental counterparts. The high accuracy of the variants of *Viðrøða líkams ok sálar*, as well as their proximity to the archetype of the Norse text Y, would naturally suggest that, in spatial and temporal terms, the composition of Y occurred in close proximity to the Benedictine monastery of Munkeliv in Bergen around 1200–25. Consequently, the translation of the Flemish source-text should be dated to shortly before or after the accession to the throne of King Hákon Hákonarson in June 1217—the king who famously commissioned the translation of numerous chivalric romances from French into Norse.⁸¹

76 Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 275–76.

77 Henningham, *Early Latin Debate*, 20–31.

78 Capozza, 34.

79 Capozza, 70.

80 Emily Jean Richard, *Body-Soul Debates in English, French and German Manuscripts, c. 1200–c. 1500* (PhD diss., University of York, 2009), 38.

81 The oldest text among such translations is *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*, a Norse rendition of the French poem *Tristan* by Thomas of England (fl. c. 1100–99), translated in 1226 by Brother Robert, an English or Norman monk active at the Norwegian court during the first half of the thirteenth century. Subsequently, once he became abbot of an unspecified Norwegian monastery, Robert wrote his translation of *Elis saga ok Rósamundu* around

Although the latest possible date for the production of *Viðrǫða líkams ok sálar* is contemporary with the translation of *Tristrams saga ok Ísǫndar*, on the basis of historical and editorial considerations, I would exclude Brother Robert as a possible translator of *Desputisun*. In fact, the French visionary body-and-soul dialogue is thematically, stylistically, and lexicographically distant from the Arthurian and courtly matrix of the texts translated by Robert, which does not include any of the theological, eschatological, and soteriological material typical of *Desputisun* and its Norse translation. Furthermore, Brother Robert was probably active in an English Cistercian centre in Norway, such as that of Lyse or Hovedøya,⁸² while a Benedictine milieu can be hypothesized for the preparation of Y.

Conclusion

In terms of genre, sources, and dating, the text of *Viðrǫða líkams ok sálar* undoubtedly represents a *unicum* within the corpus of Old Norse literature. From the textual evidence examined, the version transmitted in N emerges as the closest possible textual witness to the archetype Y. As previously demonstrated by Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, through qualitative analysis of concurrent readings, it is also possible to ascertain the existence of a subarchetype that today is lost, designated as Z by the two scholars, the ancestor of the three Icelandic manuscripts A, R¹, and R². Furthermore, the existence of an additional *codex interpositus* Z₁ has been established on the basis of significant errors shared by R¹ and R². In addition, from a complete collation of *Viðrǫða líkams ok sálar* with variants of the *Desputisun*, conclusions can also be made about the French *Vorlage* underlying the Norse text. From its agreements and omissions within the French manuscript tradition, it is logical to assume that it necessarily had to belong to the Continental tradition rather than to the Insular tradition. The lost French source-text must have preceded

1250 and *Strengleikar* in 1270. Furthermore, King Hákon Hákonarson also commissioned *Mottuls saga* and *Ivens saga*. Other texts on Arthurian topics, such as *Parcevals saga*, were translated during his reign. For a recent study, see Francesca Coscia, “L’amour courtois in Scandinavia: La versione norrena dei lais di Marie de France negli Strengleikar” (PhD diss., University of Naples “L’Orientale,” 2018), 32.

82 Isidro Rivera, “Brother Robert,” in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. Norris J. Lacy (New York: Routledge, 1996), 56.

the transcription of the two surviving manuscripts, **PB**, which preserve older and more concise readings, more faithful to the text of the *Nuper*. A Flemish and Benedictine context of producing **PB** would therefore suggest that the lost French codex was transferred from Flanders to a Benedictine monastery, such as Munkeliv in Bergen, via a profitable network that connected the Norwegian Benedictine monasteries to the Flemish sister houses. Moreover, the exchange of material goods, which naturally also included manuscripts, was certainly supported by the commercial routes that were well-known to Norwegian travellers on their way to Europe, routes that were already attested from the first half of the twelfth century and were maintained for at least two centuries. Consequently, the Norse text could plausibly be attributed to a Norwegian cleric with a good grasp of French, who may have completed the task between King Hákon Hákonarson's accession to the throne in 1217 and the material preparation of the *Norwegian Homily Book* before 1225. Once available at a Munkeliv scriptorium in Bergen, the Norse translation of the *Desputisun* may have been incorporated into the *Norwegian Homily Book* in order to provide a final narrative framework for the eschatological and soteriological speculations in the cycle of forty-one Norse homilies preceding it in the codex. Due to its peculiar provenance, tone, and literary genre, *Viðrøða líkams ok sálar* represents a highly valuable *pièce de résistance* for the entire homiliary. Through its vivid scenes and dramatic accusations, the readers are urged to expiate their own sins in time before being tragically condemned to the miseries of hell without any possible path to redemption.

Appendix

Collations of the “Continental” Epilogue Transmitted in PBN

P (150–6/955–1078)	B (229–32/941–1060)	N (288–9/9–7)
<p>Adont m'estoit avis qui li cors s'ert asis, restendoit soi ariere de lonc en lonc sa biere, tant forment s'estendi que la biere en croissi, et ietoit I sospir com hom qui veut morir. L'ame quant ce veoit merveilleus duel faisoit, chaitive se clamoit et sovent se pasmoit. Après quant ert pasmee, crioit: “Maleuree, mar fui onques criié, iamais ne serai lié! Hai, lasse, dolente, tant dolerouse atente, chaitive creature, tant malvaise aventure! Rois del ciel et de terre porcoi mostras ta gerre, vers une feble cose qui seul parler n'en ose?</p> <p>Moult ai vers toi grant ire, se io l'osaïse dire, car quant tu me crias moultes fois m'esgardas, que ia ior ne vesquise qui pechie ne feïsse. N'est nus hom en cest monde</p>	<p>Et ce mestoit avis Or li cors kiert assis Sestendoit en le biere Et ou lit ou il iere</p> <p>Lame qui ce veoit Merveilleus doel faisoit Dolente se damoit Et souvent se pasmoit Et quant se estoit pasmee Sicrioit con diervee Crioit maleuree Mar fusses tu crie Jamais ne serai lie Ne point assouagie Ahi lasse dolente En doulerese atente Caitive creature Con dolente aventure Dieus te laisse pener Et si ne pues finer Rois dou ciel et de tiere Pour coi sueffres tel <i>guerre</i> Viers une creature De mal toute seure Et si est fole chose Car nus parler nen ose Car <i>quant</i> tu me crias Mortel fais me dounas Ainc ior estre ne poi</p>	<p>Sva syndisc mér at bucren lağðesc niðr oc rétte sic sva hart at kistu fialar tóco at braca, en sialfr hann andvarpaðe sva sem maðr er andasc vil.</p> <p>En sálan þa er hon sa þat. þa toc hon at ráðasc oc øymde sec oc mælte sva. Vesol scepna em ec at ec scal bíða guðs ræiði. Guð hvi metr þu þic þes at syna áfl þit við iam u styrct vétr sem ec em. þvi at þu scapaðer mic dauðlegan. oc meðan ec mátta lifa. þa var engi sá dagr at ec scyldi ægi syndir gera. oc engi maðr annar lifir sva at hann syngasc ægi. Vesol er su scepna er slict er fyrir lagt.</p>

qui de pechie soit monde,
 tant soit de sainte vie
 qui ne face folie;
 malvaie est la nature
 qui suefre tel eniure!
 Pere, tu me crias
 et puis me reformas,
 porcoi fis creature
 quant de lui n'en as cure?
 Moult est ce grant dam-
 age
 quant tu qui es tant sage
 deignas ainc faire rien
 que ne tornait a bien.
 Pas ne te loeront
 cil qu'en infer seront,
 ia de ta grant pitié
 nul ior ne seront lié
 li crestien qui vivent,
 desputent et estruient.
 Ce dient li plusour
 que moult est grant dolor
 s'il restoit a plaisir
 que ia doivent perir
 icele creature,
 la qui formé nature
 fesis prendre a ton fis
 por oster de peris
 en ancien forfait
 qui Adam avoit fait.
 Por no redempcion
 soffri il passion
 et fu en la crois mis
 por sauver ses amis.
 Quant il por nos fu mort
 dient que c'est grant tort,
 que li siens anemis
 est tant poësteis,
 que ice volt saisir
 porcoi il volt morir;

Seiou pechie nen oi
 Carnest hom en cest
 monde
Qui de pechie soit monde
 Tant soit de sante vie
Qui ne fache folie
 Poure est li creature
Qui acele aventure
 Sire forment maidas
 Et puis me refusas
 Pour coi fais creature
 Puis que de li nascure
 Ja ne te loeront
 Cil ken infier ironr
 Ja de te grant pitie
 Ne se seront or lie
 Li crestijen qui vivent
 Desputent et estruient

 Et dient li plusour
Que mout est grant do-
 lour
 Sil te fust apleisir
 Jane deust perir
 Jcele creature
 Pour qui fraille nature
 Fesis prendre ton fil
 Pour oster de peril
 Del anchien forfait
Que adans avoit fait
 Il fu atort jugies
 Et naures et playes
 Et el sepulcre mis
 Pour sauver ses amis
 De nule creature
 Neust dius si grant cure
 Come cil de nous eust
 Se li pechies ne fust
 Que nous vier lui fesimes

Guð scapare min
 hvi scapaðer þu mic
 oc ofsacaðer siðan.
 Undarlect þyccir hvi
 þu visdóms brunnr
 scapaðer þa luti er æigi
 gafosc væl. ðeir aller
 er fara til hæl vitis ecci
 monu þeir lofa miscun
 þina. oc þeir er en lifa í
 veroldo. þeir þrætta sin
 í millum.

En flestir mæla sva at
 þeim þyccir unndarlect
 er þin scepna scal fyrir
 farasc siðan þu mazt
 son þin sva lítils at þu
 lézt hann taca manlega
 ásyn.
 Fyrir vára læusn þolde
 hann þínsl oc var á cros
 næglr. þvi næst þa
 þolde hann dauða. Nu
 er þat unndarlect hvi
 fianden er sva diarfr at
 hann þorer misgranda
 oc mis þyrma þvi er
 guðs sonr þolde dauða
 fyrir. Oc sva væinaðe
 sér su sál.

il volt morir por nos
 et nos tolir as lous.
 Li leus si s'aproisma
 vers moi si m'engingna,
 plus c'or serai perdue
 iamais n'arai aiue.
 Tostans ai aplorer
 qui me puet conforter,
 car ainc ne fu cel angle
 ne icel saint arcangle
 apostle ne martir
 qui me peust garir.
 Sempres ne soie prise
 et el puis d'infer mise,
 tant com se dementoit
 cele ame et se plaignoit.”

Puis venoit un deable
 comme leus ravisable,
 cele ame saisisoit
 fierement li disoit:
 “Qui chi vous amena,
 mal garant vous sera,
 a voistre cors pullent
 faisies parlement,
 or se repentiroit
 li fel se il pooit.
 Ni a mais recurrence,
 plus poise en la balance
 le soie iniquité

Quant nous le de
 guerpimes
 Pour no redemption
 Souffri dius passion
 Car il suffri le mort
 Pour nous ce fu atort
 Mais li sien anemi
 Furent trop posteif
 Jce est lokison
 Pour coi ot passion
 JI volt pour nous morir
 Pour nos pechies tolir
 Unsdes leus ravissables
Que on claime deables
 Uns viers lui sa proisma
 Si locist et mania
 Toustans mist aplorer
 Neme puis conforter
 Car il na ou ciel angele
 Saint ne sainte
 narcangele
 Apostre ne martir
Qui me puisse garir
 Sempres ne soie prise
 Et dedens infier mise
 Cele ame escroit
 Forment se desmentoit
 Aha ce estes vous
 Deables miervillous
 Et mout fiers et hisdeus
 Ravissables com leus
 Lame mout sescroit
 Diabes li disoit
 Ame vien anous cha
 Mal garans te sera
 J cil tiens cors pullens
 Acui tiens parlemens
 Or se repentiroient
 Se faire le pooient
 Tart est lor repentance

En i þvi como fiandr oc
 toko hana á bræut oc
 báro hana sva u þyrmi-
 lega sem vargar marger
 bera sæuð æin. En hon
 øpte ascrámalega en þat
 stoðaðe henne ecci. Þvi
 at dómr hennar vár þa
 loken.

que ne fait carité.
 Plus pesoit avarice
 qui verté ne iustice,
 por ce mestes livrés
 et en infer dampnés.
 El noir fu infernal
 avras malvais ostal,
 en la grant pullentie
 nos feras conpaignie».
 L'ame estoit entre II,
 com aignel entre lous,
 et noir et triste et blee
 tote descoloree.
 Li felon l'enportoient
 de rien ne l'espargnoient,
 pechoient li le dos
 et le ventre et les os.
 Ele getoit grant cris
 a oels crioit mercis,
 ele crioit forment
 moult angoisseusement;
 mais ce ert por noient
 que nul preu ni atent.
 Tel paor oi del cri
 Que io men esperi.

Trop poisent en balance
 Pour ce sont il dampne
 Et en infier livre
 Jssies diable fors
 Et si prenes le cors

Lame estoit entre-ij-
 Come agnaus entre leus
 Noire et descoulouree
 Et forment triboulee
 Li felon l'emportoient
 De rien ne les pargnoient
 Depiechent li le dos
 Et le ventre a lor cros
 Et le crioit forment
 Et angousseusement
 Tel paour oi du cri
 Qui ie men esperi

P	B	N
<p>Then I think that the body had sat, stretched out to dispute lengthwise in his coffin; he stretched so hard that the coffin broke, and he sighed, like a man who comes to die. When the soul saw the wonderful duel made, wretched, she lamented and often fainted. After</p>	<p>Then I think that the body had sat, stretched out to dispute lengthwise in his coffin and in the bed where he lies. When the soul saw the wonderful duel made, she lamented and often fainted. After she had fainted, she cried, "Damned one, I never cried, I will</p>	<p>So it seems to me that the body lay down and stretched so hard that the coffin took to break/crack; but he himself groaned so like a man who wants to die. But when the soul saw that, she then began to fear and to lament herself and thus spoke: "I am a</p>

she had fainted, she cried, "Damned one, I never cried, I shall never be happy! Alas, weary, sorrowful, so painfully waiting, wretched creature, such a bad destiny! Kings of heaven and earth, why do you wage war against a poor thing who alone dares to speak? Many feel great anger toward you, if I dare to say so, because whenever you cried to me, you looked at me many times, (seeing) that I did not refuse that I did not sin. There is no naked man in this world who cleanses himself of sin, who leads such a holy life that he does not face mischief; wretched is the nature that suffers such injury! Father, you reproach me and then reform me; why do you make a creature, inasmuch as you do not care for him? This great damage is much, when you, who are so wise, deign to do nothing that did not turn out well. Those who will be in hell will praise your great mercy, and the Christians who live, argue, and quarrel will still be alive. Many say that

never be happy, born not satisfied! Alas, weary, sorrowful, so painfully waiting, wretched creature, such a bad destiny! God abandon you to suffer and if you cannot pay. Kings of heaven and earth, why do you wage your war against a creature all free from evil? And if the thing is crazy, why don't we dare to speak? Who alone dares to speak? Many feel great anger toward you, if I dare to say so, because when you deadly cried to me, you looked at me, a day is never short, that I did not sin. There is no naked man in this world who sins, who does not face mischief no matter how holy his life; wretched is the creature who suffers such injury! Father, you are shouting at me and then reform me; why do you make a creature since you do not care for him? Those who will be in hell will not praise your great mercy, and the Christians who live, argue, and quarrel who will still be alive. Many say that, that the great pain is much if it will oppose pleasure, that

wretched creature, and I shall wait for the anger of God. God, why do you think to show your power with a creature as weak as I am? Why did you create me a mortal? And while I was alive, there was not a day when I did not commit sins. And no other man lives who does not sin. Wretched is that creature that is made of such a nature. God, my creator, why did you create me and, after that, accuse me? Wonderful one, it seems unbelievable how you, the fount of wisdom, have created things that do not prove to be good. All of those who go to hell should not praise your mercy. And those who live in the world wrangle between them. But most talk so that, to them, it seems extraordinary that your creature should die, since you valued your son so low that you let him take on a human aspect. For our redemption, he suffered the Passion and was nailed to the cross. And he subsequently suffered death. It is now incredible that the devil

the great pain is much if it will oppose pleasure, that this creature will have to die, whose form you made your son take in order to deliver from the fruit that Adam had done in the ancient offence. For no redemption, he suffered the Passion and was hung on the cross to save his friends. When he had died for us, they say that it is wrongful, that he without enemies is so powerful that here he wants to seize because he wants to die; he wants to die for us and take us away from wolves. The lions so are coming closer to me so they deceive me; more than gold will be lost. I will never get help. I have lamented about everything, which can comfort me, because there is no angel of Heaven, saint, holy archangel, apostle, or martyr who can protect me. I will always be taken and then put in hell," as this soul lamented and cried. Then a devil came as a predatory lion, who seized the soul and fiercely said, "The one who brought you will be

this creature will have to die, whose weak nature you made your son take in order to deliver from the danger of the ancient offence that Adam had done. He was wrongfully judged and nourished and bent and placed in a tomb to save his friends. God does not take care of any creature, as he make use of us, if they were not sinners, that we did toward him when we abandoned. For no redemption, he suffered the Passion, because he suffered the death, that it is wrongful for us, but he without enemies is so powerful his motivation is here because he had his passion. He wants to die for us to deliver us from our sins. The lions are coming closer to me so they deceive me; more than gold will be lost. I will never get help. I have lamented about everything that can comfort me, because there is no angel of Heaven, saint, holy archangel, apostle, or martyr who can be a witness for me. I will always be taken and then put in hell," as this soul lamented and cried. Then

is so daring that he dares to hurt and outrage [humanity], as the Son of God suffered death." And that soul wailed in that way. And in that moment, devils came and took her away, as violently as many wolves carry a sheep. And she cried in terror. But that did not help her, because her judgment was made.

a bad witness for you, you debate with your stinking body or he would regret the evil if he could. Never recourse, his iniquity weighs more in the balance than doing charity. Greed weighs more than not turning to justice, for this sorrowful weight and damned in hell. The black was infernal; you will have evil lodging. In the great sink, we will keep you company." The soul was among those, like a lamb among wolves, both black and sad and blue, all discoloured. The criminals carried her away, spared her nothing, wounded her back and belly and bones. She let out a great cry, with her eyes cried for mercy, and cried very agonizingly. But she is doing it for nothing for they pay no attention to her prayer. I heard such fear in the cry that I awoke.

came a devil wondrous and very fierce and awful as predatory lion, who seized the soul and fiercely said, "The one who brought you will be a bad witness for you, you debate with your stinking body or he regretted the evil if he could. Never recourse, his iniquity weighs more in the balance than doing charity. Greed weighs more than not turn to justice, for this sorrowful weight and damned in hell. The black was infernal; And come out, devils, deliver her to Hell, and take the body." The soul was among those, like a lamb among lions, black and discolored, and very tormented. The criminals carried her away, spared her nothing, wounded her back and belly and bones. She cried loudly and agonizingly. I heard such fear in the cry that I awoke.

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ÁGRIP

Uppruni og ferill elstu viðræðu sálar og líkama í norrænni hefð

Efnisorð: umfjallanir um tengsl sálar og líkama, Norska hómilubókin, Reynistaðarbók, Flanders [Flæmingjaland], engilnormanskar bókmenntir, skrifstofur benediktína, *Un Samedi par nuit*, norræn textafræði

Greinin fjallar um handrit, varðveislu og dreifingu textans *Viðrøða líkams ok sálar*, elstu umfjöllun um tengsl sálar og líkama sem varðveitt er í norrænni þýðingu. Um er að ræða fremur nákvæma en þó samþjappaða þýðingu á engilnormönsku kvæði sem gengur ýmist undir heitinu *Desputisun de l'âme et du corps* eða *Un Samedi par nuit*. Norræni textinn er varðveittur í fjórum handritum: AM 619 4to (*Norska hómilubókin*), AM 696 XXXII 4to, AM 764 4to, og JS 405 8vo. Með því að bera saman og kanna fjölda þeirra leshátta sem eru samhljóða staðfestir greinarhöfundur og bætir við stemma (ættartré handrita) sem sett var fram af Ole Widding og Hans Bekker-Nielsen árið 1959. Sú staðreynd að í norræna textanum eru leshættir sem eru dæmigerðir fyrir það sem nýlega hefur verið skilgreint sem „meginlandshefð“ engilnormönsku handritanna bendir til þess að upphaflegt og nú glatað frumrit textans hafi verið franskt skinnhandrit sem að öllum líkindum var gert í flæmsku benediktínaklaustri (Picardy, í norðausturhluta Artois eða Hainaut) á síðari hluta tólftu aldar. Síðar kann handritið að hafa borist frá Flanders (Flæmingjalandi) til systurklausurs benediktína í Noregi – eins og Munkeliv í Björgvin – enda vel þekkt og staðfest að ábatasamt tengslanet verslunar og klausturmenningar var á milli skrifarastofa í klaustrum í Flanders og Noregi á tímabilinu frá tólfstu til fjórtándu aldar.

SUMMARY

Genesis and Provenance of the Oldest Soul-and-Body Debate in Old Norse Tradition

Keywords: Soul-and-body debates, *Old Norwegian Homily Book*, *Reynistaðarbók*, Flanders, Anglo-Norman literature, Benedictine scriptoria, *Un Samedi par nuit*, Old Norse Philology

This article traces the manuscript filiation and the routes of textual transmission of *Viðrøða líkams ok sálar*, the first soul-and-body debate that is preserved in Old Norse translation, a fairly faithful yet succinct translation of the Anglo-Norman poem known alternatively as *Desputisun de l'âme et du corps* and *Un Samedi par nuit*. The Norse text survives today in four manuscripts: AM 619 4to (*Old Norwegian Homily Book*), AM 696 XXXII 4to, AM 764 4to, and JS 405 8vo. Through a

qualitative analysis of concurrent readings, the present study confirms and expands the stemma hypothesized by Ole Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen in 1959. The presence in the Norse text of readings typical of a newly identified “Continental tradition” within the Anglo-Norman family of manuscripts indicates that the now-lost manuscript source may have been a French codex, produced in all probability in a Flemish Benedictine monastery (Picardy, northeastern Artois or Hainaut) during the second half of the twelfth century. Subsequently, the codex may have been transferred from Flanders to a sister Benedictine house in Norway—such as Munkeliv in Bergen—via well-attested profitable monastic and trade networks that connected Flemish and Norwegian scriptoria between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries.

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VIÐAR PÁLSSON

SLÍMUSETUR IN EARLY ICELANDIC LAW AND ITS EUROPEAN CONTEXT

King and Law

Iceland received new law from its king in 1271, *Járnsíða* (Ironsides). Among other novelties, it forbade unwelcome and overbearing guests ‘slimesitting’ at other people’s feasts, *sitja slímusetri*:¹

Menn þeir er til þess vilja hafa sig að ganga í samkundir manna óboðið af þess hendi er veisluna á, og sitja þar slímusetri, og þó að þeir verði harðlega á brott reknir eða þar nokkuð misþyrmt, þá eru þeir hálfréttismenn og sekir þrim mörkum við konung. Er þetta firi því gjört að margur góður maður hefir fengið skemmdir og vandræði firi þeirra óhlutvendi.

Those men who take it upon themselves to enter the feasts of others without an invitation by its host, and remain there slimesitting, become *hálfvéttismenn* and guilty of a three-mark fine to the king, even if they are harshly driven away or injured somewhat. The reason for this provision is that many a good man has suffered damages and trouble because of their dishonorable behavior.

Járnsíða was ratified by *lögrétta* in 1271–73. It was modelled on the recently reformed provincial laws of Norway, which also lay behind much of the *Landslög* (National Law) introduced in Norway in 1274. *Járnsíða* was superseded by *Jónsbók* in 1281, which likewise forbade obnoxious guests ‘slimesitting’ in other people’s home.²

1 *Járnsíða og Kristinréttur Árna Þorlákssonar*, ed. Haraldur Bernharðsson, Magnús Lyngdal Magnússon, and Már Jónsson, Smárit Sögufélags (Reykjavík: Sögufélag, 2005), 92.

2 *Jónsbók: Kong Magnus Hakonssons lovbog for Island vedtaget paa Althinget 1281 og réttarbætr*

The article heading in *Jónsbók* is *Um boðslottu, hálffréttismenn* (On intruders, *hálffréttismenn*), and the fine is an *eyrir*. Otherwise, the article is the same. It entered Icelandic law as part of the legal reform of the Norwegian realm in 1274–76, when the *Landslög* and *Bjarkeyjarréttir* (Town Law) superseded the provincial codes. The article is the same in all four codes, with slight variations of expression between manuscripts.³ Hence, it was not introduced with Iceland and its local political context specifically in mind but rather Norway and its realm more generally. Its introduction in Icelandic law was a consequence of royal standardization of law within the realm.

Identifying the offender as being a *hálffréttismaðr* in these circumstances, literally ‘a man of half rights’, recognizes that person’s right to sue for injuries but only up to half the amount they otherwise would be able to demand, that is in circumstances where that person was acting lawfully and without malice. The article thus instructs that whoever forces hospitality on another and refuses to leave may indeed sue for injuries incurred while being resisted or thrown out, a legal action that may or may not secure reduced compensation. At the same time, however, the intruder becomes guilty by the act alone of breaking the king’s peace and cannot escape paying him a fine for his offence. The king’s right is firm, whereas the intruder’s position is at best ambiguous.

Hálffréttismaðr is an infrequent term in the legal corpus, referring to the reduced legal status of an adult or that of a minor or youth before entering adulthood by carrying weapons.⁴ *Hálfrétti* is more common, meaning half-spoken or ambiguous slander worth half compensation (*vis-à-vis fullrétti*, an explicit and unambiguous slander or defamation worth full compensation).⁵ What is noticeable about the half-rights of the slimesit-

de for Island givne retterbøder af 1294, 1305 og 1314, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson (Copenhagen: S. L. Møller, 1904), 92.

- 3 *Norges gamle love indtil 1387* [NGL], ed. Rudolf Keyser, Peter Andreas Munch, and Ebbe Hertzberg, 5 vols. (Christiania: C. Gröndahl, 1846–95), 2: 225–26 (*Bjarkeyjarréttir inn nýi*); *Kong Magnus Hákonsson Lagabøtes landslov: Norrøn tekst med fullstendig variantapparat*. ed. Magnus Rindal and Bjørg Dale Spørck, 2 vols., *Norrøne tekster*, vol. 9 (Oslo: Arkivverket: 2018), 1: 421–22.
- 4 NGL, 1: 69 (*Gulapingslög*), 169 (*Frostapingslög*), 314 (*Bjarkeyjarréttir*), 2: 207 (*Bjarkeyjarréttir inn nýi*); *Kong Magnus Hákonsson Lagabøtes landslov*, 266.
- 5 *Grágás: Islændernes Lovbog i Fristatens Tid, udgivet efter det kongelige Bibliotheks Haandskrift* [Ia–Ib], edited by Vilhjálmur Finsen, *Nordiske Oldskrifter*, vols. 11, 17, 21,

ting intruder is the legal thought that a criminal against the king does not forfeit all his legal rights while in the act of committing the crime.

Was this an issue? Were strong-armed men imposing themselves on others as unwelcome guests? Why had this become the king's concern? The commonwealth law *Grágás* provides nothing on the issue. In Norwegian provincial law, the concept *slímusetur* is known but in a different context. The older *Gulapingslög* (Older Law of Gulapíng) stipulates that if a wife feeds her convicted husband in their home for more than five days, she becomes guilty of aiding a criminal, unless the man's continued stay is against her will, in other words he is 'slimesitting'.⁶ This is a different subject, however, from the *slímusetur* of *Járnsiða* and *Jónsbók* and that of *Landslög*. The above questions remain.

To understand the king's newly acquired interest in legislating against *slímusetur*, it is necessary to appreciate both the local context of legal reform and the European context of political language. Many things that had not been the concern of the king now became so. My present argument is that law forbidding people from imposing themselves on others by enforced hospitality must be understood in its European context and in comparison with similar legal provisions made elsewhere during the high Middle Ages. The two contexts, local and European, are but different viewpoints; however, they are useful in separating the specific and contextual from that which is general. The local context of legal reform in the Norwegian realm in the second half of the thirteenth century is principally a variant on a European theme that rang loud in the central Middle Ages. Essentially, it was a part of a larger, European process of state building.

After nearly a century of civil war, King Hákon *gamli* (r. 1217–63) and his son King Magnús *lagabætir* (r. 1263–80) set out to consolidate the kingdom of Norway and transform it from a realm into a state.⁷ At the center of their program was legal reform that entailed continued codifying of the

22 (Copenhagen: Det Nordiske Literatur-Samfund, 1852), Ia: 135, 190; *Grágás efter det Arnemagneanske Haandskrift Nr. 334 fol., Stáðarhólsbók* [II], edited by Vilhjálmur Finsen (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1879), 395–96.

6 NGL, 1: 72.

7 Two syntheses are Knut Helle, *Norge blir en stat 1130–1319*, *Handbok i Norges historie*, vol. 1, no. 3 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1964) and Sverre Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom: State Formation in Norway, c. 900–1350* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010).

customary law of the four legal provinces of the kingdom, which were reformed and standardized.⁸ By so doing, the king became more directly involved in local law than previously. The codification of customary law and its subsequent reform by royal initiative meant that the framework of the law changed fundamentally. It transported the *locus* of the law from orality and living memory to the media of literacy and the written word. Law was becoming increasingly bookish and more securely situated within the sphere of king and clerics. Reformed codes were introduced for Gulaping in 1267 and for Eiðsifaping and Borgarþing the following year. Frostaping accepted a reformed code in 1269 without Christian Law owing to opposition from church authorities, who believed the king was overriding its legislative independence by reforming Christian Law. King and archbishop were still working towards a settlement on ecclesiastical jurisdiction and administrative freedom of the church when the former introduced a new and unified code of secular law for the entire kingdom in 1274, the *Landslög*.⁹

The introduction of unified law for the entire kingdom, legislated by royal authority from above by God's grace, was made under strong influence from contemporary European measures. The reintroduction of Roman law in the high Middle Ages allowed kings to better consolidate and centralize their power through legislative reforms, through which customary law increasingly gave way to centralized legislative authority from above.¹⁰ In 1231, the Wonder of the World, King Frederick II of Sicily (r. 1198–1250) and Holy Roman Emperor (r. 1220–50), became the first monarch of the age to introduce unified law for his kingdom. In terms

- 8 Most likely, regional law was originally codified in the late eleventh or the early twelfth century. What may survive of it, however, became part of younger and reformed redactions. See Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold*, 179–82 and Knut Helle, *Gulatinget og gulatingsslova* (Leikanger: Skald, 2001), 20–23.
- 9 Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold*, 179–227; Arnved Nedkvitne, *The Social Consequences of Literacy in Medieval Scandinavia*, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy, vol. 11 (Brepols: Turnhout, 2004), 67–105.
- 10 See, e.g., Antony Black, *Political Thought in Europe 1250–1450*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), esp. 14–41, 136–69, 186–91; K. Pennington, “Law, Legislative Authority and Theories of Government, 1150–1300,” J. P. Canning, “Law, Sovereignty and Corporation theory, 1300–1450,” Jean Dunbabin, “Government,” and Jeannine Quillet, “Community, Council and Representation,” all in J. H. Burns, ed., *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350–c. 1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

of centralized bureaucracy and state apparatuses, the kingdom of Sicily was at that time probably the most advanced of all Western states.¹¹ King Magnús's *Landslög* of 1274 put Norway among those at the forefront of progressive, state-wide legislation inspired by Roman law.¹² The inspiration came not least from Castile, where major reforms were made on the basis of Roman law principles in the mid-thirteenth century (resulting in *Les Siete Partidas*, 'Code in Seven Parts', finished around 1265).¹³ In 1258, Princess Kristín, daughter of King Hákon, was married to Prince Philip of Castile, the half-brother of King Alfonso X (r. 1254–84). A large entourage of Norwegian courtiers visited the Castilian court on this occasion and must have learned firsthand about the legal reforms then in full progress. The legal reforms in Norway followed immediately thereafter.¹⁴

The novelty of legislating against *slímuasetur* can be understood up to a point within the local context of these reforms. The emergence of a central legislative authority, through which the king appeared as a human legislator, brought with it a new understanding of the nature and origins of law. Nonetheless, law codes continued to focus primarily on criminal law and only secondarily on constitutional law. One way that the king sought to increase his power was by taking control of areas of society where his authority was previously either absent or limited and dispensing justice there. Peace increasingly became the *king's peace*, a 'public' peace. This became evident in, for example, what Max Weber famously called the 'monopoly of violence' by state authority, when the king sought to eliminate feuds and 'private justice' of any kind among his subjects. Aside from regional and chronological variations, it remains open to debate how successful premodern state authorities were in their quest for such a monopoly.¹⁵ Identifying

11 For chief characteristics, see Hiroshi Takayama, "Law and Monarchy in the South," in David Abulafia, ed., *Italy in the Central Middle Ages, 1000–1300*, The Short Oxford History of Italy (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), and David Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 202–25.

12 When exactly the *Landslög* were introduced, in 1274 or even as early as 1267, is open to debate, cf. Anna Catharina Horn's survey of early scholarship on the legal reforms of the 1260s and 1270s: "Lovrevisjonene til Magnus Hákonsson Lagabøte – en historiografisk gjennomgang," *Maal og Mimne* (2018, no. 2).

13 Thoroughly treated in Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *Alfonso X, the Justinian of His Age: Law and Justice in Thirteenth-Century Castile* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019).

14 *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, ed. Þorleifur Hauksson, Sverrir Jakobsson, and Tor Ulset, 2 vols., Íslensk fornrit, vols. 31–32 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2013), 2: 197–200, 202–03.

15 The continued practice of feuding by the nobility in late medieval and early modern so-

slimesitting guests as a threat to the king's peace and as in breach of the law belongs to this saga. It may be compared with other novelties of the Norwegian king's law that likewise sought to expand his jurisdiction and field of interest. However, we turn now to the broader European background, against which the introduction of this law must be read.

King and Hospitality

Feasting (*convivium*, *veizla*) was a common expression in the political language of premodern society. Aside from friendship-making through feasts and gifts among peers or near-peers, which was common among the political elite or aristocracy, formal hospitality was exacted on a wide scale by political superiors. Itinerant kingship, which was emblematic of early and high medieval rulership, focused fiscal, social, and political ties on the ritualistic exaction of feasts. Outwardly portrayed as a free and voluntary action, the reception of one's political superiors was usually anything but that. It highlighted and cemented the unequal social and political standing among the partakers and was contextualized by larger frameworks of power, both in its application and perception. The degree of compulsion would vary along a scale from voluntary feasting among peers (*Gastfreundschaft*) to the obligatory reception of political superiors (*Herrschaftsgastung*).¹⁶

The big players on the scene, itinerant kings, perambulated their domains as regularly and systematically as they could, but even they faced real limits in the theater of power. Their access to local resources for upkeep was regulated by custom, which was subject to constant negotiation with the aristocracy and landed elite. The royal fisc, a set of properties and assets earmarked for the upkeep of the king and his court, emerged over time out of such circumstances. The king might be its owner in name, yet his

ciety is treated in, e.g., Hillyar Zmora, *The Feud in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). The non-monopoly of violence by medieval public authorities and the sustained practice of 'private justice' throughout the medieval era is well illustrated in Warren C. Brown, *Violence in Medieval Europe*, *The Medieval World* (London: Routledge, 2011), esp. 165ff.

¹⁶ A large body of scholarship is dedicated to itinerant kingship and the political and social implications and uses of hospitality in premodern Europe. For extensive references and discussion of main themes, see Viðar Pálsson, *Language of Power: Feasting and Gift-Giving in Medieval Iceland and Its Sagas*, *Islandica* 60 (Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2017), esp. 57–62, 77–82, 96–103, 109–10.

access to it was uneven and often quite restricted. Such rights and limits were understood as norms and expressed as custom (*consuetudines*). In Old Icelandic sagas, where the itinerant kingship of the Norwegian king, and occasionally that of others, repeatedly comes to the forefront, the king's movement and upkeep is bound by *lög*, *venja*, *siðvenja*, *vandi*, and the like. In fact, much energy is spent in the kings' sagas on the adjudicative process between king and aristocracy of setting these limits and how the king must share power with those who back him up.¹⁷

Exacting hospitality was practiced or claimed by various lords and political potentates high and low, both secular and ecclesiastical. Sometimes it was regular, sometimes spasmodic and ad hoc. It was often disputed and led not infrequently to confrontation and conflict. Enforcing hospitality and imposing oneself on others is, in any case, a form of political violence, even when negotiated and channeled. Importantly, it was not simply a matter of finances but mainly a matter of political display, a visual verification of power relations acted out before witnesses.

The story of how and why the curbing of enforced hospitality became a legislative theme among high medieval legislators belongs to the larger story of Western Europe's societal transformation during that period, which was characterized not least by growing institutionalization and centralization of power.¹⁸ The earliest steps in this direction had already been taken in the political climate of mid- and late-tenth-century Italy but were soon made north of the Alps too. Initially, kings would attempt to shut the door on forceful members of the political elite via charters of protection for those suffering their visits, principally cities. Once kings assumed the role of active legislators, however, as the king of Norway did in the later thirteenth century, they sought to establish more general rules to this effect through law, linking this agenda to public peace and order.

Coming into the eleventh century in France, so-called banal lords or castellans with their bands of *militēs* imposed their political will on local societies, using force when necessary. Their belligerent behavior and arbitrary use of violence thrived not least because of the relative weakness of

17 See Viðar Pálsson, *Language of Power*, 58–122 for references to sagas and secondary sources regarding the development of the royal fisc in Norway and the regulated royal itinerary bound by it.

18 See, e.g., R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution, c. 970–1215, The Making of Europe* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000).

royal government. They imposed their own jurisdiction on their neighbors and forced them, often with brute force, to submit to dues and obligations of various sorts, including hospitality. These were quickly styled as 'bad customs', *mala* or *pravae consuetudines*.¹⁹ Moreover, in the course of the high Middle Ages a fast-rising population left many aristocratic younger sons without hope for landed inheritance and traditional establishment. Many of them had few career choices but to enter the universities in the cities and become clerics and courtiers in the rising bureaucracies of secular and ecclesiastical lords. Others chose to try their luck as knights in the service of lords high and low. Especially before many of them were channeled into crusades outside Europe from the close of the eleventh century onwards, their local presence did anything but promote social and political stability or reduce violence. At the same time, nobles, higher lords, and other political superiors continued to practice conventional means of displaying their power and mobilizing resources in their favor by exacting hospitality and upkeep in various forms.

Already in the late tenth century and the early eleventh, popular and ecclesiastical peace movements began to spread all over Western Europe. The Peace and Truce of God, *pax et treuga dei*, sought to limit and regulate the use of violence and armed forces and turned against the arbitrary use of political power against non-belligerents and common people. It promoted public peace.²⁰ However, these popular movements, initially spreading from southern France and reaching the Empire, soon fed into royal and princely initiatives for administering criminal justice and protecting public order. Quite prominently, curbing violence in the form of forced hospitality became part of royal and princely legislative agendas. In the Empire, for example, it became part of the *Landfrieden* movement (*constitutio pacis* or *pax jurata*), which likewise sought to circumscribe feuds and promote

19 These topics have featured prominently in the continued debates on or relating to the 'feudal revolution/mutation'. Its scholarship is enormous. For a relatively recent synthesis of much of it, see Charles West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution: Political and Social Transformation Between Marne and Moselle, c. 800–c. 1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

20 See Geoffrey Koziol, *The Peace of God, Past Imperfect* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2018), and Thomas Head and Richard Landes, eds., *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

public courts for dispute resolutions.²¹ Protection of the politically weak from forced entry into their homes and involuntary hospitality for political superiors was addressed as early as in Carolingian capitularies, but since the late tenth and early eleventh century, towns and cities had increasingly sought royal or princely protection from the forced entry and hospitality of powerful nobles and political potentates. For example, King Berengar II of Italy (r. 950–66) issued privileges for Genoa in 958 which expressly forbade neighboring counts, margraves, and other nobles from forcing themselves into the city and exacting hospitality. Thereafter, numerous other cities secured comparable privileges, such as Mantua and Savona in 1018 from Emperor Henry II (r. 1014–24), Pisa in 1081 from Emperor Henry III (r. 1084–1106 but as king from 1056), and Cremona in 1114 from Emperor Henry V (r. 1111–25). Various Spanish cities and towns secured early privileges too.

The development was similar in England and France, especially from the twelfth century onwards. King Henry I (r. 1100–35) granted privileges to London in 1132 that limited its customary obligations to host notable visitors, and these restrictions were tightened even further with renewed privileges in 1155 by King Henry II (r. 1154–89). As the grip was tightened, enforced hospitality eventually became a capital crime, like housebreaking. The gradual criminalization of involuntary hospitality in the high Middle Ages went in tandem with the consolidation of royal power and public judicial authority. In the Empire in 1186, Frederick Barbarossa (r. 1155–90) legislated against arson and various household violations and injuries, including forced hospitality (*hospitari violenter*). It was only to be punished, however, if it evidently caused damage. Such qualifications gradually disappeared, and forced entry of any kind (*domum invadere*) came to be considered a serious crime against public peace and order.²²

21 Benjamin Arnold, *Medieval Germany 500–1300: A Political Interpretation* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 151–57.

22 The examples given in this and the previous paragraph, and many more, are reviewed in Robert von Keller, *Freiheitsgarantien für Personen und Eigentum im Mittelalter: Eine Studie zur Vorgeschichte moderner Verfassungsgrundrechte*, *Deutschrechtliche Beiträge*, vol. 14, no. 1 (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1933), cf. Hans Conrad Peyer, *Von der Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus: Studien zur Gastlichkeit im Mittelalter*, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Schriften*, vol. 31 (Hanover: Verlag Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1987), 192–99.

Local Icelandic Context

Late-commonwealth Icelanders knew this language of power well. Obligatory hospitality lay at the heart of itinerant kingship in Norway, as elsewhere, and Icelandic authors describe its social, political, and economic mechanisms at length in the kings' sagas, dating from the early thirteenth century. In the world of the kings' sagas, well prior to royal legislation against enforced hospitality (by others), the king is but one among those who exact hospitality as an exercise of authority. Petty kings routinely sought to establish their local authority by formal reception, *veizla*, and often met with great resistance. The sagas' description of how the Eiríkssynir sought establishment in Norway after their stay in England is emblematic, for example. The last of them, Guðrøðr, arrived in Víkin, "tók hann at herja ok brjóta undir sik landsfólk, en beiddi sér viðtöku" (proceeded to harry and subjugate the people, and demanded acclamation for himself). The farmers chose to host him at feasts (*veizlur*) rather than paying for his and his army's upkeep with an outright payment. They got rid of him soon, however, when two of King Óláfr Tryggvason's kinsmen "koma á einni nótt með liði sínu þar, sem Guðrøðr konungur var á veizlu, veita þar atgöngu með eldi ok vápnum. Fell þar Guðrøðr konungur ok flestallt liðit hans" (arrived one night together with their force where King Guðrøðr was attending a *veizla*, and attacked with fire and weapons. King Guðrøðr fell there and almost all of his men).²³ His brother, King Erlingr, had suffered the same fate in Þrándheimr when the farmers themselves recruited "lið mikit, stefna síðan at Erlingi konungi, þar sem hann var á veizlu, ok halda við hann orrustu. Fell Erlingr konungur þar ok mikil sveit manna með honum" (a great force, then headed for where King Erlingr was attending a *veizla* and confronted him in battle. King Erlingr fell there and a mighty host of men with him).²⁴ Involuntary hospitality became especially burdensome for the local farmers when rival claimants for authority surveyed the same region simultaneously, demanding *veizlur* as

23 *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 3 vols., Íslenzk fornrit, vols. 26–28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1941–51), 1: 334–35, cf. *Flateyjarbók: En samling of norske kongesagaer med indskudte mindre fortællinger om begivenheder i og udenfor Norge samt annaler*, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C. R. Unger, 3 vols. (Christiania: P. T. Mallings forlagsboghandel, 1860–68), 1: 432–33, and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar eptir Odd munk Snorrason*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit, vol. 25 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2006), 286–88.

24 *Heimskringla*, 1: 220–21.

well as other forms of taxation. Thus, following King Ólafr Tryggvason's death at Svöldur in 1000, both Earl Eiríkr and magnate Erlingr Skjálǫgsson believed themselves to be rightful overlords of Rogaland, and each proceeded to demand *veizlur* and other payments in full from the local farmers, who had no choice but to pay double.²⁵ We may doubt the historicity of the narrative, but the political culture it describes is typically premodern.

The kings' sagas focus principally on the king and his mobilization of resources rather than that of other major players, who appear more randomly in the narratives. There can be no doubt, however, that before royal authority increased and became consolidated in the thirteenth century, the aristocratic practice of articulating political and social status through demands of formal upkeep and reception from inferiors must have been common among the politically strong, as it indeed was in premodern Europe. Before asking if the same was true for commonwealth Iceland, two things regarding the king's own practice of exacting feasts should be underlined. Firstly, that Norway's framework of itinerant kingship developed over a long period of time, and its limits were expressed through custom.²⁶ Therefore, the practice of enforced hospitality, whether by the king or anyone else believing he was entitled to it, becomes visible to us almost exclusively through medieval narratives, not law. For Western Europe generally, the subject became a matter of law only when kings started to legislate against this practice by others, forbidding them to *slimesit* (or, prior to this, when they issued privileges for specific cities and towns in the form of charters). Political superiors would be accompanied by a retinue, *lið* or *hirð*, when they paid formal visits, and the law of the Norwegian court, *Hirðskrá*, gives valuable insight into the composition of the royal retinue. *Hirðskrá* is a late legal document, however, dating from the second half of the thirteenth century, and thus it postdates the formative period of itinerant kingship. To what extent it reflects earlier law of the court (and if it does, how far back) is a matter of debate.²⁷

25 *Heimskringla*, 2: 28–29, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga: Den store saga om Olav den hellige efter pergamenthåndskrift i Kungliga biblioteket i Stockholm nr. 2 4to med varianter fra andre håndskrifter*, ed. Oscar Albert Johansen and Jón Helgason, 2 bks. (Oslo: Norsk historisk kjeldeskrift-institutt, 1941), 59–60, and *Flateyjarbók*, 1: 537.

26 Expressed in the sagas with (*for*) *lög*, *vandi* or *venja*, *siðvenja*, *siðr*, and the like; see, e.g., *Heimskringla*, 2: 49 (*siðvenja*), 100 (*siðr*), 102 (*lög*), 191 (*siðvenja*), 297 (*lög*, *vandi*), cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 81, 146, 148 and *Flateyjarbók*, 2: 64; *Heimskringla*, 3: 207 (*for* *lög*).

27 See the introduction to *Hirðskræen: Hirdloven til Norges konge og hans håndgangne menn etter*

Secondly, the number of retainers or followers a political superior would have brought with him when exacting hospitality was more moderate than many modern people would assume. In cases of systematic exploitation of hospitality, such as that of the king, both the frequency of visits and the number of men to be accommodated were rigorously contested and restricted. According to the kings' sagas, the royal *hirð* was originally sixty men. Supposedly, it was doubled twice in the eleventh century, initially to one hundred and twenty by King Haraldr *harðráði* and then again by his son King Óláfr *kyrri*, bringing it to two hundred and forty men. *Fagrskinna*, *Morkinskinna*, and *Heimskringla* all contain lengthy passages on these changes and how they were met with reluctance and suspicion by the aristocracy, unwilling as it was to allow the king to go beyond customary limits of size when exacting feasts.²⁸ Judging by the evidence of the sagas, the itinerant court of Norwegian kings, accompanying him as he *fór á veizlur*, would on average have numbered either in the tens or, at most, somewhere over one hundred.²⁹ This may be compared to early and high medieval Carolingian and German kings, whose traveling court usually numbered in the hundreds, sometimes even as low as three hundred; and French, English, Sicilian, and Aragonese kings, whose retinue appears on average to have amounted to between three and five hundred. Princes and various lesser political heads exacting hospitality in early and high medieval Europe, secular and ecclesiastical, made do with much smaller numbers, a few tens of men.³⁰

AM 322 fol, ed. Steinar Imsen (Oslo: Riksarkivet, 2000), esp. 24ff., and Didrik Arup Seip, "Hirdskrá," in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingtid til reformationstid* [KLNLM], 22 vols. (Reykjavík: Bókaverslun Ísafoldar, 1976), 6: 580–82.

- 28 *Morkinskinna*, ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, 2 vols., Íslenzk fornrit, vols. 23–24 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2011), 2: 9; *Fagrskinna — Nóregs konunga tal*, ed. Bjarni Einarsson, Íslenzk fornrit, vol. 29 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1985, 65, 301; *Heimskringla*, 3: 207. See also *Heimskringla*, 2: 72–73, cf. *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*, 103–4 and *Flateyjarbók*, 2: 48.
- 29 The size of feasts and the royal retinue is studied in Viðar Pálsson, *Language of Power*, 89–96.
- 30 Carlrichard Brühl, *Fodrum, gistum, servitium regis: Studien zu den wirtschaftlichen Grundlagen des Königtums im Frankenreich und den fränkischen Nachfolgestaaten Deutschland, Frankreich und Italien vom 6. bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts*, 2 bks. (Köln: Böhlau, 1968), 168–71; John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936–1075*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Fourth Series, vol. 21 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 58; Peyer, *Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus*, 156–57.

Turning to commonwealth Iceland, we may anticipate two things given what we know about Norway and Europe. Firstly, that if enforced hospitality was practiced, commonwealth law, *Grágás*, is unlikely to contain any regulations about it, neither the obligation nor its limits. It would have been dictated by unwritten custom, social norms. Secondly, that if enforced hospitality was practiced, its practitioner would have brought with him only a small band of men, perhaps just a handful. Clearly, *Grágás* contains articles that address obligatory hospitality, but these are unrelated to *slímuasetur* and the issue of enforced hospitality as an expression of power or social status. Thus, according to Christian law, it is a communal responsibility to take a newborn child to baptism without delay if a priest is not nearby and the child has to be taken to him. Its parents, or another person responsible for the child, must travel with it, but others are prohibited from hindering or delaying their travel in any way—they must offer food and shelter if needed (in exchange for payment in certain cases), assist with boats or ferries if waters must be crossed, make horses available if necessary, and so on.³¹

The visitation of Icelandic bishops and their demands for hospitality when surveying their dioceses is, I would argue, a closely related yet separate issue from that of enforced hospitality by political superiors and *slímesitting*. Rather, it was an internal matter of church administration, and only within that framework did it revolve around the political superiority of the bishop. Certainly, legal prohibitions against enforced hospitality in high medieval Europe were directed against all kinds of political heads exacting hospitality from political inferiors, including ecclesiastical leaders such as bishops. However, unlike many of their European colleagues, such as in France and the Empire, the Icelandic bishops were not concurrently secular administrators. On the contrary, their office was in every respect separate from secular political leadership (which did not deny them influence in the secular sphere). We should also remember that episcopal visitations were regulated by church law and that the new codes of the Norwegian realm prohibiting *slímuasetur*—*Járnsíða*, *Jónsbók*, *Landslög*—

31 *Grágás*, Ia: 4–7; II, 1–7; *Grágás* [III]: *Stykker, som findes i det Arnemagnæanske Haandskrift Nr. 351 fol. Skálholtsbók og en Række andre Haandskrifter*, ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1883), 1–6; *Járnsíða*, 145–46. There are other special circumstances too, cf. *Grágás*, Ia: 24, 27, *Grágás*, II: 26, 29, 35–36, 74, 119, 169, 211, 252, 333, *Grágás*, III: 30, 77, 123, 173, 214, 256–57, 339.

were secular law. Church law was to be reformed and issued as an independent body of law alongside these secular codes, including regulations of episcopal administration and visitations. The location of the article on slimesitting within secular law therefore reinforces the understanding that it was principally meant to regulate secular political culture. It is easy to imagine, nonetheless, that in practice there may not always have been a straightforward separation in people's minds when they felt bishops to be overbearing or costly during their visitations.

The Old Christian Law, *Kristinna laga þáttir* in *Grágás*, gives no instructions on the practicalities and logistics of episcopal visitations, aside from the obligation of farmers hosting the bishop to provide horses if necessary. The law simply commands that the bishop of Hólar shall survey his diocese annually and the bishop of Skálholt shall survey his diocese every three years, that is one-third annually.³² Bishops occasionally appear on a visitation in the bishops' sagas and contemporary sagas (*biskupa sögur* and *samtíðarsögur*). According to *Guðmundar saga dýra* in *Sturlunga saga*, Bishop Brandr Sæmundarson of Hólar (b. 1163–1201) *gisti* every other church farm when he surveyed his diocese. In most cases, however, it remains unclear to the saga audience whether and how the presence of a bishop, such as when he is seen feasting, was in connection with his inspection.³³ King Eiríkr Magnússon (r. 1280–99) and Bishop Árni Þorláksson of Skálholt (b. 1269–98) reached a general agreement on the limits of visitations by the Concordat of Ögvaldsnes in 1297, according to which the bishop should survey (*visitera*) his region evenly and only after the Mass of Peter and Paul on June 29.³⁴ The bishop of Hólar continued to survey his region annually until at least the early fourteenth century. Regulating episcopal visitations (*yfirfor/yfirferð/yfirsókn*), such as the size of the bishop's retinue and proper notice of its schedule, remained a work in progress in the later Middle Ages, well past the commonwealth era and

32 *Grágás*, Ia: 19, II: 22–23, III: 20–21, 69, 113–14, 163–64, 207, 246–47, 288, 324–25.

33 For example, such as when Bishop Brandur accepted a feast (*boð*) at Helgastaðir or when Bishop Magnús Gizurarson of Skálholt was hosted at a feast (*veizla*) by Órækja Snorrason in Vatnsfjörður in 1233. See *Sturlunga saga*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason, and Kristján Eldjárn, 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946), 1: 161–62, 362–63.

34 *Diplomatarium Islandicum: Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn, sem hefir inni að halda bréf og gjörninga, dóma og máldaga, og aðrar skrár er snerta Ísland eða íslenzka menn*, ed. Jón Sigurðsson, Jón Þorkelsson, Páll Eggert Ólason, and Björn Þorsteinsson, 16 vols. (Copenhagen and Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 1857–1972), 2: 325.

King Magnús's legal reforms. At some point, church farmers received the option of paying off the obligation to host the bishop (*úthlutning* or *útlausn*), but the origins and extent of that practice are unclear.³⁵

The case of Bishop Guðmundr *góði* of Hólar (b. 1203–37) is atypical, and parts of it may in some sense be understood in terms of slimesitting. Guðmundr's church politics and finances were at odds with traditional ideas upheld by many of the political elite, including powerful chieftains in his diocese. With appeal to humility, Guðmundr took various people under his protection and often traveled with a considerable flock. As is evident from *Guðmundar sögur* and *Sturlunga saga*, local farmers were not too keen on maintaining such a crowd at their own expense, regardless of whether Guðmundr was formally on a visitation or otherwise traveling through the region. For example, the tension is evident in this scene in *Sturlunga*, depicting uneasy circumstances in 1220:³⁶

Síðan fóru þeir norðr til Svarfaðardals, ok ætlaði biskup norðr í sýslu sína. En Eyfirðingar vildu eigi taka við biskupi á bæi sína ok flokk hans.

[Guðmundr arrives in Reykjadalur] ... Dreif þá til hans fólk margt. Bergþórr Jónsson var þar með biskupi, ok hafði hann nær tíu tígum manna. Þótti bóndum þungt undir at búa ok þolðu þó um hrið. Ferr biskup í Múla, ok tekr Ívarr við honum liðliga, ok er þar sæmilig veizla, þess er sjá mátti, at engi ástsemð var veitt af Ívari. Skilja þeir þó vel, ok fór biskup á brott ...

They then proceeded north to Svarfaðardalur, the bishop intending to advance north to his see. But the farmers of Eyjafjörður refused to host him and his flock at their farms.

[Guðmundr arrives in Reykjadalur] ... People flocked to him in numbers. Bergþórr Jónsson accompanied the bishop with nearly one hundred men. The farmers felt that the burdens were heavy but

35 See Gunnar F. Guðmundsson, *Íslenskt samfélag og Rómakirkja*, vol. 2 of *Kristni á Íslandi* (Reykjavík: Alþingi, 2000), 110–14, and Magnús Már Lárusson, “Gästning. Island,” in *KLNM*, 6: 18–19. The New Christian Law, Bishop Árni's *Kristinréttir* of 1275, expanded previous provisions on the obligation to provide horses for the bishop and his men upon request when on a visitation, cf. *Járnsíða*, 149.

36 *Sturlunga saga*, 1: 274–75.

nonetheless endured them for a while. The bishop arrived at Múli, and Ívarr hosted him impeccably. There was a respectable *veizla*, which Ívarr clearly offered without affection. They parted on good terms, however, and the bishop went on his way ...

Ívarr quickly gathered men before the bishop returned, this time drawing them up for battle:

En at þeim viðbúningi ríðr biskup í tún.

Spyrja þeir Eyjólf [who was with the bishop], hvat safnaðr þessi skal.

En Ívarr segir, at þeir skuli nú at keyptu komast, áðr þeir fái eign hans, ok segir, at nú skal fara allt saman, karl ok kýr.

The bishop rode into the home-field as the arrangements were being carried out.

They asked Eyjólfur what was up with the crowd.

Ívarr said this time they would have to pay full price before getting hands on his property, it would be over his dead body.

Reluctance to host the bishop under comparable circumstances is widely discernible in *Sturlunga*.³⁷ In a general sense, this is akin to slimesitting, as violent exaction of hospitality is by nature. However, Guðmundr's intention was hardly to impose his political authority on inferiors by demonstrative action, the kind of which legislators had in mind when prohibiting slimesitting. Rather, he demanded Christian and communal responsibility for the maintenance of their bishop and his flock, which plainly counted many people of humble social and financial standing.

Examination of the political culture that is described in *Sturlunga saga* and other relevant narratives for the commonwealth period quickly reveals that, unlike Norwegian political culture and most other premodern political cultures in Western Europe to which we have referred, it was not characterized by regular or systematic exaction of hospitality by political superiors. On the contrary, such practice is noticeably absent. Feasting and gift-giving remained native expressions of bonding among peers or

37 See, e.g., *Sturlunga saga*, 1: 272–77, 317–18, *passim*.

near-peers in medieval Iceland, and sometimes served to cement bonds between chieftains and their closest followers.³⁸ But *Herrschaftsgastung* in one form or another was never an element of typical commonwealth leadership, even as it transformed into territorial lordship towards the final stages of the commonwealth era. There are several reasons for this. The Icelandic theater of power was much smaller than that of, for example, Norway, and its actors played on a comparatively small stage. Despite their best efforts, they were in no way comparable to or in the same league as the foremost Norwegian notables (including, of course, the king), let alone major European figures. They operated in a rural economy without cities, and Iceland's population was small. They fought over human and other resources that were poor and limited compared to most other places in Western Europe at the time. Much has been written on the financial basis of commonwealth chieftains that cannot be reviewed here,³⁹ but it remains clear that they neither needed nor had the capacity to perambulate their domains on a regular basis and exact hospitality as a form of taxation and a display of political dominance. Prior to the formation of territorial domains in the thirteenth century and the consolidation of power into the hands of the few, a chieftain's sphere of power would in any case not have spanned great distances.

Guðmundr *dýri* (d. 1212) is the single chieftain in the corpus of contemporary sagas reported to have imposed regular visits on his kinsmen and *þingmenn*. He was a chieftain in Eyjafjörður, living at Bakki in Öxnadalur. The saga briefly reports:⁴⁰

Guðmundr átti fjölða þingmanna út um Svarfaðardal ok náfrændr, ok fór hann þannig at heimboðum haust ok vár.

Guðmundur had many thingmen and kinsmen in Svarfaðardalur, and went there for *heimboð* in autumn and spring.

One assumes these visits were imposed, yet the reference is too brief and

38 See Viðar Pálsson, "Forming Bonds with Followers in Medieval Iceland: The Cases of Thordr kakali and Thorgils skarði," in *Nordic Elites in Transformation, c. 1050–1250*, ed. by Kim Esmark, Lars Hermanson, and Hans Jacob Orning, vol. 2: *Social Networks*, Routledge Research in Medieval Studies (Routledge: New York, 2020).

39 For an introduction, see Gunnar Karlsson, *Godamenninn: Staða og áhrif goðorðsmanna í þjóðveldi Íslendinga* (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 2004), 166–78, 316–33.

40 *Sturlunga saga*, 1: 176.

general to allow much speculation. The level of obligation is unclear. At this point, the saga author is more interested in Guðmundr's deplorable behavior towards women when out and about than in the exact nature of the hospitality offered by his *þingmenn*.⁴¹

Neither is enforced hospitality a characteristic of the political culture depicted in the saga world of *Íslendingasögur*. The anomaly is *Ófeigs þáttr*, a short thirteenth-century tale associated with *Ljósvetninga saga*. The tale tells of Guðmundr *dýri*'s namesake and great-great-great-grandfather through the direct male line, Guðmundr *ríki* (*dýrr* and *ríkr* both mean 'powerful'). He was likewise a chieftain in Eyjafjörður and it was his routine:⁴²

at fara norðr um heruð á várit ok hitta þingmenn sína ok ræða um heraðsstjórn ok skipa málum með mǫnnum. Ok stóð þeim af því hallæri mikit, er hǫfðu lítt áðr skipat til búa sinna. Hann reið opt með þrjá tigu manna ok sat víða sjau nætr ok hafði jafnmarga hesta.

to proceed to the northern districts in the spring, meet with his thingmen, deal with local governance, and arrange matters with people. This placed great financial strain on those who had by that point scarcely made provision for their households. He frequently rode with thirty men, staying seven nights in many places, and bringing as many horses.

However, the tale's protagonist, Ófeigr, leads the farmers' resistance, and new limits are negotiated between the parties. It is evident from the *þáttr* that Guðmundr *ríki* had little financial stake in exacting hospitality with force, rather it was about demonstrating a strong hand. Given the relations between the two Guðmundar, and that *Sturlunga* alludes to Guðmundr *dýri* imposing himself on his *þingmenn* in Svarfaðardalur, it is tempting to link the two together. The tale in *Ófeigs þáttr* may have originated during the days of Guðmundur *dýri* or shortly thereafter, warning against overbearing behavior among the politically strong.⁴³

41 Cf. *Sturlunga saga*, 1: 175–76.

42 *Ófeigs þáttr*, ed. Björn Sigfússon, *Íslensk fornrit*, vol. 10 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornrita-félag, 1940), 117.

43 On Guðmundr *ríki*, see Gisli Sigurðsson, "The Immanent Saga of Guðmundur *ríki*," in Judy Quinn, Kate Heslop, and Tarrin Wills, eds. *Learning and Understanding in the Old Norse*

The strongest chieftains in *Sturlunga* and the ones we get closest to in the narrative, such as Snorri Sturluson and his brothers, are not shown imposing themselves on their political inferiors and demanding to be formally received by them in *veizlur*, neither routinely nor sporadically. The saga never hints that they desired to do so. It is beyond the scope of this article to treat the case of Þorgils *skarði*, a king's man who resorted to violence and threats when his claims for recognition of authority were refuted by local farmers. Some he forced into acceptance through hospitality (*veizlur*), having either threatened them with violence or simply beaten them up. However, the context of his actions was specific and quite different from that of *slímusetur*.⁴⁴

European Echoes—Concluding Remarks

The introduction to Icelandic law of a prohibition against *slímusetur*, in *Járnsíða* and *Jónsbók*, was not a response to local political conditions. Mainly, it was symptomatic of the fact that Iceland had now joined a new and different political unity, the Norwegian realm. In Norway, its introduction corresponded better to local conditions. Ultimately, however, the legal measures taken against forced hospitality in Scandinavia were echoes of a European development in which kings and princes increasingly policed their territories as legislators, supreme judges, and protectors of public peace and order.⁴⁵

Also in the larger context, it is worth noting that the practice of enforced hospitality, the obligatory reception of a political superior, did not lose its importance within medieval political discourse through these developments (state formation). On the contrary, it underscored the primacy of kings and princes as it was denied to others. In other words, kings increasingly redefined such behavior by others as illegal violence, slimestitting, and breach of public peace, while reserving for themselves

World: Essays in Honour of Margaret Clunies Ross, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, vol. 18 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).

44 Þorgils *skarði*'s actions are studied, with relevant examples, in Viðar Pálsson, *Language of Power*, 163–65, 175–81.

45 Around the same time, stipulations entered Scandinavian law that forbade travelers, powerful and not, from demanding lodging without payment, for which there was often cited customary hospitality of some sort. Evidently, that had become too burdensome. This is a related yet a separate issue. See Jerker Rosén, “Väldgästning,” in *KLNMM*, 20: 280–81.

the right to such political display. The application of enforced hospitality as a realization of political and social relations is deep-seated in Western political culture (and more widely, for that matter) and extends back to antiquity. In imperial Rome, the emperor's power and a city's loyalty and subordination to him were ritually displayed in the *adventus*, a highly ceremonial reception of the ruler into the city.⁴⁶ Medieval kings, especially in the late Middle Ages and beyond, practiced similarly lavish and formal entries into key cities and towns to underscore their authority. Such royal entries, as they are collectively called, were often styled as 'ancient tradition' and explicitly referred to the imperial *adventus* in its ceremonial language and symbolism. The reception of a new monarch into a city was often the occasion for renewing rights and privileges, not least the spelling out of the limitations of the ruler's power over the city and its inhabitants. This was especially noticeable for the entries in the Netherlands, known as the 'Joyous Entry' (*Blijde Intrede* in Dutch but commonly referred to in French, *Joyeuse Entrée*), but royal entries were called *Joyeuse Entrée* outside of the Netherlands as well.⁴⁷ In both Roman and medieval entries, formal hospitality and feasting lay at the heart of the ritual. In this context, the deed was not defined as slimesitting or violence but a royal or princely prerogative, a spectacle of state.

46 See Björn C. Ewald's and Carlos F. Noreña's introduction to their *The Emperor and Rome: Space, Representation, and Ritual*, Yale Classical Studies, vol. 35 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 40–41 with further citations.

47 See Gordon Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy, and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

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ÁGRIP

Slímusetur í forníslenskum lögum og evrópsku samhengi

Efnisorð: *slímusetur, veizlur*, norræn og evrópsk miðaldalög, vaxandi ríkisvald

Ísland fékk ný lög af hendi konungs 1271, *Járnsíðu*. Meðal nýmæla í þeim var bann við því að óvelkominir og yfirgangssamir gestir *sætu slímusetri* í veislum annarra. Sams konar lagagreinar standa í norskum *Landslögum* Magnúsar lagabætis (1274) og *Jónsbók* (1281).

Til þess að skilja nývaknaðan áhuga konungs á því að girða fyrir *slímusetur* er nauðsynlegt að setja hann í samhengi við bæði staðbundnar lagaumbætur og evrópskt tungutak valds. Ýmsir hlutir sem áður höfðu staðið utan valdsviðs konungs voru nú beygðir undir það. Í greininni færi ég rök fyrir því að lög sem settu yfirgangsmönnum stólinn fyrir dyrnar og lögðu bann við því að þeir þröngvöðu sér upp á aðra með kröfu um formlegan viðurgerning (veislu) beri að skilja í evrópsku samhengi og með samanburði við sambærilega lagasetningu annars staðar í Evrópu á hámiðöldum. Þetta tvennt, staðbundið og evrópskt samhengi, er þó að endingu tvö sjónarhorn á sama fyrirbærið, gagnleg til þess að draga fram hið sérstaka og samhengisbundna gagnvart hinu almenna. Lagaumbætur í Noregsveldi á síðari hluta þrettándu aldar voru fyrst og fremst tilbrigði við evrópskt stef sem ómaði hátt og snjallt á hámiðöldum og var leiðarstef í víðtækari samfélagsbyltingu álfunnar, vexti og viðgangi ríkisvalds.

Innleiðing laga gegn *slímusetri*, fyrst í *Járnsíðu* og síðan *Jónsbók*, var ekki víðbragð við staðbundinni valdamenningu á Íslandi. Þvert á móti var hún til merkis um að Ísland væri orðið hluti af nýrri og annars konar valdaheild, Noregsveldi. Lög gegn *slímusetri* áttu mun betur við norska valdamenningu. Framar öllu voru þau, og önnur sambærileg ákvæði á Norðurlöndum, endurómur frá Evrópu, þar sem konungar og aðrir furstar gengu sífellt lengra við stjórn og ögun valdasvæða sinna í hlutverki löggjafa, ædsta dómara og verndara almannafríðar og -reglu.

SUMMARY

Slímusetur in Early Icelandic Law and its European Context

Keywords: *slímusetur*, hospitality, medieval Nordic and European law, state formation

Iceland received new law from its king in 1271, *Járnsíða* (Ironsides). Among other novelties, it forbade unwelcome and overbearing guests ‘slimesitting’ at other people’s feasts, *sitja slímusetri*. Analogous articles appear in the Norwegian *Landslög* (National Law, 1274) and *Jónsbók* (1281).

To understand the king’s newly acquired interest in legislating against *slímusetur*, it is necessary to appreciate both the local context of legal reform and the European context of political language. Many things that had not been the concern of the king now became so. My present argument is that law forbidding people from imposing themselves on others by enforced hospitality must be understood in its European context and in comparison with similar legal provisions made elsewhere during the high Middle Ages. The two contexts, local and European, are but different viewpoints; however, they are useful in separating the specific and contextual from that which is general. The local context of legal reform in the Norwegian realm during the second half of the thirteenth century is principally a variant on a European theme that rang loud in the central Middle Ages. Essentially, it was a part of a larger, European process of state building.

The introduction to Icelandic law of a prohibition against *slímusetur*, in *Járnsíða* and then *Jónsbók*, was not a response to local political conditions. Mainly, it was symptomatic of the fact that Iceland had now joined a new and different political unity, the Norwegian realm. In Norway, its introduction corresponded better to local conditions. Ultimately, however, the legal measures taken against forced hospitality in Scandinavia were echoes of a European development in which kings and princes increasingly policed their territories as legislators, supreme judges, and protectors of public peace and order.

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THE END OF *ÁRNA SAGA BISKUPS* AND THE CULT OF ST MAGNÚS OF ORKNEY

Hagiography and Ecclesiastical Politics in Early Fourteenth-Century Iceland

Part I

i

Of all the biographical Old Norse sagas, *Árna saga biskups* is unique in ending abruptly not with, or after, but before its hero's death. The saga terminates in 1290, eight years before the demise of its subject, Bishop Árni Þorláksson of Skálholt (1269–1298).¹ Although it survives in some forty manuscript witnesses, there is no certainty about its conclusion. Except for two fragments, all the surviving witnesses derive from the late fourteenth-century *Reykjarfjarðarbók*. This manuscript originally had around a hundred and forty leaves, but only about thirty of them still exist today, while the rest are known from later transcripts. In this way, *Árna saga's* abrupt ending may reflect a loss of leaves from the manuscript at an early stage of its copying. Alternatively, *Reykjarfjarðarbók* may never have included a different ending for this saga in the first place.² What is certain, however, is that *Árna saga biskups* was produced after the death of its protagonist. Both the latest editors of *Árna saga biskups* agree on a date of composition during the episcopacy of Árni Helgason of Skálholt (1304–1320), either by the bishop himself or someone within his circle of authority.³

1 I express my gratitude to Professor Richard North for his valuable advice during the early phase of this research, and I also thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on the submitted manuscript.

2 Þorleifur Hauksson (ed.). *Árna saga biskups* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1972), vii–lx. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (ed.). *Biskupasögur 3: Árna saga biskups, Lárentius saga biskups, Söguþáttur Jóns Halldórssonar biskups, Biskupa ættir*. Íslensk fornrit 17 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1998), lii–lvi.

3 Þorleifur Hauksson (ed.), civ–cvii. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (ed.), xxii–xxvii.

The saga's ending in 1290 arguably leaves out the summation of Árni Þorláksson's episcopal career. This was a settlement, brokered in 1297 by King Eiríkr Magnússon of Norway (1273–1299), which marked the bishop's victory in the so-called *Staðamál* ('The Issues of the Staðir'). The *Staðamál* was a protracted conflict over whether the Icelandic Church or the secular landed elite should ultimately control the Church Farms (*staðir*). These were farms that secular landowners had donated to the Church, yet in many cases landowners and their families had continued to hold and benefit from these properties. The settlement of 1297 would eventually transfer to the Church a significant part of Iceland's landed wealth.⁴

As it now stands, *Árna saga biskups* has in fact two endings, for two of the three principal classes of the copies from *Reykjarfjarðarbók*, entitled *B and J, conclude the saga in a different manner. J signifies a copy made by Jón Gissurarson from Núpur in Dýrafjörður (1589/90–1648). *B (B1-B3) stands for redactions made by Björn Jónsson from Skarðsa (1574–1655) from a lost copy. There is also B4 which, as Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir has shown, is an autograph copy of an abridged version of *Árna saga* that the same Björn made directly from *Reykjarfjarðarbók*.⁵ The text of B1, transcribed in Oddi in 1686 and now preserved in the British Museum, best represents the *B group, and it is used as the base text for both the diplomatic edition of 1972 and the *Íslensk fornrit* edition of 2018.

In its B1 text, the saga ends with a chapter designated as no. 146 in the modern editions. By this point – 1290 – Árni Þorláksson had resided for two years in Niðaróss as a guest of Archbishop Jörundur (1288–1309), having left for Norway in the autumn of 1288 as did his adversary and royal representative, Hrafn Oddsson (1225–1289). The departure of these two principal disputants in the *Staðamál* had been prompted by the coming of Óláfr Ragnríðarson to Iceland earlier in the year.⁶ The visit of this Norwegian courtier clearly focused their minds, and they agreed to submit their case to the judgement of the king and the archbishop. Yet matters did not run smoothly. While he was in Norway, Bishop Árni, supported

4 Magnús Stefánsson, 'Um staði og staðamál', *Saga* 40.2 (2002): 139–166.

5 Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, 'Árna saga biskups og Björn á Skarðsa', in *Sagnaþing helgað Jónasi Kristjánssyni sjötugum 10. apríl*, ed. by Gisli Sigurðsson, Guðrún Kvaran & Sigurgeir Steingrímsson (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1994), vol. I, 243–256.

6 Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (ed.), 177.

by his archbishop, went on the offensive by asking Jörundr Þorsteinsson of Hólar to bring churches in Skálholt under episcopal control.⁷ Hrafn Oddsson's death in November 1289 put another spanner in the works. This came from an injury Hrafn sustained in Denmark while campaigning with the Norwegian king.⁸

Chapter 146, which concludes the *B version of *Árna saga biskups*, records the fallout from these developments which, in its own way, offers a resolution to the saga. Bishop Árni sends a letter to Iceland that announces Hrafn Oddsson's death. The missive also states that any laymen who refuse to forfeit *staðir* and to confess their sins will fall into a state of excommunication. The episode further relates how Abbot Runólfr Sigmundsson of Þykkvibær (d. 1307), who had acted as the bishop's caretaker in his absence, progressed with appropriating Church Farms in the Western Quarter. The *B version ends by highlighting the case of Óláfr Arnesson from Staðarstaður in Western Iceland who, some six years earlier, had played a prominent role in usurping ecclesiastical properties:

Óláfr Arnesson hafði þetta sumar fregnat andlát herra Hrafns; varð hann þar fyrir skelfdr ok gekk af stað til Laurentíusmessu ok kom til móts við ábóta at Máriumessu í Skálholt ok var leyst at fyrirfarandi eiði. Veitti guðlig mildi þessum manni, forstjóra kristinnar, mikit fullting, herra Árna byskupi er utanlands diktaði röksemðir. Herra ábóti lét ok eigi dvína atgönguna at allr múgr leikmanna varð sinn munn at byrgja.⁹

That summer, Óláfr Arnesson had heard about Sir Hrafn's passing. It scared him, and he left on the Mass of St Lawrence and met the abbot at Skálholt on St Mary's Mass and was absolved of the afore-said oath. God's grace afforded strong support to Bishop Árni, the leader of Christianity, who prescribed the ensuing strictures from Norway. Nor did the lord abbot let his offensive diminish, so all the laity were obliged to keep their mouths shut.¹⁰

7 *Ibid.*, 192–193; 230.

8 *Ibid.* On this whole episode in *Staðamál*, see Magnús Stefánsson, 'Frá goðakirkju til biskupskirkju', in *Saga Íslands* III, ed. by Sigurður Línal (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1978), 210–218.

9 *Ibid.*, 205–206.

10 All translations from *Árna saga biskups* are my own.

The saga ends here. Just after these words, in the margin of B4 (the condensed version of *Árna saga* which he copied directly from *Reykjarfjarðarbók*), is a note written by Björn Jónsson at Skarðsá: ‘vantar við söguna’ (‘missing from the saga’). To bridge the perceived gap, Björn added a short annalistic account that focuses on key events in *Staðamál* and ends with Árne’s death.¹¹

The J version, also copied from *Reykjarfjarðarbók* but probably older than *B, concludes with an episode which is designated as chapter 147 in the modern editions. It recounts the travels of a *prófastr* (‘provost’) named Þorvaldr Helgason to Norway:

Á þessu sumri fór síra Þorvaldr í skip at nýju í óleyfi herra Runólfs ábóta. Hafði hann næsta vetr þá atferð sem áðr er frá sagt, en hans sigling tókz ei betr en svo at þeir létu skipit við Færeyar, en tóku allir land. Í þessari ferð féll honum til hörmuligt tilfelli – at þar áðr var hann fyrir sakir frænda ok framkvæmðar ok mikilla mennta öruggr ásóknarmaðr óvina Guðs kristni meðan hann hélt trúnað við sinn herra – var hann gripinn af óhreinum anda svo harðliga at til heilagrar Magnússkirkju leiddu hann fyrir nauðsyn tíu menn í sömu kirkju. Ok er hann kom inn að dyrunum varð sá hlutr er ótrúligr mætti þykkja, ef ei vitat væri þann grun á sem helgi Magnús patron sömu kirkju þíndist fyrir ekki ok varð ei forgefins Krists píslarvottr. Nú sem þeir komu með þennan mann í kirkjuna varð hann svo linr í vitleysi at hann féll sem dauðr niðr í höndum þeim, ok þau bein sem áðr voru styrk á móti náttúru urðu nú blaut og breysklig móti allri náttúru, svo hann lofaði lifanda Guð, jómfrú Máriu ok Magnús patron. Þeir voru nokkrir sem töluðu svo hégómliga um þetta ok sögðu tilefnit vera af sterkri drykkju, ok þat hefði hans vitleysi ollat. En til prófunar að illt er satt, vitjaði þetta mein hann eptir þat hann kom í Noreg á fund herra Eiríks konungs. Voru ok þeir menn er þat sinnuðu at þá er hann tók at ásaka sinn herra fyrir Eiríki konungi, kemr aptr hit sama tilfelli. Geymdu hans þá fyrst íslenzkir menn ok síðan norrænir. Var þá heittr sérdeilis bakstr ok bundit við höfut honum, en þat hjálpaði ekki, ok andaðiz hann í þessari hörmung. Þann vetr annan var Árne byskup öruggr í Noregi at því sinni.¹²

11 *Ibid.*, 207–208.

12 *Ibid.*, 206–207.

This summer Priest Þorvaldr embarked again without receiving permission from Lord Abbot Runólfr. The conduct of Þorvaldr the previous winter has already been narrated, but his voyage went no better this time, for they lost the ship in the Faroes even though they all got to shore. On this journey Þorvaldr was afflicted by a distressing incident. Previously his family, advancement and high learning had kept him safe as a plaintiff against the enemies of God's Christendom, so long as he remained faithful to his lord. Now he was attacked by an unclean spirit so violently that ten men were needed to bring him into the holy Church of St Magnús. And when he came through the door, such a thing happened as might have seemed unbelievable if it had not been proved beyond doubt that St Magnús, the patron of the same church, had suffered and become the aforesaid Christ's martyr. When they brought this man to the church, he became so limp with madness that he fell down as if dead in their hands, while his legs, which had been so unnaturally strong, became likewise so unnaturally limp and weak that he praised the living God, the Virgin Mary and the patron, St Magnús. There were some who spoke falsely about what had occurred, saying that it was due to heavy drinking and that this had caused his madness. And as proof that the evil was real, it attacked Þorvaldr again when he came before King Eiríkr. There were also men who testified that he was afflicted by the same condition when he began to accuse his lord bishop to King Eiríkr. First he was cared for by the Icelanders and then by the Norwegians. A special poultice was heated up and tied around his head, but this did not help, and it was in this distressing state that he died. Bishop Árni had a safe stay in Norway that time, his second winter there.

This episode features in Jón Gissurarson's copy of *Reykjarfjarðarbók* (J), but it is in neither Björn Jónsson's autograph copy of his abridged *Árna saga* (B4) nor in the copies of his fuller version (B1–B3). Þorleifur Hauksson suggests that by the time Jón produced his copy, this part of the manuscript may have become difficult to read.¹³ Also worth considering

13 Þorleifur Hauksson (ed.), xxvii. In 1279 Hrafn was dubbed *merkismaðr* at the Norwegian court, see Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (ed.), 75. In this context, the honour appears to have meant seniority among the king's representatives in Iceland (*sýslumenn*). Hrafn likely held

is whether Björn, unlike Jón Gissurarson, simply judged the episode unworthy of copying. As Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir points out, Björn Jónsson adopted a broadly utilitarian approach towards his copying activity. Thus, when copying B4 Björn omitted passages of a religious or theological nature that he considered superfluous to his interests, which centred on legal history. *B was copied for Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason of Skálholt (1628–1656) in a version which ostensibly included the whole of *Árna saga biskups*. Nevertheless, chapter 147 may still have appeared to Björn as an episode undeserving of inclusion. After all, to him this account of a miracle in the Faroes and the personal fate of one prelate may have seemed irrelevant to the major themes of Iceland's history.

ii

To properly interpret this concluding chapter, it is crucial to have knowledge about the background of its main protagonist, *Prófastr* Þorvaldr Helgason. Þorvaldur first appears in *Árna saga* in 1285, at a time of increasing tension between Bishop Árni Þorláksson and Hrafn Oddsson, the king's most prominent representative in Iceland, regarding *staðir*.¹⁴ As a part of his strategy in the dispute, Hrafn sought to undermine the authority of the provosts. As a recently created office at the time, the provost represented the bishop's authority within larger districts. He held a supervisory role over parishes and wielded important financial responsibilities. Most importantly, the office holder collected the St Peter's Pence (*Rómarskattur*) and the bishop's quarter of the tithe.¹⁵

In 1285 Árni made Þorvaldr provost in the Western-fjords, with the wealthy *staðir* of Holt in Öfundarfjörður as his main residence. This act angered Hrafn who, it appears, had only recently dispossessed Þorvaldr of both his authority and the farm. Hrafn accused the bishop of reneging on a previous agreement. In his letter to the bishop, Hrafn claimed that as long as he was the king's man in the Western-fjords, 'Þorvaldr will not hold the

the office of *sýslumaðr* in the country's northern and western quarters uninterrupted from 1270 to his death in 1289. See Axel Kristinsson, 'Embættismenn konungs fyrir 1400', *Saga* 36 (1998): 113–117.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁵ Erika Sigurdson, *The Church in Fourteenth-Century Iceland: The Formation of an Elite Clerical Identity* (Brill: Leiden, 2016), 72–75.

office of a provost, nor will he keep the *staður* at Holt unless he becomes more powerful than me' ('skal Þorvaldr eigi hafa prófastdæmi, ok eigi hefir hann staðinn í Holti nema hann verði ríkari en ek').¹⁶

Undeterred by these menaces, Árni moved against one of Hrafn's most important supporters in the region, Eiríkr Marðarson, who had himself earlier appropriated major church farms, including Holt, and had spread Hrafn's message throughout the Western-fjords. Confronting Eiríkr at his farmstead at Eyri in Arnarfjörður, the bishop enumerated his misdeeds and demanded that he repented before God. When Eiríkr refused, Árni excommunicated him. Eiríkr then sent a messenger to Hrafn with news of what had occurred. Hrafn immediately asked Eiríkr to meet him in Steingrímsfjörður where they could arrest Þorvaldr Helgason together.¹⁷

Árna saga biskups now offers further information about Þorvaldr. Hrafn refers to his 'forn fjandskapur' ('old enmity') towards the *prófastr*. It transpires that Þorvaldr and his brother, Aðalbrandr, had never repaid Hrafn fifty marks that they had borrowed from him in Norway.¹⁸ Þorvaldr had manifestly once been on sufficiently good terms with Hrafn to solicit such a loan from him in the first place.

Árni learned about Hrafn's plans and was waiting for him with his retinue in Steingrímsfjörður when the royal representative arrived there to arrest Þorvaldr. An ill-tempered discussion ensued, but in the end, they made an uneasy truce in which they agreed to uphold whatever judgement was reached by the king and the archbishop.¹⁹

iii

At this point, in the year 1287, a stylistic shift can be observed in *Árna saga biskups*.²⁰ Before this juncture, overt biblical and other learned references are infrequent, but thereafter they become more prominent. One of these, of particular interest for our purpose, is the saga's comparison of Árni with the Prophet Elijah, and of Hrafn with Elijah's adversary King Ahab:

16 Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (ed.), 151.

17 *Ibid.*, 160.

18 *Ibid.*, 162.

19 *Ibid.*, 162–164.

20 Haki Antonsson, 'Árna saga biskups as Literature and History', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 116.3 (2017): 278–279.

Á þessu sama vári stóð fyrrnefndr Árni byskup frammi fáliðaður vígmaðr i fylking síns signaða herra [...]

En virðuligr herra Árni byskup sem Helias óttaðiz eigi liðsfjölða sinna óvina [...]²¹

In this same spring, the aforementioned Bishop Árni stood with a few followers as a warrior in the van of the legion of his sanctified Lord [...]

Yet worthy Lord Bishop Árni, just like Elijah, did not fear the great host of his enemies [...]

As the conflict between Hrafn and Árni escalates, the biblical comparison is developed further. This is in the context of Hrafn's accusations:

Hér at móti þagði eigi Árni byskup med öllu, ok þótt Hrafn vildi sem annar Achab gera at kálgarði vingarð hins rétláta Naboth, lét Árni byskup sem annarr Helias fljúga yfir sína óvini eld ógnar mála af heilögum ritningum, takandi dæmi af fornu ok nýju lögmáli hvílikan enda lífsins höfðu niðrbrotsmenn rétrar trúar ok saurganarmenn heilagra mustara [...].²²

Bishop Árni was not completely silent about these, and although Hrafn, like a second Ahab, would turn Naboth's vineyard into a cabbage patch, like a second Elijah did Bishop Árni let a fire of threats from the Holy Scriptures fly over his enemies, taking examples from the new and the old Covenant about what kind of end of life those endured who broke down the true faith and defiled the holy temples [...].

In the context of *Staðamál*, the saga's evocation of Elijah's heroic fortitude and Ahab's unjust confiscation of Naboth's vineyard is highly appropriate. Additionally, the saga compares Árni's enemies to historical figures who had defiled sacred spaces, namely 'Antiochus Epiphanes', 'Heróðes' (Herod

21 Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (ed.), 168.

22 *Ibid.*, 172.

Antipas), 'Gaius Sesar (Julius Caesar) and 'Theodoricus valónir' (Þiðrekur af Bern/King Theodoric the Great).²³

The identification of Hrafn with Ahab continues, albeit more obliquely, in the manner of his death. Like the Israelite king, Hrafn dies after being struck by a stray arrow in battle. Further, just as Elijah grants Ahab an opportunity to repent before his death, Árni hears Hrafn's penance in the days leading up to the fateful incident. Indeed, it is on the day that Hrafn fails to meet Árni for this purpose that he suffers the stray shot.²⁴

Present in the saga's latter part is the possibility of Hrafn exacting violence on Árni to achieve his aims. Of course, the saga's intended audience would have known that the bishop was not fated to die as a martyr. Further, *Árna saga's* portrayal of Hrafn Oddsson is nuanced so that he is in no way the 'evil enemy' common in medieval hagiography. Thus, while the saga depicts Árni's fierce opposition to Hrafn's unjust ambitions, near the end of the saga, the bishop draws him into his orbit. A reconciliation of a kind is achieved. This is not in respect to *Staðamál* but rather in a spiritual sense. In the days leading up to his death, Hrafn seeks out Bishop Árni to make his confession, and there is a suggestion that through his long painful death, he is atoning for his previous misdeeds. To aid a good outcome, Bishop Árni prays for his soul:

[...] ok veitti Árni byskup honum þá fagrliga bæn móti mörgum meingerðum, eigi ólíkt þeim Ambrosio er fyrir þeim mönnum það eptir dauðann er hans mótstöðumenn voru í lífinu.²⁵

... and praying, Bishop Árni made a beautiful intercession for him regarding his many misdeeds, not unlike Ambrosius when, after their deaths, he prayed for the men who had been his opponents in life.

Emphasised here is the Church's ultimate authority over laymen, however powerful they may have been during their lifetime.

²³ *Ibid.*, 172.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 197–198.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

Þorvaldr Helgason's trajectory is quite different from that of Hrafn Oddsson. When Hrafn failed to apprehend the provost in Steingrímsfjörður, he announced that anyone who recognised Þorvaldr's authority would forfeit their 'peace and possessions' ('fé ok friði'). Hrafn also declared that Holt in Önundarfjörður should be repossessed.²⁶ In 1288, the following year, he rode with his henchmen to Holt, where Þorvaldr just managed to flee into the church with a portion of his wealth. Following a short siege, the provost gave himself up, with the provision that he would 'obey only God, the Holy Church and his bishop' ('ok þó at haldinni hlýðni við Guð ok heilaga kirkju ok byskup sinn').²⁷ Nonetheless, Þorvaldr's principled stance proved short-lived as he now joined Hrafn's side: 'Fór Þorvaldr nokkot skeið með Hrafn, ok þótti mönnum nokkot breytt orðlagi hans til byskups'²⁸ ('Þorvaldr was with Hrafn for some time, and people thought his words towards the bishop were somewhat changed'). This development angered Árne, who thought Þorvaldr had capitulated unnecessarily and out of fear: Þorvaldr had committed a misdeed, and the bishop 'never trusted him again' ('trúði byskup honum aldrei síðan').²⁹

Unsurprisingly, according to his saga, Árne's mood was heavy when he met Þorvaldr at Pentecost in the same year, and it hardly lifted when he heard about his provost's financial improprieties. Not only had Þorvaldr squandered the resources of Holt, but he had also underwritten the profligacy of Aðalbrandr, his brother, who served as a priest at Breiðabólstaður in Reykjanes until his death in 1286. Reading between the lines, it appears that Árne had been willing to overlook Þorvaldr's transgressions until he became a turncoat.

At this point, a farmer named Njáll brought a case against Þorvaldr before the bishop, involving an unpaid debt. Árne judged that Þorvaldr should repay what he owed to the farmer as well as to the Church. After protesting, Þorvaldr asked the bishop to stipulate the amount to hand over. Árne made known that, along with other goods, Þorvaldr should relinquish a narwhal tooth that he had tricked ('með klókskap') out of a farmer in the

26 Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (ed.), 169.

27 *Ibid.*, 174.

28 *Ibid.*, 174.

29 *Ibid.*, 174.

Western-fjords.³⁰ A dismayed Þorvaldr replied he would only relinquish such a precious object to the bishop and not to Njáll. Þorvaldr now asked to be allowed to leave for Norway, but this was denied. In response, Þorvaldr spread the rumour that he had in fact promised the object to Eiríkr of Norway.

This was a cue for Hrafn Oddsson, as the king's representative, to enter the dispute on Þorvaldr's side. *Árna saga* is clear about Hrafn's motivation: 'Þótti honum [i.e. Hrafn] vænt um er hann hafði veiddan hinn vildasta af yfirklerkum biskups ok dregið mjög til sinnar þykkju, ok vilnaðiz at svá mundu fara fleiri'³¹ ('He appreciated having netted the very best of the bishop's higher clerics and having won him over to his way of thinking. He expected to bring more over like him'). Finally, after some wrangling, the case of the narwhal tooth was mediated by Óláfr Ragnríðarson, the aforementioned royal emissary, who had been sent to Iceland to facilitate a settlement in *Staðamál*. It was agreed that the Skálholt bishop should bring the tusk to the king, who would himself then choose the man who had given it, whether Árne or Þorvaldr.

Earlier that same summer (1288) Þorvaldr had attempted to leave Iceland. Loaded with his wealth, he boarded a vessel at Hvítá that ran aground at Hvalseyjar in Western Iceland. *Árna saga* implies that this was a divinely ordained outcome, as it relates how Þorvaldr mocked the bishop's travel-ban as he prayed before departure.³² Next spring, Abbot Runólfr Sigmundarson of Þykkvibær, the bishop's caretaker, informed Árne about both Þorvaldr's abortive attempt to leave the country and his misdemeanours at Holt the previous winter. The *prófastr* had namely eloped with a woman and squandered the wealth of his district's churches. He had also appropriated Peter's Pence (*Rómarskattur*), a tax intended for the defence of Christendom.³³ This is the last we hear of Þorvaldr until his second and successful attempt to leave for Norway.

There is a curious coda to Þorvaldr's colourful participation in *Árna saga biskups*.³⁴ *Konungsnámáll* for the year 1285 includes this entry: 'Fundu

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 176.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 176.

³² *Ibid.*, 187.

³³ *Ibid.*, 191.

³⁴ For a study of this episode, see Hermann Pálsson, 'Landafundurinn árið 1285', *Saga* 4 (1964): 53–69.

Helgasynir Nýjaland, Aðalbrandr ok Þorvaldr' ('The Helgasons discovered New-land, Aðalbrandr ok Þorvaldr').³⁵ In the same year, *Höyers-annáll* mentions that the two brothers sailed into Greenland's wilderness ('Helgasynir sigldu í Grænlands óbyggðir').³⁶ Other annals for the year 1285 note this discovery, yet without mentioning the brothers. *Gottskálksannáll*,³⁷ *Flateyjarbókaramáll*³⁸ and *Forni annáll*³⁹ state that a land was found west of Iceland, whereas *Skálholtsannáll* refers to the newly discovered place as 'Dúneyjar' (probably Dúneyjar, i.e., Eiderdown Islands).⁴⁰

What land, if any, Þorvaldr and Aðalbrandr discovered is not central to our purpose. The most likely scenario is that they landed on an island off Greenland's east coast, perhaps in another abortive attempt to reach Norway. On their return, the brothers may have presented their find in an exaggerated, even misleading, manner. It is noteworthy that in the year of the purported discovery, Hrafn had complained to Bishop Árni about Þorvaldr's mismanagement of ecclesiastical assets and, it appears, about his diversion of resources to his brother.⁴¹ The discovery of a 'new land' may have been opportunistic, a ruse concocted by the brothers to ingratiate themselves with the king of Norway. If so, this plan did not bear fruit until a few years later. *Lárentíus saga* (Laurentius saga) relates that in 1289 King Eiríkr sent a certain Hrólfr to Iceland with the brief of finding *Nýjaland* (which the Icelanders called 'Landa-Hrólfr').

The timing of this mission is interesting because Þorvaldr had switched to Hrafn's side only a year earlier. Having gained his ear, Þorvaldr may have leveraged his knowledge of this new land for self-advancement. With his prospects highly uncertain in Iceland, Þorvaldr planned to escape

35 Gustav Storm (ed.), *Islandske annaler indtil 1578* (Christiania [Oslo]: Grøndahl og søns bogtrykkeri, 1888), 142. For further historical contextualisation of this episode, see Helgi Þorláksson, 'The Vinland Sagas in a Contemporary Light', in *Approaches to Vinland: A Conference on the Written and Archaeological Sources for the Norse Settlements in the North-Atlantic Region and Exploration of America*, ed. by Andrew Wawn and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir (Reykjavík: Sigurður Nordal Institute, 2001), 70–75.

36 *Ibid.*, 70.

37 *Ibid.*, 337.

38 *Ibid.*, 383.

39 *Ibid.*, 50.

40 *Ibid.*, 196.

41 Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (ed.), 145.

Iceland to Norway with his wealth and garner favour with the king and his court. This, at least, would explain his insistence on personally presenting the narwhal tusk to King Eiríkr. From the perspective of this study, the ‘*Nýjaland* episode’ also underlines the impact that the fame and notoriety of Þorvaldr Helgason may have had on the early audience of chapter 147 in *Árna saga biskups*.

v

The end of *Árna saga biskups*, as presented in the J version of the saga, is marked by the deaths of Hrafn Oddsson (22 November 1289) and Þorvaldr Helgason (in the summer of 1290). Bishop Árni aside, these are the characters the saga follows most closely in its concluding part (1285–1290). Unsurprisingly, Hrafn receives the greater share of attention. As we have seen, his end brings about a reconciliation between him and the bishop. This is neither political nor even personal. Rather, as we have already observed, the saga draws Hrafn closer into Árni’s intercessional orbit with the implication of his reprieve in the afterlife. The bishop hears Hrafn’s confession in the days leading up to the fatal battle incident, and he prays for the soul of his deceased adversary.

This presentation should be read in light of the historical context in which *Árna saga biskups* was composed. *Staðamál* had been resolved largely in favour of the Church. Thereafter it was in the Church’s interest to reconcile with the secular elite, while also emphasising the salvific benefits that only this institution could offer. *Árna saga* stresses this point perhaps most obviously and dramatically in its description of the reburial of Oddr Þórarinsson (d. 1255) in 1279. Oddr was a prominent chieftain who died in battle while excommunicated and was therefore buried in unconsecrated ground. Twenty-four years later, Bishop Árni, with the archbishop’s permission, lifted Oddr’s excommunication and reburied his bones in Skálholt.⁴² The level of detail and the length at which the saga relates these events show the importance of its message. Even in the afterlife, the bishop, the embodiment of the Church, could alter the fate of seemingly lost causes among the laity.

In the case of Þorvaldr Helgason, the pendulum swings in the oppo-

42 *Ibid.*, 71–74. The episode is analysed in Haki Antonsson, *Damnation and Salvation in Old-Norse Literature* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2018), 44–50.

site direction. He is a high-ranking ecclesiastic who partakes in corrupt practices of every kind and betrays the Church. In return, Þorvaldr is divinely punished with death and dire prospects in the afterlife. In the Faroe Islands, St Magnús of Orkney and St Mary allow Þorvaldr to mend his ways. When the provost chooses to continue on his iniquitous path, he suffers the ultimate consequence.

At the close of *Árna saga* biskups, the deaths of Hrafn Oddsson and Þorvaldr Helgason juxtapose the fates of these two characters. One draws towards the Church near the end, whereas the other heads in a different direction. Such an arrangement aligns with a thematic pattern I have identified elsewhere in the Old Norse saga corpus.⁴³ Broadly speaking, this involves the activities of characters, (usually) near the end of their lives, which leads to their posthumous fates developing in contrasting ways. *Njáls saga*, for instance, is especially rich in this formulation. Thus in the saga's latter part, the fate of Flosi, the leader of the group that burnt Bergþórshváll, contrasts with that of many of his followers, who perish at the Battle of Clontarf. Flosi's famous dream foreshadows this development.⁴⁴ In the same battle, a similar, yet still more explicit, juxtaposition involves the brothers Óspakr and Bróðir.⁴⁵

Near *Laxdæla saga's* close there is the example of Þorkell Eyjólfsson and Gestr Oddleifsson. The former drowns in Breiðarfjörður as he attempts to transport timber for a large church at Helgafell. Þorkell's fate in the afterlife appears grim, for shortly thereafter Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir sees his ghost appear before the gates of Helgafell's church, unable to enter.⁴⁶ His fate is juxtaposed with that of Gestr, whose corpse is seemingly miraculously transported over Breiðarfjörður to the church at Helgafell, when, for a short period, a clear passage-way forms in the otherwise frozen sea.⁴⁷ It was, of course, Gestr who had foreseen Þorkell's drowning in Guðrún's fourth dream.⁴⁸

43 *Ibid.*

44 Einar Ól. Sveinsson (ed.). *Brennu-Njáls saga*. Íslensk fornrit 12 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1954), 346.

45 *Ibid.*, 445–451.

46 Einar Ól. Sveinsson (ed.). *Laxdæla saga, Halldórs þættir Snorrasonar, Stífs þáttur*. Íslensk fornrit 5 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1934), 222–223.

47 *Ibid.*, 196–197.

48 *Ibid.*, 90–91.

It is only to be expected that *Árna saga*'s author would adopt narrative devices that were familiar to him from other sagas of the same period. Here I have identified an example that not only serves a pressing ideological purpose but also provides the narrative with a greater sense of cohesion at the end of the preserved *Árna saga biskups* with chapter 147 included. This verdict, I stress, somewhat contradicts the view of previous commentators who have found the ending unconvincing and unsatisfying within the context of the overall saga. This applies as much to Þorleifur Hauksson, who sees 'nothing contradicting the case that the chapter [i.e. ch. 147] was original to the saga', as it does to Richard Cole, who suggests that the same chapter was added early in the process of its transmission.⁴⁹

49 'Óneitanlega eru sögulokin engan veginn sannfærandi'. 'The ending of the saga is in no way convincing'. Þorleifur Hauksson (ed.), cvi.

'An ending of sorts was added fairly early on in the transmission of the saga, perhaps out of an awareness of the saga's narrative deformity. This is a rather *non secquiturs* miracle tale, where St Magnus and the Virgin Mary intercede to drive out demons who have possessed Þorvaldr Helgason while on a trip to Orkney. There is a slender connection to Árni: Þorvaldr was a priest who defected to Hrafn's faction in *staðamál*. But the narrator makes no attempt to connect this to any agency on the part of the bishop. Ultimately, this intervention only exacerbates the disunity of the plot.' Richard Cole, 'Árna saga biskups /Kafka / Bureaucracy /Desire', *Collegium Medievale* 28 (2015): 38.

PART II

i

Chapter 147, which concludes the J version of *Árna saga biskups*, notes that some believed Þorvaldr's distressed condition was due to his drunkenness rather than demonic possession: 'Þeir voru nokkrir sem töluðu svo hégómlega um þetta ok sögðu tilefnit vera af sterkri drykkju, ok þat hefði hans vitleysi ollat' ('There were some who spoke falsely about what had occurred, saying that it was due to heavy drinking and that this had caused his madness'). What happened to Þorvaldr on his last voyage was clearly a matter of debate. Although it is futile to speculate about what the author knew of this incident, he chose to recount the episode at some length and emphasise its truthfulness. The author's defensive style may indeed suggest that drunkenness was the prevailing interpretation of Þorvaldr's condition (and one which otherwise seems quite in keeping with his character). However, in order to convey the episode's intended meaning, it was necessary to incorporate demonic possession as a crucial element in the story. In other words, the narrative was constructed for a specific purpose.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of this purpose, one must look beyond *Árna saga biskups*, namely to an Icelandic text composed in the same period. This is the so-called *Magnúss saga lengri*, 'Magnúss saga the Longer', which recounts the life and death of St Magnús of Orkney (d. 1116/17).⁵⁰ At the heart of this hagiographic work lies Magnús' martyrdom on Egilsay, a location where the earl had agreed to meet and negotiate with his cousin and co-earl, Hákon Pálsson (d. 1123). As Magnús sets foot on the island, he discovers that Hákon wants him dead. But Magnús neither flees nor fights his corner. Instead, he spends a night in a church praying for his salvation. In the morning, the earl has mass sung, and he receives communion. The same morning, Hákon sends four retainers into the church to apprehend him:

Þessir fjórir, er heldr megu kallast af sínum grimmeik inir skæðustu
vargar en skynsamir menn, jafnan þyrstandi til blóðs úthellingar,

50 Finnboði Guðmundsson (ed.). *Orkneyinga saga, Legenda de sancto Magno, Magnúss saga skemmri, Magnúss saga lengri, Helga þátr Úlfs*. Íslensk fornrit 34 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1965), 335–383.

hlupu inn í kirkjuna mjök svá at lokinni messunni. Gripu þeir þegar inn heilaga Magnús jarl með miklu herfangi, harki ok háreysti af friði ok faðmi heilagrar kirkju sem inn hógværa sta sauð af hjarðartröð.⁵¹

These four, who in their ferocity may be called the most destructive wolves rather than reasonable men, thirsting as they always do for blood, ran swiftly into the church as soon as mass was finished. They seized then the holy Earl Magnús with great commotion, noise and clamour away from the peace and embrace of the holy church, just as they would the gentlest sheep in a sheep-pen.

Magnús is brought before Hákon and executed following a dramatic exchange of words.

This description differs in some significant detail from the one presented in *Orkneyinga saga*.⁵² In the latter, Magnús also arrives in Egilsay and knows he is about to be betrayed by his cousin. Still, he refuses to flee and spends the night praying in a church. Unlike in *Magnúss saga lengri*, however, Magnús departs before Hákon's henchmen enter the church. Although the *Flateyjarbók* text of *Orkneyinga saga* does not indicate where Magnús went off to, an eighteenth-century Danish translation of a lost version of this saga says that the earl transferred to 'a secret place' ('hemmelig sted') on the shore. From there Magnús calls to Hákon and his companions and reveals his hiding place.⁵³ Thereafter the accounts are broadly similar. The thirteenth-century *Magnúss saga skemmri* ('The Shorter Magnúss saga') follows *Orkneyinga saga* regarding the same events.⁵⁴

Magnúss saga lengri highlights Hákon's desecration of the church as he orders his men to capture Earl Magnús. This act associates St Magnús' martyrdom with an attack on the sanctity of the Church. The likening of Magnús to a gentle sheep within a sheep-pen emphasises this point. The simile refers, of course, to the Parable of the Shepherd (John 10:1–18) which, among other interpretations, established the sheepfold as a figure

51 *Ibid.*, 366.

52 *Ibid.*, 107–111.

53 *Ibid.*, 108 (fn. 1).

54 *Ibid.*, 318–322.

for the Church (and so for Salvation). Thus, for instance, St Augustine says in his Tractate (no. 45) on St John's Gospel 10:1–10, 'Keep hold of this, that Christ's sheepfold is the Catholic Church'.⁵⁵ The reference to the 'meek lamb' connotes Christ's sacrifice, and the wolves, the Church's diabolical enemies. Magnús' presence in the church on Egilsay is therefore elevated to a sacrifice for the Church in general.

In *Magnúss saga lengri* St Magnús becomes associated with the Church. This association is supported by the earl shedding his secular ways for a life of holiness (including adopting chastity). The transformation is accompanied by clear echoes of Thomas Becket's martyrdom.⁵⁶ Take for instance, Edward Grim's account of Becket's martyrdom, which represents the earliest and arguably most influential account of this event.⁵⁷ Grim notes the loud and vulgar commotion that followed the entry of the four knights, while he likens Becket to a sacrificial lamb and his attackers to wolves. Hákon's four henchmen who burst into the church in Egilsay are manifestly modelled on the four knights who enter Canterbury Cathedral as the archbishop prepares for vespers. The archbishop's slaying in 1170 encapsulated, of course, the most egregious attack on the Church's liberty.

The obvious allusion to Becket's martyrdom in *Magnúss saga lengri* brings us to this text's composite elements. Apart from the authorial prologue, *Magnúss saga lengri* combines two texts: *Orkneyinga saga*, in a version close to the *Flateyjarbók* text of this saga, and a lost Latin Life of St Magnús which *Magnúss saga lengri* attributes to 'Meistari Rodbert' ('Master Robert'). The identity of Robert is uncertain. Finnþogi Guðmundsson, the editor of the St Magnús material in *Íslensk fornrit*, suggested he was Robert of Cricklade (ca.1100–1174/79), a prior of St Frideswide's priory in Oxford.⁵⁸ Finnþogi's reasoning centred on Robert

55 *Tractates on the Gospel of John/St Augustine*, trans. by John W. Rettig (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 190.

56 Haki Antonsson, 'Two Twelfth-Century Martyrs: St Thomas of Canterbury and St Magnús of Orkney', in *Sagas, Saints and Settlements*, ed. by Paul Bibire and Gareth Williams (Leiden: Brill 2004), 56–57.

57 James Robertson (ed.). *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury (Canonized by Pope Alexander III, AD 1173)*, 7 vols. (London: Rolls Series, 1875–1885), vol. 2, 80–82.

58 Finnþogi Guðmundsson (ed.). Finnþogi's insights in this matter were likely prompted by a footnote in A. B. Taylor's English translation of *Orkneyinga saga*. *Orkneyinga saga: A New Translation*, trans. by A. B. Taylor (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1938), 75 (fn. 1).

of Cricklade's authorship of a Becket *vita* around 1173. This otherwise lost Life constitutes the core of the early thirteenth-century *Thómas saga* I.⁵⁹

This is where matters rested until Peter Foote's study of 1989, in which he analysed the second of the two prologues to *Magnúss saga lengri*.⁶⁰ Master Robert's prologue follows on from the Icelandic author's own prologue. Foote observed that in their prologues both Master Robert and William of Canterbury, who completed his Life of Becket in 1174, used a passage from Jerome's introduction to his translation of the Books of Samuel and Kings. Foote concluded that the English authors had likely not used a common intermediary source, but that William's prologue would have influenced Master Robert's introduction to his St Magnús *vita*. Foote also observed that it is known from another source that Robert of Cricklade was familiar with William of Canterbury's composition. My own contribution was to identify more specific parallels between *Magnúss saga lengri* and the Becket corpus.⁶¹ In short, it has been shown beyond reasonable doubt that the early Becket corpus influenced Robert's Life of St Magnús.

Yet Robert's work is unlikely to have been the earliest hagiographic work on the Orkney saint. In 1137 Magnús' relics were translated from Birsay to Kirkwall, and some twenty years later they were moved into his cathedral. The most plausible solution is that Master Robert, who may have been Robert of Cricklade, refashioned an existing Life of the saint. This meant reinterpreting Magnús' life and martyrdom by solidifying the saint's association with the Church. This is explicitly Robert's purpose in the prologue, which highlights how Magnús, figuratively speaking, brought his gifts to the Tabernacle. His gifts are said to be gold, which denotes wisdom; silver, which denotes celibacy; jewels, which denote miracles; goat-hair, which signifies the repentance of sins; and red goatskin, which denotes martyrdom. From these items, so the prologue claims, is fashioned the cover that protects the Tabernacle from the sun and the rain. The Tabernacle stands, of course, for the Church, and the natural elements

59 Margaret Orme, 'A Reconstruction of Robert of Cricklade's Vita et Miracula S. Thomae Cantuariensis', *Analecta Bollandiana* 84 (1966): 379–98.

60 Peter Foote, 'Master Robert's Prologue in Magnúss saga lengri', in *Festskrift til Finn Hødnebo*, ed. by Bjørn Eithun et al. (Oslo: Novus forlag, 1989), 65–81.

61 Haki Antonsson, 'Two Twelfth-Century Martyrs'.

signify the enemies that attack her.⁶² Thus St Magnús of Orkney is here presented as the defender of the Church and, in a sense, her embodiment.

Notwithstanding this biblical figuration, the most effective way for Master Robert to associate St Magnús with the Church was by evoking the recent martyrdom of Thomas Becket. As just mentioned, Robert probably based his work on an older *vita* of St Magnús, to which he added not only the prologue but also learned references and theological comments. The rewriting of hagiographic works so as to align them with religious trends and contemporary interests was common in twelfth-century England. For instance, early in the century an anonymous author wrote a Life of St Frideswide, an Anglo-Saxon princess who spurned the advances of a king and died a virgin. The *vita* is composed in a simple style and seems to have been intended for monastic use. Sometime between 1140 and 1170 Robert of Cricklade re-formulated this *vita*. While Robert frequently retained verbatim the original Latin, he also chose to amplify or add certain themes of topical importance.⁶³ Whether or not this Robert was Robert of Cricklade, I argue that something comparable happened in the early hagiography of St Magnús of Orkney.⁶⁴

Associating Magnús with the Canterbury martyr, and thus with *liber ecclesiae*, is also evident in his liturgy. The martyr's rhymed Office, which was based on Robert's '*vita*', was tailored to specific music, namely the score composed by Benedict of Peterborough (d. 1193) for Becket's Office.⁶⁵ Accordingly, when the St Magnús' Office was sung on his Feast Day, both the words and the melodies evoked the Canterbury saint. Such use of pre-existing music both served a practical purpose and, in this case, established an aural intertextual relationship between Magnús and St Thomas Becket.⁶⁶

62 Finnbogi Guðmundsson (ed.), 336–337.

63 For the texts and a comparison see, John Blair, 'Saint Frideswide Reconsidered', *Oxoniensia* 52 (1987): 71–127.

64 It is tempting to speculate that the subtle, yet occasionally notable, differences between *Orkneyinga saga's* and *Magnúss saga lengri's* account can be explained by the former work using the oldest *vita* rather than the reworked text.

65 Ben Whitworth, 'Medieval Music for Saint Magnus: From Research to Performance', *University Campus Oldham. Spark* 4 (2021): 21–30.

66 On aural liturgical intertextuality see, for instance, Margot Fassler, *Music in the Medieval West. Western Music in Context: A Norton History* (New York/London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2014), 3–4. An obvious Icelandic example is the matching of St Þorlákr's Office

ii

Magnúss saga lengri survives in a copy made by Ásgeir Jónsson from around 1700. Ásgeir's exemplar was *Bæjarbók* (from Bær in Rauðasandur in the Western-fjords), a manuscript dated to 1370–1390. With the exception of four leaves, this manuscript was destroyed in a fire in Copenhagen in 1795. The other dating indicator of *Magnúss saga lengri* resides in its use of *skrúðstill* ('ornamental style'), a feature that appeared in the late thirteenth century and is common in fourteenth-century Old Norse ecclesiastical literature. On this basis, the timeframe for *Magnúss saga lengri* is ca. 1290–ca. 1390, with a preference for the early part of the fourteenth century.⁶⁷

In an essay published in 1962, Magnús Már Lárusson argued that the saga's most likely place of origin was the northern diocese of Hólar.⁶⁸ His argument rested on the genealogical connection this text makes between the Orkney saint and Bishop Jón Ögmundarson of Hólar (1052–1121). Further, *Magnúss saga lengri* situates Magnús' martyrdom during the papacy of Paschal II (1099–1118) and Jón's episcopacy (1106–1121). These are unconvincing reasons for a northern authorship of *Magnúss saga lengri*, presupposing as they do a factional attitude among Icelandic ecclesiastics towards the cult of the native saints. However, the sources do not reveal such an attitude. From the outset, churchmen from both dioceses contributed to the promotion of the cults of Jón Ögmundarson and Þorlák Þórhallsson.⁶⁹ To Icelandic ecclesiastics, the native saints were manifestly a source of pride irrespective of their diocesan origins. This sentiment is explicitly expressed in the saga's Icelandic prologue: 'Hér með eru blessaðir biskupar, Johannes ok Thorlacus, hverir Ísland hafa geislat með háleitu skini sinna bjartra verðleika' ('Herewith are the saintly bishops, Jón and

with the music for St Dominic's Office which is commonly attributed to the circle around Bishop Jón Halldórsson of Skálholt. Gisela Attinger, 'Some Reflections on the Liturgy for St Þorlák', in *Dominican Resonances in Medieval Iceland*, ed. by Gunnar Harðarson and Karl G. Johansson (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 204.

67 Finnboði Guðmundsson (ed.), cxxxvii–cxxxviii.

68 Magnús Már Lárusson, 'St. Magnus Orcadensis Comes', *Saga* 3 (1960–1963): 470–508.

69 For instance, Guðmundr Arason and Gunnlaugr Leifsson, who around 1200 both had close associations with the diocese of Hólar, were instrumental in the early recording of St Þorlák's miracles. Ásdís Egilsdóttir (ed.), *Biskupasögur 2: Hungurvaka, Þorláks byskups in elzta, Jarsteinabók Þorláks byskups önnur, Þorláks saga byskups C, Þorláks saga byskups E, Páls saga byskups, Ísleifs þátr byskups, Latinubrot um Þorlák byskup*. Íslensk fornrit 16 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2002), 246–247.

Þorlákr, who have illuminated Iceland with the exalted rays of their shining merits').⁷⁰

The sources rather point to Skálholt diocese as *Magnúss saga lengri's* place of origin. Two events are especially relevant in this context. The first is the arrival of a St Magnús relic in Skálholt Cathedral. According to Icelandic annals, this occurred in 1298, the same year as Bishop Árni Þorláksson died in Norway.⁷¹ Although there is no mention of the relic's place of origin, it is possible that Árni secured the holy object while in Norway, where he would have had the opportunity to engage with bishops from the different parts of the Nidaros archbishopric. This would have placed the bishop in an ideal environment in which to negotiate for and exchange prestigious relics.

Also worth considering is Árni's possible connection to Bishop Erlendr of the Faroe Islands (1269–1308). Árni was consecrated in Norway in the same year as this former cathedral canon of Bergen in Norway, and both attended the coronation in 1280 of King Erlingr Magnússon.⁷² Sometime in the 1290s, Bishop Erlendr commenced the building of a new cathedral in Kirkjubøur dedicated to St Magnús of Orkney. Whether in Erlendr's time the cathedral ever amounted to much more than the outer walls is uncertain.⁷³ In this early phase, however, a plaque was made on the east wall which in high relief depicts Christ flanked by the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene. Below is a Latin inscription which lists the cathedral's relics. Along with a piece of the Holy Cross, they are of St Magnús, the Virgin Mary and St Þorlákr.⁷⁴ This may indicate that around the turn of the thirteenth century Skálholt and the Faroese diocese exchanged relics of their respective patron saints.

The second event to highlight is Althing's adoption, in 1326, of St Magnús' feast (13 December) as an obligatory feast day. The Feast of Corpus Christi was also made obligatory on the same occasion.⁷⁵ According to *Lárentius saga*, Jón Halldórsson of Skálholt introduced

70 Finnboði Guðmundsson (ed.), 335.

71 Gustav Storm (ed.), See *Konungssannáll*, 145; *Skálholtsannáll*, 198.

72 Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (ed.), 80.

73 Kirstin Eliassen, 'Domkirkeruinen, "Múrurin", i Kirkjubø', *Fróðskaparrit* 43 (1995): 23–58.

74 *Ibid.*, 35–36.

75 Gustav Storm (ed.), *Konungssannáll*, 153. *Skálholtsannáll*, 205.

the latter feast to Iceland.⁷⁶ The same bishop was surely also responsible for the codification of St Magnús' feast. The third section (of five) of AM 671 4to contains Jón Halldórsson's *Bannsakabréf* ('Letter of Excommunication') of 1326, which includes a statute for the feast days of St Magnús and Corpus Christi. From the same year, there is a reference to the church day of St Magnús (13 December), as recorded in the so-called *Árstíðaskrá Vestfirðinga* (KBAdd 1). Stefan Drechsler has observed that both references originate from the Western-fjords, which Bishop Jón visited around the same time.⁷⁷

In placing St Magnús' Feast on a more official standing, Jón Halldórsson was probably codifying an existing practice within his diocese. A *máldagi* of Sæból in the Western-Fjords dating to 1306/7 suggests as much.⁷⁸ In it, Bishop Árni Helgason allows the celebration of St Magnús' feast day before Christmas (13 December) throughout the parish as with 'the Feast of St Andrew and St Nicholas' (i.e. an obligatory feast) ('þuilijkt sem Andersmesso eda Nichulasmesso').

Along with Sæból, Kolbeinsstaðir on the Snæfellsnes peninsula was one of the five principal churches dedicated to the Orkney martyr. In a late twelfth-century *máldagi*, the church is dedicated to the Virgin Mary.⁷⁹ In *Vilkingsbók* from 1397, however, Kolbeinsstaðir is dedicated to St Magnús, St Peter, St Nicholas, the Virgin Mary, St Catherine of Antioch, St Dominic and All the Saints.⁸⁰ The *máldagi* records Ketill Þorláksson's donation of this farm and the adjoining church for his own and his wife's salvation. The *máldagi* also states that Ketill, who served as *sýslumaður* in the Western Quarter from 1314 and as *hirðstjóri* from 1320 to ca. 1341, had the church's interior adorned. The inclusion of St Dominic (d. 1221) among the church's patron saints points to the influence of Bishop Jón Halldórsson, Iceland's first Dominican bishop. The refurbishment of Kolbeinsstaðir

76 Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (ed.), 383.

77 Stefan Drechsler, 'Jón Halldórsson and Law Manuscripts of Western Iceland, c. 1320–1340', in *Dominican Resonances in Medieval Iceland*, ed. by Gunnar Harðarson and Karl G. Johansson (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 130–131.

78 *Diplomatarium Islandicum – Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn* II: 1253–1350 (Copenhagen: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1893), 360–361.

79 *Diplomatarium Islandicum – Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn* I: 834–1284 (Copenhagen: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag 1857), 274–275.

80 *Diplomatarium Islandicum – Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn* IV: 1265–1449 (Copenhagen: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag 1897), 180–183.

probably concluded with a re-dedication and a public show of Ketill's donation. Such an occasion, conducted for the benefit of the country's highest royal official, called for the participation of the Skálholt bishop. St Magnús' inclusion alongside major universal saints is notable, and, as with St Dominic, an influence here from the Skálholt bishopric seems likely.

This assumption is supported by an event reported in the annals for 1308. In that year, Bishop Árni Helgason of Skálholt and Haukr Erlendsson (d. 1334) established a *spítali*, an institution for the elderly and infirm clergymen ('lærðir menn'), in Gaulverjabær in southern Iceland.⁸¹ Although St Magnús is not specified as the hospital's patron, this is recorded in a separately preserved Latin oath seemingly intended for the institution's foreman.⁸²

Haukr Erlendsson's involvement is noteworthy. He appears to have served as a Lawman briefly in 1294.⁸³ Haukr left for Norway in 1299, and by 1303/4 he had been knighted and made the Lawman of the Gulathing, a position he held until (at least) 1316. Haukr, however, retained close links with Iceland, and during one of his visits, he joined Bishop Árni in founding Gaulverjabær hospital. In 1308 Haukr held no formal office in Iceland, so his participation probably involved a donation. If so, the hospital can be considered alongside another of Haukr Erlendsson's prestigious projects, namely his production of *Hauksbók* (which in 1308 was still ongoing). These undertakings aimed at enhancing Haukr's stature both in Iceland and in Norway.⁸⁴ But it was undoubtedly Bishop Árni Helgason who chose St Magnús as the patron saint of Gaulverjabær hospital, and this choice attests to the saint's close association with the Skálholt diocese in the early decades of the fourteenth century.

This is the context for the composition of *Magnúss saga lengri*. The arrival of his relics in Skálholt in 1298 elevated the interest in the Orkney

81 Gustav Storm (ed.), *Konungsannáll*, 149; *Skálholtsannáll*, 291; *Gottskálksannáll*, 341; *Flateyjarannáll*, 391.

82 *Diplomatarium Islandicum* II, 507. Margaret Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland. Their Veneration from the Conversion* (Brussels: Société Bollandistes 1994), 120–121.

83 Haukr's father, Erlendr Ólafsson ('digri' according to *Árna saga*) (1312) held the position of lawman in northern and western Iceland from 1283 to 1289, and in 1290 he became a royal representative in the Western-Fjords. In the latter stages of *Staðamál*, Erlendr was arguably Hrafn Oddsson's most important ally against Árni Þorláksson.

84 For an introduction to *Hauksbók* and the manuscript's historical context, see Sverrir Jakobsson, 'Hauksbók and the Construction of an Icelandic World View', *Saga-Book* 31 (2007): 22–38.

martyr, which was already present in this diocese, especially among the ecclesiastical elite. This led to the writing of a new vernacular hagiographical saga about the Northern Isles saint in an effort that resonated with a broader ideological agenda, namely with the defence of the Church's interests. Such an agenda may at first appear surprising considering Magnús' secular and bellicose background. But what attracted Skálholt to St Magnús was precisely the image of a secular lord who transcended his milieu and became, in effect, an embodiment of the Church. In the late twelfth century, Master Robert was the first to formulate this link in his Latin *vita* of the Orkney martyr with its influence from the Becket corpus. In the early fourteenth century, this aspect agreed with the interests of the Icelandic author of *Magnúss saga lengri*, who was the first to allow this foundational work to be foregrounded in the vernacular.

iii

We have seen how *Magnúss saga lengri* draws on the Becket corpus. But how does *Árna saga biskups* and, especially its ending with chapter 147, connect with the Orkney and Canterbury martyrs?

Magnúss saga lengri identifies Magnús with Elijah, the prophet who stood firmly against the blasphemous and covetous King Ahab: 'Allar syndir gerast af girnd, ok allar fýstir óleyfðar af ágirni fram ganga. Þat reyndist með Achab, inum ranglátasta konungi, er ofsótti Heliam spámann'⁸⁵ ('All sins are the result of cupidity, and all unlawful desires result from cupidity. This was the case of Ahab, the unjust king, who persecuted the Prophet Elijah'). As already mentioned, *Árna saga biskups* twice likens Árni to Elijah who stood alone against King Ahab (i.e. Hrafn Oddsson) and the king's unjust seizing of Naboth's vineyard.⁸⁶ This biblical example juxtaposes an unwavering prophet with an unjust king. In the Becket corpus, the corresponding figures are St Thomas and Henry II. Already during Becket's lifetime, John of Salisbury applied this comparison in a letter of 1166.⁸⁷ In his biography of Becket, completed in 1186, Herbert of Bosham refers to Ahab's appropriation of Naboth's vineyard as he

85 Finnboði Guðmundsson (ed.), 361.

86 Haki Antonsson, '*Árna saga biskups* as History and Literature', 283.

87 W. J. Millor and N. L. Brooke (ed. & transl.). *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, vol. 2: *The Later Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 172–173. See also another letter of his from the same year, pp. 246–247.

comments on the covetousness of kings.⁸⁸ In the Becket liturgy, Naboth's vineyard denotes the Church, which St Thomas defends with his life.⁸⁹

Unlike St Magnús and St Thomas Becket, Árne Þorláksson did not make the ultimate sacrifice for this cause. Although *Árna saga biskups* generally shows the bishop in an admirable light, the text never advocates for his sanctity. Even so, as has already been observed, a latent threat of violence permeates *Árna saga biskups*. This is especially true in the saga's latter stages. His adversaries, headed by Hrafn, could at any point have resorted to violence. In short, Árne might have had to choose the fate of St Magnús or St Thomas Becket. Although Árne never faced this choice, the saga makes clear he would have opted for martyrdom. He is the warrior in God's cause: 'Á þessu sama vári stóð fyrrnefndr Árne byskup frammi fáliðr vigmaðr í fylking síns signaða herra [...]' ('In this same spring the aforementioned Bishop Árne stood with a few followers as a warrior in the van of the legion of his sanctified Lord').⁹⁰

Now we turn for the last time to Þorvaldr Helgason and the conclusion of *Árna saga biskups*, as it appears in the J redaction. Þorvaldr travels literally and figuratively away from the Church. This *prófastr* chooses to become the Church's adversary, and he pays for this stance with his life and, by implication, with his soul. We have seen how in the spring of 1288, when Hrafn Oddsson and his retinue paid Þorvaldr a visit, the provost sought refuge in his church. After a short siege, he capitulated and joined Hrafn's cause. With this act, seen from the side of Árne and his biographer, Þorvaldr betrayed the Church.

The significance of the concluding episode of the extant *Árna saga biskups* now comes into focus. The scene centres on a contrast:

[...] at þar áðr var hann fyrir sakir frænda ok framkvæmdar ok mikilla mennta öruggur ásóknarmaðr óvina Guðs kristni meðan hann hélt trúnað við sinn herra – var hann gripinn af óhreinum anda svo harðliga at til heilagrar Magnússkirkju leiddu hann fyrir nauðsyn tíu menn í sömu kirkju. Ok er hann kom inn at dyrunum varð sá

88 James Craigie Robertson (ed.). *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury (Canonized by Pope Alexander III, AD 1173)*, 7 vols. (London: Rolls Series, 1875–1885), vol. 3, 222.

89 Kay Brainerd Slocum, *Liturgies in Honour of Thomas Becket* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2004), 145.

90 Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (ed.), 168.

hlutr er ótrúligr mætti þykkja, ef ei vitat væri þann grun á sem helgi Magnús patron sömu kirkju þíndist fyrir ekki ok varð ei forgefins Krists þíslarvottr.

Previously his family, advancement and high learning had kept him safe as a plaintiff against the enemies of God's Christendom, so long as he remained faithful to his lord. Now he was attacked by an unclean spirit so violently that ten men were needed to bring him into the holy Church of St Magnús. And when he came through the door, such a thing happened as might have seemed unbelievable if it had not been proved beyond doubt that St Magnús, the patron of the same church, had suffered and become the aforesaid Christ's martyr.

The contrast could hardly be starker. Þorvaldr Helgason is cured by a saint who has made the ultimate sacrifice. At one time, he defended the Church against her enemies, but then he became one of her enemies. Still, despite his cure in the Faroes, Þorvaldr continues on his chosen trajectory and so suffers the fatal and eternal consequence in Norway. The evocation of Magnús' martyrdom is not accidental. He is the warrior who transforms himself into an epigone of ecclesiastical virtues. At the end, in a death-scene amplified by associations with Becket's martyrdom, Earl Magnús gives his life for the Church. Þorvaldr Helgason acts in the opposite way, and his fate reflects this.

iv

Stefán Karlsson observed how three generations of Icelandic authors created the Old Norse Becket corpus.⁹¹ Further, these three generations align with different periods in the struggle for *libertas ecclesiae*. Bergr Gunnsteinsson (ca. 1160–1230) represents the first generation with his oldest saga of St Thomas Becket. This text (*Thómas saga I*) augments his translation of Robert of Cricklade's aforementioned *vita* with material from other Becket biographies. *Guðmundar saga A* mentions that Bergr was part of Guðmundr Arason's entourage when he travelled to Norway to be consecrated as the bishop of Hólar (1203–1237).⁹²

91 Stefán Karlsson, 'Icelandic Lives of Thomas à Becket: Questions of Authorship', in *Proceedings of the First International Saga Conference, University of Edinburgh, 1971*, ed. by Peter Foote, Hermann Pálsson and Desmond Slay (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1973), 212–243.

92 Stefán Karlsson (ed.), *Guðmundar sögur biskups. Ævi Guðmundar biskups: Guðmundar saga*

Influence from this first generation is observable elsewhere in Old Norse literature, for example in *Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* from around the middle of the thirteenth century. The saga relates the life and violent death of Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson (ca. 1166–1213), a powerful chieftain in the Western-fjords, who supported Bishop Guðmundr Arason of Hólar (1203–1237) and undertook a pilgrimage to Becket's shrine. The saga's description of Hrafn's death reveals the influence of the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, as depicted in his *Life* by Robert of Cricklade.⁹³

Arngrímur Brandsson (d. 1361) represents the third generation. This priest and abbot of Þingeyrar (from 1350) used St Thomas as the primary exemplar in his saga about Bishop Guðmundr Arason (*Guðmundar saga D*) and, as Stefán Karlsson has shown, he likely composed the youngest of the Becket compilations (*Thómas saga III*).⁹⁴

Stefán Karlsson identifies Jón Holt (d. 1302) as representative of the second and middle generation. This priest, who may have been of Norwegian origin, translated *Quadriologus*, a composite text of early Becket biographies. It is easy to link Jón Holt's project with Árni Þorláksson's agenda of *libertas ecclesiae*. In *Árna saga biskups*, Jón is arguably the bishop's most trusted supporter and sometime advisor. Priest Jón Holt first appears in 1284 when he is displaced from his rich church farm of Hítardalur in Western Iceland where, the saga claims, he had lived for nearly four decades.⁹⁵ Later, compensating for Jón's loss turns into one of the more protracted wrangles between Árni and Hrafn. Near the end of the saga, we find Jón Holt presenting the Church's case before the king and archbishop.⁹⁶

I argue that the impact of this second generation, writing in the early part of the fourteenth century, is also observable in *Magnúss saga lengri*. The arrival of Magnús' relics in 1298 in Skálholt would have enhanced any interest in the Orkney martyr. An existing, yet hardly popular, cult could now be reformulated and in a sense relaunched. From this fermentation came *Magnúss saga lengri*, a text that highlights Robert's Latin *Life* of St

A (Copenhagen: Reitzels 1983), 139.

93 Guðrún P. Helgadóttir, *Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), lxi–lxxiii.

94 Marlene Ciklamini, 'The Hand of Revision: Abbot Arngrímur's Redaction of *Guðmundar Saga Biskups*', *Gripla* 8 (1993): 231–252.

95 Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir (ed.), 119.

96 *Ibid.*, 195.

Magnús and its influence from the St Thomas Becket corpus. In this way, St Magnús' cult chimed with the ideological outlook of the Icelandic ecclesiastical elite in the aftermath of *Staðamál*. All this crystallises at the end of *Árna saga biskups* as we have it in the J-version of the saga, which, in all likelihood, represents its original conclusion. This episode juxtaposes an ecclesiastic's betrayal of the Church with St Magnús' martyrdom and so evokes the steadfastness of her great champion, Bishop Árni Þorláksson of Skálholt.

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SUMMARY

The end of *Árna saga biskups* and the cult of St Magnús of Orkney.
Hagiography and ecclesiastical politics in early fourteenth-century Iceland

Keywords: The Sagas of Bishops, hagiography, Church history, *Árna saga biskups*, the veneration of St Magnús of Orkney in Iceland, the hagiographic corpus on St Thomas Becket

This article begins by focusing on the final chapter of *Árna saga biskups*, specifically chapter 147 found in the saga's modern edition. This chapter is only present in a single transcript of the saga, originating from a lost portion of *Reykjafjarðarbók*.

It narrates the events leading to the death of Provost Þorvaldr Helgason in 1290. The account follows his journey to Norway, where he encountered demonic possession. He received temporary relief from this affliction in the Faroes Isles, thanks to the intervention of St Magnús of Orkney and the Virgin Mary, within a church dedicated to St Magnús. However, Þorvaldr's condition worsened, leading to his demise in Norway. The saga implies a connection between Þorvaldr's fate and his betrayal of Bishop Árni Þorláksson's efforts for the Church's interests during the *Staðamál*.

St Magnús of Orkney plays a significant role in this narrative. The article contends that his role aligns with the promotion of the Orkney martyr's cult by the Skálholt bishopric, likely during the time when *Árna saga biskups* was composed – either in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. This promotion probably included the crafting of *Magnúss saga lengri* ('*The Longer Magnúss Saga*') within the same context. Further, the article argues that the interest in St Magnús is tied to his association with the Church and its freedoms. This connection can be traced back to a twelfth-century Latin Life of St Magnús, which was influenced by the biographies of Thomas Becket, especially his martyrdom in defence of the Church. The article also identifies echoes of the Becket corpus in *Árna saga*, which is unsurprising given the saga's subject matter and the prominence of the Canterbury martyr within Icelandic clerical circles.

Previous research suggests that the original saga likely concluded in 1290, eight years prior to the central character's death. However, the exact reasons for this ending remain uncertain. This article reveals how this seemingly insignificant concluding episode to *Árna saga biskups* combines significant religious and intellectual elements in a manner that the saga's early audience would have understood. This case study underscores the adaptable and allusively fertile nature of the hagiographic tradition to address contemporary concerns.

Á G R I P

Niðurlag *Árna sögu biskups* og dýrkun heilags Magnúsar Orkneyjajarls
Helgisögur og kirkjupólitik á Íslandi á fyrri hluta fjórtándu aldar

Efnisorð: biskupasögur, helgisagnafræði, kirkjusaga, *Árna saga biskups*, dýrkun Magnúsar Orkneyjajarls á Íslands, helgisögur um heilagan Tómas Becket

Í upphafi þessarar greinar er athyglinni beint að lokakaflanum í *Árna sögu biskups*, einkum kafla 147 í nýjustu útgáfu sögunnar. Þessi kafla er aðeins varðveittur í einni uppskrift sögunnar sem á rætur að rekja til ákveðins hluta í Reykjavjarðarbók sem nú er glataður. Þar segir frá þeim atburðum sem leiddu til dauða Þorvalds Helgasonar prófests árið 1290. Greint er frá ferðalagi hans til Noregs þar sem ill öfl náðu tökum á honum. Þegar hann kemur til Færeyja nær hann sér tímabundið

með aðstoð Magnúsar Orkneyjajarls og Maríu meyjar þegar hann er staddur í kirkju sem helguð er heilögum Magnúsi. Engu að síður versnar ástand Þorvalds aftur og að lokum lætur hann lífið í Noregi. Í sögunni er gefið í skyn að samband sé milli örlaga Þorvalds og svika hans við tilraunir Árna biskups Þorlákssonar til að halda hlut kirkjunnar í hinum svokölluðu Staðamálum.

Magnús Orkneyjajarl leikur mikilvægt hlutverk í þessari frásögn. Í greininni er því haldið fram að það tengist auknum áhuga á dyrkun hans sem píslarvotts í Skálholtsbiskupsdæmi, sennilega um það leyti sem *Árna saga biskups* var samin – annaðhvort seint á þrettándu öld eða snemma á fjórtándu öld. Líklegt er að *Magnúss saga lengri* hafi verið samin um þetta leyti í þessu samhengi. Í greininni eru færð rök fyrir því að áhugi íslenskra kennimanna á Magnúsi tengist afstöðu hans til kirkjunnar og baráttu hans fyrir frelsi hennar. Þessi tengsl má rekja til tólfstu aldar frásagnar af ævi Magnúsar á latínu, sem dregur dóm af frásögnum af ævi Tómasar Becket, þar sem lögd er áhersla á píslarvætti hans í tilraun til að verja kirkjuna. Sýnt er fram á enduróm frá sögunum af Becket í *Árna sögu*, sem kemur ekki á óvart þegar efni sögunnar er haft í huga og sú virðing sem píslarvotturinn frá Canterbury naut meðal kirkjunnar manna á Íslandi.

Í fyrri rannsóknum hefur verið talið að í upphaflegri gerð sögunnar ljúki henni árið 1290 eða átta árum áður en aðalpersóna hennar lést. Ástæður þess eru samt sem áður óljósar. Greinin afhjúpar hvernig atburður í lok *Árna sögu biskups* sem virðist ekki skipta miklu máli tengir saman mikilvæg trúarleg og vitsmunaleg atriði á þann hátt sem fyrstu áheyrundur sögunnar hafa átt auðvelt með að skilja. Þessi afmarkaða rannsókn undirstrikar hvað helgisöguhefðin var sveigjanleg og hversu auðvelt var að tengja hana á frjóan hátt við atburði og áhyggjur líðandi stundar.

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THE GENESIS OF A COMPOSITE

The Codicology of AM 239 fol.

Detailed codicological analysis plays a vital role in fully understanding the production history, or genesis, of a manuscript.¹ This holds true for all manuscripts but seems of particular importance when dealing with a composite book, containing different units, such as AM 239 fol. This late-fourteenth-century codex moreover plays a key role among its contemporaries, as its earliest provenance is documented. The entire group of the so-called “Helgafell-manuscripts,” which includes prominent manuscripts such as AM 350 fol. *Skarðsbók Jónsbókar*, owes its name and possible location of origin to this codex.

An ownership note from around 1400 at the top of fol. 1r connects the manuscript AM 239 fol. to Helgafell (see image 1): “... at helga felle a bok þessa”.² Ólafur Halldórsson hypothesized that the illegible part once read “klaustrit” and that this book was the property of the Augustinian house at Helgafell on Snæfellsnes in west Iceland.³ This theory was and is widely accepted. In his *Helgafellsbækur fornar* (1966), Ólafur grouped several manuscripts together, based on the hands of what he considered to be two fourteenth-century scribes (hereafter called H1 and H2 according to Ólafur’s division), and argued that they were most likely produced at the religious house.⁴ AM 239 fol., which is in part written by H1, is of

1 The present article is a result of the research conducted within the research project “Bókagerð í Helgafellsklaustri á fjórtánda öld” led by Beeke Stegmann and funded by RÍM, and part of my doctoral project “Book Making in Late-Fourteenth-Century Iceland. A Codicological Study in the European Context,” funded by the Icelandic research fund RANNÍS, grant no.: 228433-051. I want to thank Beeke Stegmann, Elizabeth Walgenbach and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir as well as the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

2 Ólafur Halldórsson, *Helgafellsbækur fornar*, *Studia Islandica* 24 (Reykjavík: Heimspékideild Háskóla Íslands og Bókautgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1966), 40.

3 *Ibid.*, 40.

4 An overview of the manuscripts attributed to this group can be found on the Helgafell-

particular importance for this grouping: on the one hand, the ownership note allows the localization around 1400 of this book and potentially other books that were written by this scribe; on the other hand, the manuscript's first text, *Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs*, written by H1, was copied (at least) twice by scribe H2. These copies are preserved and today stored under the shelfmarks AM 653 a 4to (with JS fragm. 7) and SÁM 1. The fact that H2 copied the first text in AM 239 fol. several times could imply that H2 had access to H1's writing and might have worked at the same location, presumably Helgafell.

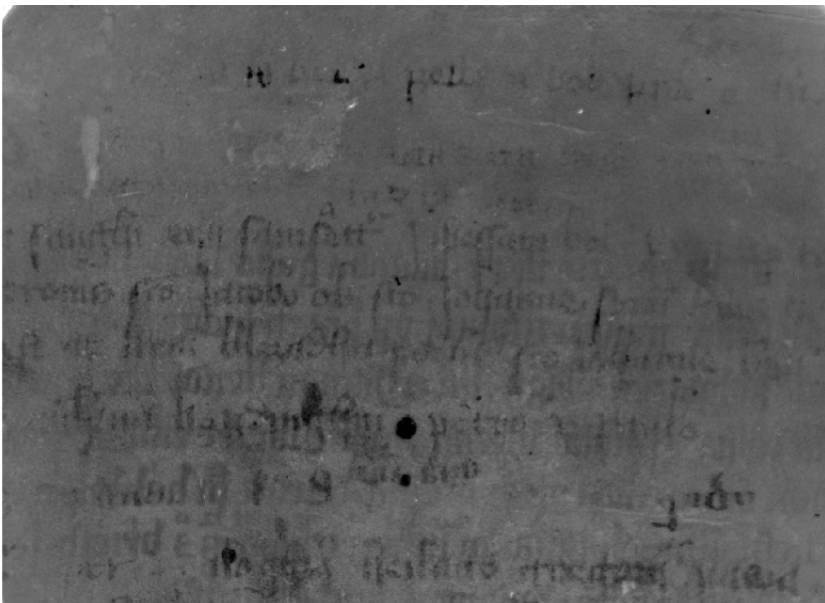


Image 1: Ownership note and table of contents on fol. 1r. AM 239 fol. Image taken by Beeke Stegmann with a multispectral scanner, reproduced with permission.

project website: <https://hirslan.arnastofnun.is/>. For a paleographical description on H1, see in particular Stefán Karlsson, *Sagas of Icelandic Bishops: Fragments of Eight Manuscripts*, Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 7 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1967). New linguistic and paleographical analysis indicates that the current attribution of manuscripts to this particular scribe needs to be revised. For an in-depth discussion on a new division, see the contributions of Katrín Lísa van der Linde Mikaelsdóttir and Haraldur Bernharðsson in the proceedings of the Helgafell symposium held on 3 and 4 March 2023 (forthcoming). According to their new scribal division, scribe H1 in AM 239 fol. would correspond to H1.A. On scribe H2, see Haraldur Bernharðsson, "Skrifari Skarðsbókar

AM 239 fol. was recently described as a composite manuscript, consisting of two fourteenth-century “production units” based on the division of the two main scribal hands.⁵ According to this description by Stefan Drechsler, the first unit extends from fols. 1r to 35v and is written by one hand (H1). The second unit is written by another unidentified hand (hereafter H3) and has been said to extend from fols. 36r to 85v and again from fols. 96r to 109v.⁶ The hypothesized two production units were furthermore presented as “most likely written together, indicating that, in the fourteenth century, it was common practice to produce composite manuscripts at Helgafell.”⁷ This presumption draws support from a table of contents on fol. 1r, which lists four of the five texts that are still contained in the manuscript today. Like the note of ownership on 1r, this table of contents is partially illegible due to the worn state of the page. It names *Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs*, *Jóns saga baptista*, *Péturs saga postula* and *Viðræður Gregoríusar* (Dialogues of Pope Gregory); *Andrés saga postula* cannot be read here.⁸

This article suggests that the proposed division into two units deserves to be revisited. The present codicological study indicates that AM 239 fol. consists of not two but rather three major production units from the late fourteenth century, as well as several younger ones. Through detailed qualitative analysis, not only of the paleography but also of other book-production features, these three production units and their relationship to one another become apparent, giving a comprehensive understanding of the manuscript’s genesis and its use as exemplar.

postulasagna. Nokkrar athuganir á skriftarþróun,” in *Handritasýrpa: rit til heiðurs Sigurgeiri Steingrímssyni sjötugum 2. október 2013*, ed. Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir, Rit 88 Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, 2014), 203–22.

- 5 Stefan Drechsler, *Illuminated Manuscript Production in Medieval Iceland Literary and Artistic Activities of the Monastery at Helgafell in the Fourteenth Century* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2021), 116–17. The division of scribal hands is based on earlier research by Ólafur Halldórsson 1966 and Stefán Karlsson 1967.
- 6 Fols. 86r–95v are a later paper addition from the seventeenth century, written by Magnús Jónsson í Vigur and supplementing the lost end of *Péturs saga postula*, as will be discussed below.
- 7 Drechsler, *Illuminated Manuscript Production*, 117.
- 8 For a discussion on the relationship between the ownership note and the tables of content, as well as its dating, see below.

Introduction to AM 239 fol.

Before diving into the methodology and codicological description of the individual production units, a few words on some basic aspects of AM 239 fol. should be provided. AM 239 fol. consists of 109 leaves in its present state and contains five texts: *Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs* (fols. 1v–35v), *Jóns saga baptista* (fols. 36r–52v15), *Pétrs saga postula* (52v15–95v), *Andrés saga postula* (96r–101v) and the Dialogues of Pope Gregory, *Viðráður Gregoríusar* (fols. 101v–109v). The manuscript is paginated, but a large number of leaves went missing from the first half of the manuscript before the pages were numbered.⁹ Two sets of comments in the lower margins document approximately how many leaves are missing, one of them referencing the shelfmarks of Árne Magnússon’s copies of SÁM 1.¹⁰ The current collation contains fifteen gatherings (see figure 1).¹¹ The ownership note on fol. 1r connects AM 239 fol. to Helgafell on the Snæfellsnes peninsula in West Iceland as early as the beginning of the fifteenth century. The manuscript’s provenance is again documented from the seventeenth century onwards on note slips written by Árne Magnússon, so-called AM slips. It appears that the codex was located in the Westfjords of Iceland for a considerable period of time.¹² According to Árne Magnússon’s notes, Magnús Jónsson í Vigur (1637–1702) received the manuscript from Magnús Magnússon and passed it on to Páll Jónsson.¹³ Magnús Jónsson í Vigur added a paper gathering to the manuscript, supplying the missing part of *Pétrs saga postula* (see figure 1, quire XIII).¹⁴

9 For further information of the lacunae in AM 239 fol., see table 1 below and footnote 9.

10 According to the marginalia, the following leaves are missing: two leaves missing after fol. 2; one leaf missing after fol. 4; ca. twenty leaves missing after fol. 20; one leaf missing after fol. 29; one leaf missing after fol. 33; ca. seven leaves missing after fol. 35 (potentially six containing the end of *Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs* and one containing the beginning of *Jóns saga baptista*); two leaves missing after fol. 36; two leaves missing after fol. 37; ca. six after fol. 38; one leaf missing after fol. 44; one leaf missing after fol. 45; end of *Pétrs saga postula* missing – supplied by paper addition; one leaf missing after fol. 103; end of *Viðráður Gregoríusar* missing after fol. 109.

11 The terms “gathering” and “quire” are used interchangeably in this article. A gathering of four bifolia will be referred to as “quaternion.”

12 Ólafur Halldórsson, *Helgafellsbækur fornar*, 40.

13 AM 239 fol., fylgigögn 3rv and fylgigögn 4rv.

14 Árne Magnússon identifies the scribe on the first AM-slip. See also Kristian Kålund,

Apart from Drechsler's recent study, previous research on AM 239 fol. does not explicitly account for any codicological division within the manuscript. Ólafur Halldórsson states that the fourteenth-century leaves of the manuscript were written by two scribes but does not divide the codex further.¹⁵ Stefán Karlsson only remarks that fols. 1 to 35 were written by one scribe,¹⁶ whom C. R. Unger has identified as the same hand as in AM 226 fol.¹⁷ Kristian Kålund lists AM 239 fol. as one entity from the second half of the fourteenth century and states that it contains "forskellige hænder."¹⁸ These discussions focus on the paleography rather than the codicology. In her art historic study from 2009, Lena Liepe also treats the manuscript as one entity; however, she points out that the pen-flourishing changes from fol. 36r onwards.¹⁹

Katalog over Den Arnamagnæanske Håndskriftsamling Udgivet Af Kommissionen for Det Arnamagnæanske Legat, vol. 1 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1889), 207.

15 Ólafur Halldórsson, *Helgafellsbækur fornar*, 48.

16 Stefán Karlsson, *Sagas of Icelandic Bishops*, 20–21.

17 Carl Richard Unger, ed., *Postola Sögur: Legendariske Fortællinger Om Apostlernes Liv, Deres Kamp for Kristendommens Udbredelse Samt Deres Martyrdød Efter Gamle Haandskrifter Udgivne Af C.R. Unger* (Christiania, 1874), xii.

18 Kålund, *Katalog over Den Arnamagnæanske Håndskriftsamling*, 1:207.

19 Lena Liepe, *Studies in Icelandic Fourteenth Century Book Painting*, Snorrastofa, rit 6 (Reykholzt: Snorrastofa, Cultural and Medieval Centre, 2009), 163.
















QUIRE I	f	hair or flesh	QUIRE II	f	hair or flesh	QUIRE III	f	hair or flesh	QUIRE IV	f	hair or flesh	QUIRE V	f	hair or flesh
	1	R U F		5	R U F		13	R U F		21	R U F		29	R U F
	2	R U F		6	R U F		14	R U F		22	R U F		30	R U F
	3	R U F		7	R U F		15	R U F		23	R U F		31	R U F
	4	R U F		8	R U F		16	R U F		24	R U F		32	R U F
				9	R U F		17	R U F		25	R U F		33	R U F
				10	R U F		18	R U F		26	R U F		34	R U F
				11	R U F		19	R U F		27	R U F			
				12	R U F		20	R U F		28	R U F		35	R U F
				13	R U F									
	QUIRE VI	f		hair or flesh	QUIRE VII		f	hair or flesh		QUIRE VIII	f		hair or flesh	QUIRE IX
	36	R U F		40	R U F		46	R U F		54	R U F		62	R U F
	37	R U F		41	R U F		47	R U F		55	R U F		63	R U F
				42	R U F		48	R U F		56	R U F		64	R U F
				43	R U F		49	R U F		57	R U F		65	R U F
				44	R U F		50	R U F		58	R U F		66	R U F
				45	R U F		51	R U F		59	R U F		67	R U F
				46	R U F		52	R U F		60	R U F		68	R U F
				47	R U F		53	R U F		61	R U F		69	R U F
	QUIRE XI	f		hair or flesh	QUIRE XII		f	hair or flesh		QUIRE XIII	f		hair or flesh	QUIRE XIV
	70	R U F		76	R U F		82	R U F		88	R U F		124	R U F
	71	R U F		77	R U F		83	R U F		89	R U F		95	R U F
	72	R U F		78	R U F		84	R U F		90	R U F		96	R U F
	73	R U F		79	R U F		85	R U F		91	R U F		97	R U F
	74	R U F		80	R U F		86	R U F		92	R U F		98	R U F
	75	R U F		81	R U F		87	R U F		93	R U F		99	R U F
	76	R U F		82	R U F		88	R U F		94	R U F		100	R U F
	77	R U F		83	R U F		89	R U F					101	R U F
	78	R U F		84	R U F		90	R U F					102	R U F
	79	R U F		85	R U F		91	R U F					103	R U F
	80	R U F		86	R U F		92	R U F					104	R U F
	81	R U F		87	R U F		93	R U F					105	R U F
	82	R U F		88	R U F		94	R U F					106	R U F
	83	R U F		89	R U F		95	R U F					107	R U F

Figure 1: The current collation of AM 239 fol. In collaboration with Vasare Rastonis.

Methodology

To better understand the genesis of a given codex, codicologists have developed a method to systematically analyze its production units.²⁰ The term “production unit” (PU) describes an entity of a manuscript that was produced as a continuous body of work without visible breaks or discontinuities.²¹ Production units are identified through the systematic analysis of a codex, and while scribal hands are an important aspect, other production features such as the collation, pricking and ruling must also be considered in order to capture the full picture. Changes in production methods are of particular importance, especially when several occur simultaneously in the same location, as such breaks can indicate a new production unit.

In their book *La syntaxe du codex* (2013), Patrick Andrist, Paul Canart and Marilena Maniaci classify different types of production units: the first and most basic production unit is independent from others in both its material and content (a production unit MC). The second type of production unit adds content to an already-existing unit without adding any form of material support (a production unit C). The third type of production unit adds content to an already-existing unit, while also adding more material (a production unit C-MC). The aim of the syntactical description of a manuscript is

[...] to reconstruct, as far as reasonably possible, the probable stages of the history of this codex by analysing the types of its production units, even when we cannot assign a date to the material support or the writing.²²

- 20 The term “production unit” was originally coined by Erik Kwakkel, see Erik Kwakkel, “Towards a Terminology for the Analysis of Composite Manuscripts,” *Gazette du livre médiéval* 41 (Autumn 2002): 12–19. Other terms for entities in manuscripts include “booklet,” see Pamela Robinson, “The ‘Booklet’. A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts,” in *Codicologica: Towards a Science of Handwritten Books = Vers Une Science Du Manuscrit = Bausteine Zur Handschriftenkunde*, eds. A. Gruys and J. P. Gumbert, *Litterae Textuales* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), 46–69, and “codicological unit,” see Marilena Maniaci, *Terminologia del libro manoscritto*, Addenda 3 (Roma: Istituto centrale per la patologia del libro, 1996) and Johann Peter Gumbert, “Codicological Units: Towards a Terminology for the Stratigraphy of the Non-Homogeneous Codex,” in *Il codice miscelaneo: tipologie e funzioni; atti del convegno internazionale, Cassino, 14–17 maggio 2003*, eds. Edoardo Crisci and Oronzo Pecere, *Segno e testo* 2 (Cassino: Università degli studi di Cassino, 2004), 17–42.
- 21 Patrick Andrist, Paul Canart, and Marilena Maniaci, *La syntaxe du codex: Essay de codicologie structurale*, *Bibliologia*, volume 34 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 8.
- 22 Patrick Andrist and Marilena Maniaci, “New (and Renewed) Resources in the Field of

The codicological analysis of AM 239 fol. presented below was conducted following this type of syntactical description. By applying a qualitative approach, all 109 leaves of AM 239 fol. were researched both from digital images and through in-situ analysis. The information gathered includes the type of writing support, gathering sizes and structures, dimensions of the leaves, text block and margins, pricking marks and ruling marks, colors used for the illuminations, the presence or absence of rubrics, information about the scribe(s), and contemporary and later corrections and additions. In the following analysis, the characteristics of the individual production units will be presented in this order.

Additional data was provided through pigment analysis performed by Prof. Maurizio Aceto and Prof. Angelo Agostino, who performed FORS (Fiber Optic Reflectance Spectroscopy) and XRF (X-Ray Fluorescence) on selected initials contained in the manuscript at the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum in Reykjavík in August 2021. Both techniques are non-invasive and state-of-the-art methods used for the identification of pigments and dyestuffs.

Codicological description

In the following analysis, the major production units dated to the late fourteenth century are described in detail. The discussion of codicological details underlines that these three units are, in fact, the products of separate projects.

The first production unit (PU1)

PU1 begins on fol. 1 and ends with fol. 35v, which corresponds to the previously suggested division by Drechsler. Fol. 1r was originally left blank, a copy of *Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs*, begins on fol. 1v. There are several lacunae within PU1, and fol. 35v does not coincide with the end of the saga. After this leaf, another lacuna occurs. Therefore, in its present form, the first production unit contains only one text, *Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs*, which is not preserved in its entirety. According to the previously mentioned marginalia, there are at least forty-five leaves (or ninety pages)

Manuscript Description (the ‘Syntaxe Du Codex’ and More...),” *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Bulletin* 2.1–2 (2016): 75.

missing from the manuscript,²³ thirty-one of them from PU1, meaning that this production unit was once at least twice the size that it is today.²⁴

The codicological aspects of PU1 seem to have set the tone for all the following production units. The properties of the writing support of PU1 can be characterized as follows: The writing support is vellum (calf skin), as is visible from the hair follicles. In its current form, PU1 consists of a defective quire, currently consisting of two bifolia (I¹⁻⁴), three intact gatherings made of four bifolia (II⁵⁻¹², III¹³⁻²⁰, IV²¹⁻²⁸), a defective gathering made of three bifolia (V²⁹⁻³⁴), and a singleton (fol. 35) (see figure 1 for the current collation). The gatherings that are preserved in their full size (gatherings II, III and IV) adhere to Gregory's rule, meaning that hair-sides face hair-sides within an opening, following the continental-European fashion of constructing quires.²⁵ The leaves measure 287x200 mm on average.

Other codicological features that shape the appearance of PU1 include the mise-en-page, in that the layout of the pages is rather homogeneous. The average text block size of 205x146 mm is arranged in one column per page throughout. The line count, however, varies. The first page, fol. 1v, counts 33 lines to the column. Fol. 2r counts only 28 lines, before immediately returning to 33 lines on fol. 2v. The line count stays stable until fol. 13v, from whence 32 lines are written per page, until 35v. PU1 was pricked with a tool that left slit-like marks, probably a knife (see image 2). On fols. 5–12, x-like pricking marks can be observed alongside slits (see image 3). This shape might be the result of double pricking whereby the knife was held at different angles.²⁶ The ruling in PU1 appears to be lead ruling, as

23 Excluding the unknown number of leaves missing between fols. 85 and 96 and the lost end of *Viðráður Gregoriusar*.

24 At present it cannot be ruled out that PU1 contained further texts, especially when considering that the table of contents is not legible in its entirety.

25 On Gregory's rule, see for instance Frank M. Bischoff, "Pergamentdicke und Lagenordnung. Beobachtungen zur Herstellungstechnik Helmarshausener Evangeliare des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts," in *Pergament: Geschichte, Struktur, Restaurierung, Herstellung*, ed. Peter Rück, Historische Hilfswissenschaften, Bd. 2 (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1991), 99.

26 In her BA thesis, Björk Þorleifsdóttir remarks: "Krossinn er bara notaður til að merkja fyrir spássium." Björk Þorleifsdóttir, *Af bókfelli: Smásjárathuganir á íslenskum skinnhandritum* (Reykjavík, 2003), 47. This could imply that different tools were used to indicate different boundaries and lines. A wider comparison of the use of pricking tools is currently in progress and will be considered in a forthcoming publication concerning late-fourteenth-century manuscript production.

marks on fols. 5r, 12v and 33r indicate. Elsewhere in this unit, there are ruling marks that appear as if they were done with a blunt instrument, e.g. on fol. 28r. At present, no definite explanation can be given for this discrepancy, as studies of the potential fading of lead ruling are wanting.



Images 2 and 3: Pricking in the form of a slit (left) and an x (right) as seen from fol. 6r. AM 239 fol. Photo: Sigurður Stefán Jónsson, reproduced with permission.

PU1 is illuminated with colored initials that feature pen-flourishing. The initials are mostly done in dark red and a greenish color that appears turquoise at times.²⁷ The exception is the only historiated initial, on fol. 2v, where white and black were used in addition to these two colors. Chemical analysis has identified red ochre, green earth and white lead as pigments used for the colored initials in PU1.²⁸ Liepe discusses the possibility that the illuminator in this production unit was the main scribe H1 himself.²⁹ Rubrical spaces are blank throughout this unit – no chapter headings were filled in.

As already mentioned, the writing on these first thirty-five folia has been attributed to H1, a hand identified in several other manuscripts, among them AM 350 fol. and AM 226 fol. There are not many visible cor-

27 For a discussion of the art historic properties of these illuminations, see Liepe, *Studies in Icelandic Fourteenth Century Book Painting*, 163–65.

28 Sampled initials in PU1 are on fols. 13v, 15r, 17v and 21v.

29 Liepe, *Studies in Icelandic Fourteenth Century Book Painting*, 169–70.

rections in PU₁, adding to the impression that this scribe was proficient. In several locations it seems as though H₁ scratched out a mistake and wrote over it. The few interlinear additions in this unit are typically making up for omitted words and use a comma-like insertion character. It appears that these corrections were made by H₁, as indicated by the ductus and color of the ink. A second scribe that has not been mentioned by earlier scholarship can be observed in PU₁, although its contribution is rather short. The latter half of line 6 and all of line 7 on fol. 2r are written in a different, seemingly less skilled hand, which features a much larger script that is placed unevenly on the line (see image 4). This hand does not occur elsewhere in the manuscript and might have belonged to a student or apprentice.

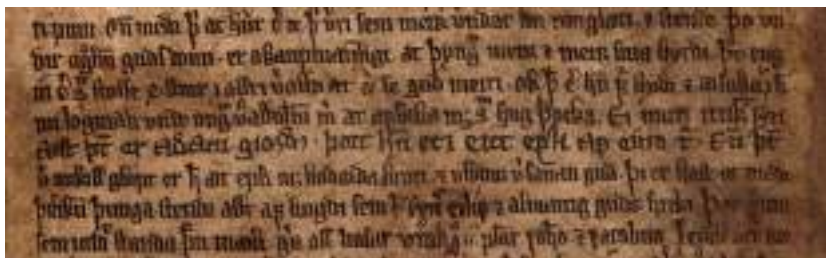


Image 4: The sporadic occurrence of an unknown hand in lines 6 & 7 on fol. 2r in AM 239 fol. Photo: Suzanne Reitz, reproduced with permission.

The second production unit (PU₂)

Previous research suggests that PU₂ begins on fol. 36 and continues until the end of the manuscript on fol. 109 (excluding the seventeenth-century insertion).³⁰ As will be shown, there are strong reasons to argue that the second production unit ends much earlier than previously proposed, namely in the middle of fol. 52v, where the text it preserves, *Jóns saga baptista*, ends. Apart from the change of scribal hands from H₁ to H₃ occurring between fols. 35 and 36 where PU₂ begins, the reasons for arguing for a new production unit starting there are the same ones that suggest that it already ends in the middle of fol. 52v.

The properties of the writing support do not change significantly: Like PU₁, PU₂ is written on vellum. Again, a loss of leaves has occurred, and according to the marginalia, some thirteen leaves are missing throughout

30 Drechsler, *Illuminated Manuscript Production*, 116.

this production unit, amongst others the leaf that contained the beginning to *Jóns saga baptista*.³¹ Today, PU2 consists of two singletons (VI^{36,37}), followed by two quaternions (VII³⁸⁻⁴⁵, VIII⁴⁶⁻⁵³), both of which adhere to Gregory's rule. The average leaf size measures 284x205 mm and is essentially the same size as PU1.

The layout stays a single column, and the text block size remains consistent with PU1, measuring 206x144 mm on average; however, the line count varies significantly (see also table 1 below): fol. 36 counts 34 lines on both sides; fol. 37r changes to 33 lines before immediately returning to 34 lines on fols. 37v–42r. On fol. 42v, the line count increases to 35 lines until fol. 45, where both recto and verso count 34 lines again. After this, the line count decreases to 31 lines until the end of the production unit on fol. 52v, line 15. The pricking marks from fol. 36 until fol. 53 (which is the last leaf of gathering VIII and from a material standpoint still belongs to PU2) show different shapes. There are a few pricking marks on fols. 36–45 that are slits. From fols. 36–41, these slits mark the outer and inner margins of the leaves. The line pricking on these leaves is either round or triangle-like (see image 5). From fol. 42 to fol. 45, the line pricking is both round and slit-like, whereby the slits are especially present in the upper half, and the round holes in the lower half of the pages. From fol. 46 onwards, the pricking shows as round marks. The reason for this mixture of shapes is unknown and does not coincide with any change in ruling, which appears to be made with lead throughout (visible on 45v, for example).



Image 5: Round or triangle-like line pricking as seen in the outer margin of fol. 41r. AM 239 fol. Photo: Sigurður Stefán Jónsson, reproduced with permission.

31 Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that PU2 originally contained other texts written prior to *Jóns saga baptista*.

The colors used for the initials continue to be dark red and greenish turquoise in appearance. As in PU₁, pigment analysis has identified the components as red ochre and green earth.³² However, there are some changes concerning the decoration of these initials: the pen-flourishing gets simpler and less professional, and several initials lack it all together.³³ Another change from the previous production unit is that rubrics are present. From fol. 36r onwards, red chapter headings are filled in using a dark red. Whether the red ink used for the rubrics is made of the same composition as the ink used for initials cannot be determined at present.

H₃, the main scribe of PU₂, is very likely the same person that filled in the rubrics in this unit; both the aspect and ductus of the script are highly similar (see image 6). H₃ has not been identified in any other manuscripts so far. The preferred insertion characters used for interlinear corrections are comma- or hook-like strokes, but other larger characters, such as a Ψ on fol. 38r, line 7 or fol. 45v, lines 17 and 22, occur as well. Judging by the large number of corrections made in PU₂ and the scribe's slightly irregular ductus, this scribe was less skilled than H₁.



Image 6: Rubric and surrounding text, both very likely written by H₃. AM 239 fol., fol. 43r. Photo: Suzanne Reitz, reproduced with permission.

The third production unit (PU₃)

A third fourteenth-century production unit (PU₃) begins on fol. 52v but has not been previously noticed, probably because no scribal change occurs between PU₂ and PU₃. Apart from the beginning of a new text, there are several subtle indicators that there is a break between the two units: the

³² Samples were taken from two initials on fol. 38v.

³³ Liepe, *Studies in Icelandic Fourteenth Century Book Painting*, 163.

hue of the black ink used for the writing of the main text changes slightly from black to a lighter brownish black. Furthermore, there is a small rubric in line 15 that can easily be overlooked, and not without reason: this little red chapter heading, reading “prologus” and initiating *Pétrs saga postula*, is tucked away at the end of the elongated and stretched “Amen” (see image 7). The rubric is practically invisible on the black-and-white images on the online-depot Digitale Samlinger and does not catch the eye on the colored images supplied on handrit.is, either.³⁴ Upon closer investigation, changes in several other production aspects such as the pricking and color palette become obvious, manifesting a third production unit.



Image 7: Break between PU₂ and PU₃ with rubric in line 15 (circled) on fol. 52v in AM 239 fol. Image: Suzanne Reitz, reproduced with permission.

PU₂ ends in line 15 on fol. 52v. The rest of the leaf, as well as fol. 53, which marks the last leaf of gathering VIII, was originally left blank. Later, when writing the text of the third production unit, H₃ first made use of this free space before adding more writing support, which is also vellum. Thus, PU₃ is a direct material continuation of the previous unit on the very same page. Lacunae occur between fols. 85 and 95, after fol. 103 and again after

³⁴ See <https://sprogsamlinger.ku.dk/q.php?p=ds/hjem/mapper/26477> and <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/AM02-0239/115#page/52v/mode/2up>.

fol. 109. Gatherings are mostly made of 4 bifolia (IX⁵⁴⁻⁶¹, X⁶²⁻⁶⁹, XI⁷⁰⁻⁷⁷, XII⁷⁸⁻⁸⁵, XIV⁹⁶⁻¹⁰³); only the last gathering is a tertion (XV¹⁰⁴⁻¹⁰⁹). Again, most of the quires adhere to Gregory's rule, only gathering X does not follow the method faithfully. The average leaf size is 288x204 mm.

The layout continues to be arranged in one column, but the text block measures 225x150 mm on average and is accordingly approximately 20 mm taller than the text blocks in PU1 and PU2. The line count is, at least at first, more regular than in PU2: fol. 52v is written in 31 lines, as is fol. 53v. Fol. 53r counts 30 lines, and from fol. 54r until 85v, H₃ writes 32 lines per page. After a lacuna (supplemented by the paper addition), the line count decreases to 29 lines on fols. 96r–97v. It increases only slightly at first, with 31 lines on fols. 98r–103v and 33 lines on fol. 104r. Fols. 104v–109v, however, suddenly show 40 lines per page. The end of the last text in PU₃, *Viðræður Gregoriusar*, is defective, but it might be that the scribe only had a limited amount of writing support left at his disposal to conclude the text and therefore started to increase the line count per page drastically.

As previously mentioned, fols. 52 and 53 were pricked together with the rest of gathering VIII and show the same round pricking holes as the other leaves in this gathering. The newly added writing material in PU₃, from gathering IX onward, shows slit-like pricking marks, meaning that the pricking tool was changed from a round to a flat tool between this production unit and the previous one. The line pricking shows a lot of incidences where too many lines were pricked (e.g., fols. 70–77), and the last two quires (fols. 96–106) show three sets of line pricking marks, whereby the outermost pricking seems to have ultimately been used by the scribe (see image 8).³⁵ The ruling in PU₃ seems to be lead ruling (see e.g. marks on fols. 62r and 78r); however, there are also marks that appear more in the style of dry-point ruling (e.g., fol. 72r).

35 Why these gatherings were re-pricked not once but twice remains unknown. The line count indicated by the pricking marks does not vary from one set to the other.



*Image 8: Three sets of line pricking as seen from fol. 103r. AM 239 fol.
Photo: Sigurður Stefán Jónsson, reproduced with permission.*

On fol. 52v, *Pétrs saga postula* is initiated with a vibrant red I-initial, which has been identified as cinnabar, and features black pen-flourishing drawn with an ink containing iron. Overall, PU₃ contains not only this vibrant red, dark red and a greenish turquoise (the latter two of which were, as in PU₁ and PU₂, identified as red ochre and green earth), but also a darker green containing carbon, and yellow.³⁶ Rubrics continue for the most part to be filled in with a red color, which at times appears slightly lighter or darker.³⁷ One chapter heading on fol. 64r, however, diverges and is written in greenish turquoise. While no pigment analysis has been performed on this heading, the appearance of the color is highly similar to that used for the pen-flourishing for the corresponding S-initial (see image 9). Should the same ink have been used for both the rubric and the pen-flourishing, it

36 No samples were taken from yellow initials, nor was the black used for the pen-flourishing on fol. 52v identified. In PU₃, selected initials on fols. 52v and 53v were researched.

37 An in-depth study on all colored elements in AM 239 fol. will be provided by Giulia Zorzan in the proceedings of the Helgafell-symposium held on 3 and 4 March 2023 (forthcoming).

would suggest that either the rubricator of this section was also responsible for (at least part of) the decoration process or that the rubricator and decorator worked very closely together, to the point that they shared the same ink well. Liepe does not go into detail concerning the pen-flourishing in this part of the manuscript, but it sets itself apart from both PU₁ and PU₂ in that occasionally, simple faces are added to the decoration, similar to those present in AM 156 4to (a *Jónsbók* codex written by H₂). The change in decoration style is an indicator that PU₂ and PU₃ were not illuminated in the same process and might even point to different decorators.

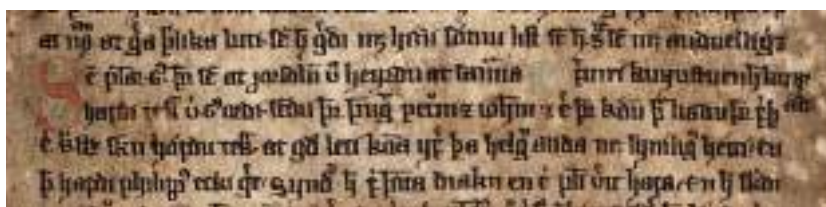


Image 9: Turquoise chapter heading and S-initial with turquoise pen-flourishing on fol. 64r. AM 239 fol. Photo: Suzanne Reitz, reproduced with permission.

As previously remarked, the scribe does not change from PU₂ to PU₃; the main text continues to be the work of H₃. The rubrics might also be ascribed to this hand, although there are certain features that do not quite correspond to the ductus of H₃: there are several rubrics throughout the third production unit that are written in a more swung and less “boxy” ductus, drawing tall f below the base line and closing the loops of insular f (e.g. on fol. 68r, see image 10). Other rubrics, however, show the squarer ductus of H₃, which is present in the rubrics in the previous production unit, featuring the open insular f and boxy letter bodies (e.g. on fol. 68v, see image 11). Another difference between rubrics PU₂ and PU₃ is the use of line fillers. While none are present in PU₂, they occur quite frequently in PU₃. The two “styles” in the rubrics change randomly – no clear pattern emerges that would point towards any clear division of hands. Following these observations, two possibilities arise: either two different people filled in the chapter headings in PU₃, or H₃ used two different ducti during the rubrication process. The turquoise rubric on fol. 64r further suggests that the rubrication process of PU₃ was (at least in part) connected to the decoration, which also changes from PU₂ to PU₃. Corrections continue to

be much more frequent than in H1's writing. Insertion characters do not change from those used in PU2.



Images 10 & 11: Two different styles in the rubrics of PU₃, one featuring insular *f* with closed loops and tall *s* extending below base line (fol. 68r, left) and one showing an open insular *f* and tall *s* standing on the base line (fol. 68v, right).

Photos: Suzanne Reitz, reproduced with permission.

Younger production units

Apart from the three late-fourteenth-century production units, there are several other, younger production units. Most of them provide content but no new writing support to the manuscript, thus qualifying as production units of the C-type. They range from simple pen-trial-like marginalia (e.g. an incomplete alphabet on fols. 21v and 22r), over the added pagination, to the ownership note and table of contents on fol. 1r. Drechsler asserts that the table of contents was “written by the same scribe that wrote the note of ownership.”³⁸ Ólafur Halldórsson (1966) is silent on the relationship between the ownership note and the table of contents and only remarks, that the table of contents was added “síðar.”³⁹ Due to the worn state of the first page, it is difficult to say for certain whether the same hand was at work here, but from the little that is visible, it seems appropriate to at least date the table of contents to a similar time as the ownership note, that is, the beginning of the fifteenth century.

³⁸ Drechsler, *Illuminated Manuscript Production*, 117.

³⁹ Ólafur Halldórsson, *Helgafellsbækur fornar*, 40.

The paper slips added by Árni Magnússon documenting the later provenance of AM 239 fol. can be classified as production units MC, as they are independent from the rest of the manuscript. This also applies to the largest younger production unit, PU4, the supplied ending of *Pétrs saga postula*.

The fourth major production unit contained in AM 239 fol. sets itself clearly apart from the three fourteenth-century units through its writing support: its only quire, XIII, is made of paper. The leaves show a watermark portraying a coat of arms, a crowned shield (see image 12). The main shield is arranged into quarters with an inescutcheon. Fields 2 and 3 show an eagle, while fields 1 and 4 are covered by a bend. In the bend, there are two quadrupeds of what seems like the same species, lifting their right front legs. The inescutcheon shows two slender objects that are crossed, perhaps swords or crosiers. No counter mark is visible.⁴⁰

The leaves are approximately 289x199 mm in size. The text block, which is again arranged in one column, measures 250x170 mm on average, and features 38 lines per page, except for fol. 92r, where 17 lines are written. Leaves 92v–95v are left blank. Neither pricking nor ruling marks are visible. Only in this paper supplement are catch words present. There are no illuminations or otherwise added decorations, and the ink used for the main text is brown. As already mentioned, the scribe of PU4 has been identified as Magnús Jónsson í Vigur in Ísafjarðardjúp. Magnús was a wealthy farmer and learned man, who is renowned for his activity as scribe and collector of manuscripts.⁴¹

40 At present, the watermark remains unidentified.

41 Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenskar æviskrár: Frá landnámstímum til ársloka 1940*, vol. 3 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1950), 28–29. For a comprehensive list of Magnús' scribal activities, see for example Jóhann Gunnar Ólafsson, "Magnús Jónsson í Vigur," *Skírnir* 130 (1956): 107–26. For his activities as a patron, see Sheryl McDonald Werronen's project "Icelandic Scribes. Scribal Networks in 17th-Century Iceland: The Patronage of Magnús Jónsson í Vigur": <https://icelandicscribesproject.com/patron/>.



*Image 12: Watermark featuring a coat of arms
on fol. 95. AM 239 fol. Photo: Lea D. Pokorny.*

AM 239 fol.'s genesis

The identification of the three production units from the late fourteenth century is invaluable for understanding the production of AM 239 fol. However, it is the relationship between these three units that truly sheds light on the genesis of this manuscript. The fact that fol. 1r was initially left blank gives reason to believe that fol. 1 was intended to be the first leaf of PU1 (and, consequently, of the manuscript as a whole), as first rectos tend not to carry writing, probably because of the higher exposure to wear and damage.⁴² Due to the lacuna that occurs between fol. 35, the last leaf of PU1, and fol. 36, the first leaf of PU2, it is impossible to define their relationship with any certainty. A closer connection between PU1 and PU2 cannot be ruled out, but it is not possible to determine whether they were written together, since H1 and H3 do not occur on the same leaf or in the same quire. Fols. 35 and 36 are not connected, nor do they mark the actual end or beginning of the texts they encompass. Therefore, it is impossible to say whether the two units were physically connected at some point.

One could argue that PU1 and PU2 are somehow related, as the color scheme and pigments used in these two units are essentially the same. However, the colors alone do not necessarily confirm a closer relationship between PU1 and PU2, as the pigments in question, red ochre and green earth, were widely available, cheap and also used in PU3. Other features point towards a discontinuation between the two first production units: The pen-flourishing changes from fol. 35v to fol. 36r,⁴³ which suggests that not only a change of scribe but also a change of illuminator (likely “*cum ornemaniste*”) occurs at this location. In addition, the sudden presence of rubrics in PU2 indicates that these two sections were not part of the same project and are, therefore, two separate production units. Perhaps PU2 was once connected with PU1 through the writing support, thus fulfilling the criteria for a production unit C-MC, as described above. The dating of

42 Ryan Perry, “The Sum of the Book: Structural Codicology and Medieval Manuscript Culture,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval British Manuscripts*, eds. Orietta Da Rold and Elaine M. Treharne, Cambridge Companions: Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 110. Blank first rectos in Icelandic manuscripts from the fourteenth century can for example be observed in GKS 1005 fol., SÁM 1, AM 61 fol., AM 156 4to and AM 350 fol.

43 Liepe, *Studies in Icelandic Fourteenth Century Book Painting*, 163.

the two units according to the ONP Dictionary of Old Norse Prose, which is based on Kristian Kålund and Stefán Karlsson,⁴⁴ does not shed light on the matter: Stefán Karlsson's narrow dating of fols. 1–35 to the decade 1360–1370 is by no means an absolute one,⁴⁵ and since PU2 and PU3 are dated to the time between 1350 and 1400, all three production units might very well be contemporaries. Thus, in its present state, both PU1 and PU2 are to be treated as production units MC – individual in both their material and content. The relationship between PU2 and PU3 is much easier to define because the break between them is preserved: PU3 was obviously added to the already existing PU2, making use of the empty space on fols. 52v and 53rv and adding new writing support to accommodate the texts. Therefore, PU3 qualifies as a production unit C-MC – adding to the available writing support left blank in the previous unit and adding more material. PU4, as a much later addition, stands separately from the other units as a production unit MC.

One can only speculate about H3's motives for adding more material to the already existing texts. Kathryn M. Rudy discusses possible reasons for users to add to a manuscript in great detail. Examples given are, among others, personalization and newly available texts as possible “forces” that “drove book owners to add texts and images to books that anyone would have considered complete.”⁴⁶ The fourth major production unit of AM 239 fol. might be included as an example at this point; it was certainly never planned by the fourteenth-century scribes but deemed a necessary completion to accommodate the user's needs some 300 years later. Surely the fourteenth-century scribes had certain motives to add material and gather it in one collection, but apart from the similarity of the texts, these motives remain unknown today.

The table of contents on fol. 1r indicates that the three oldest production units had come together by the beginning of the fifteenth century, which is why it is worth examining the binding of AM 239 fol. When taking a close look at the binding stations of the manuscript, three different

44 For the ONP dating, see <https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?m175>. Kristian Kålund dates AM 239 fol. in its entirety to the time between 1350 and 1400, cf. Kålund, *Katalog over Den Arnemagnæanske Håndskriftsamling*, 1:206.

45 Stefán Karlsson, *Sagas of Icelandic Bishops*, 21.

46 Kathryn M. Rudy, *Piety in Pieces: How Medieval Readers Customized Their Manuscripts* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2016), 9.

sewing hole sets can be distinguished: first, a set of v-shaped holes; second a notched cut, possibly from the time between the seventeenth and nineteenth century; and, third, a set of holes stabbed with a needle or awl from the middle of the twentieth century.⁴⁷ The v-shaped stations, presumably older than the other two sets, are also present in the seventeenth-century paper addition. This could, for example, mean that the paper gathering was added to an existing binding, using the same technique, or that the three fourteenth-century production units were unbound until the fourth PU was added, which would explain the substantial loss of leaves.

Loose gatherings were by no means uncommon during the Middle Ages. They could be wrapped in a limp binding of some sort, occasionally fixed to the wrapper with provisional fixtures.⁴⁸ There are several holes present in AM 239 fol. that could have been intended for quire tackets, an intermediate fixture meant to stabilize a gathering during its handling. Johann Peter Gumbert describes tackets as

[...] either loops of thread, or thin strips of parchment (often rolled tightly so as to resemble pieces of string), the ends of which are knitted [p. 301] or twisted together; they pass through holes that go, in the fold, through all the bifolia of the quire. They use two holes to make a loop, or one only and go over the end of the quire to close the loop.⁴⁹

Tackets could also be used for provisionally connecting quires to a limp binding.⁵⁰ In AM 239 fol., the holes appear mostly on the tail of leaves in the first five quires, in what corresponds to PU1.⁵¹ Vasaré Rastonis pointed out that some holes were potentially meant to be used in conjunction with a sewing station; however, given that the holes are irregular, it

47 I wish to thank Vasaré Rastonis, conservator at Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, for providing me with this information.

48 J. A. Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding* (Aldershot; Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999), 285.

49 Johann Peter Gumbert, "The Tacketed Quire: An Exercise in Comparative Codicology," *Scriptorium* 65 (2011): 300.

50 Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, 287–90.

51 At the tail of fols. 9, 13, 14, 15, 29, 30 and 31, and at the tail and maybe the head of fols. 21, 22, 23 and 24.

remains unclear what the actual purpose of these holes was.⁵² Based on the sewing stations visible today, it is difficult to say for certain that PU₁, PU₂ and PU₃ were already physically bound together by the time the table of contents was added; yet, the fact that it lists texts in all three production units strongly indicates that they were preserved together, maybe as either an unbound or only provisionally bound manuscript to begin with.⁵³

As previously indicated, leaves have gone missing from the manuscript, and the current collation includes fifteen gatherings. Below, a reconstruction of a possible collation from around 1400 is portrayed (figure 2). This reconstruction is based on the premise that a quaternion, a gathering made of four bifolia, was the most common size in medieval Europe and that most of the intact gatherings used as the building blocks for the various medieval production units in AM 239 fol. are also quaternions.⁵⁴ The number of missing leaves in the reconstruction was calculated by comparing C. R. Unger's 1874 *Postola Sögur* edition and AM 239 fol., which needs approximately 70–72 percent of the lines of Unger's edition. In figure 2, gatherings that are still intact today are presented in yellow, while gatherings that were either reconstructed partly or as a whole are presented in pink. Arabic numbers represent the current foliation; likewise, the gatherings in the reconstruction are counted in Arabic numbers, in order to set them apart from the current collation. The reconstruction suggests that, in its state around 1400 when the ownership note and the table of contents were added, this composite manuscript counted over 150 leaves in twenty gatherings, meaning that AM 239 fol.'s possible original size is comparable to manuscripts such as AM 350 fol. (currently 157 leaves) or AM 226 fol. (currently 158 leaves).

Some irregularities are accounted for, such as the size of the first gath-

52 Personal correspondence from January 13, 2022.

53 Potentially, wear of the outermost bifolia of complete gatherings could indicate that the book was unbound for a while. A survey of these bifolia was, however, inconclusive: Some gatherings (e.g. III, IV, V and VII) show an outermost bifolium that is slightly glossier and darker in color than the bifolia they enclose. Other gatherings (e.g. VI, VIII, IX and X) show these characteristics on bifolia that lie in the middle of the quire.

54 G. S. Ivy, "The Bibliography of the Manuscript Book," in *The English Library Before 1700. Studies in Its History*, ed. Francis Wormald and C. E. Wright (London: Athlones Press, 1958), 39, and Elias Avery Lowe, ed., *Codices Latini Antiquiores. A Palaeographical Guide to Latin Manuscripts Prior to the Ninth Century. Lowe. Part 2 Great Britain and Ireland, Codices Latini Antiquiores 2* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), x.

ering, which is here presented as having contained seven leaves.⁵⁵ Further irregularities are quires 6 and 10, a binion and a tertion. Special attention should be paid to the reconstructed quires 11 and 12: In the current collation (figure 1), these two gatherings are bound as one quaternion (quire VII); however, based on the missing text, there seem to be six leaves missing between the bifolium fols. 38 and 45. At present, this lacuna is filled out by fols. 39–44, however, this collation cannot be the original: Fol. 38 ends in chapter 16 of *Jóns saga baptista* with “bera lostasemi með”.⁵⁶ The text on fol. 39 begins with “loknir oc birti” and belongs to chapter 27. The subsequent leaves build a textual continuum until the end of fol. 44, which ends in chapter 33 with “at hinn heilagi”. Given that fol. 45 begins in chapter 24 with “[sag]di marga okomna hluti”, it is safe to say that fols. 39–44 textually belong after fol. 45. After fol. 45, there is again a short lacuna, just as after fol. 44. It is sensible to assume that the outer most bifolium of the reconstructed gathering XII went missing. The paper gathering added in the seventeenth century between fols. 85 and 96 is made up of five bifolia. The text ends on line 17 on fol. 92r; the following three and a half leaves are blank. Given that there are 38 lines per page in PU₄ and that not a full eight leaves were used to replace the text, it might appear sensible to assume that the original gathering, which would have had a line count of approximately 30–32 lines per page, consisted of four bifolia (quire 17 in figure 2).

55 Irregular structures of the first (and last) gathering of a manuscript can be observed elsewhere, see e.g., the collation of GKS 1005 fol. (quire I: one bifolium and a singleton as the last leaf of the quire), or that of Holm Perg 34 4to (quire I: three bifolia and a singleton, whereby the singleton (fol. 2) is bound between fols. 1 and 3). In other cases, the first gathering is smaller than the following ones, e.g. in AM 61 fol. Here, the first gathering is a tertion, while those that follow tend to be quaternions.

56 Chapter division according to Unger, ed., *Postola Sögur*.

Figure 2: Attempted reconstruction of the collation of AM 239 fol. Yellow quires are unaltered, pink quires are reconstructed. Arabic numerals represent the current folio-numbers.

AM 239 fol. as exemplar

The composite nature of AM 239 fol. has considerable implications for one of its copies, namely SÁM 1. This manuscript is, as previously stated, written by the scribe H2, as well as two other unidentified scribes.⁵⁷ It contains a multitude of postulasögur, amongst others *Pétrs saga postula* (fols. 1v–27va30), *Andrés saga postula* (fols. 36v⁵⁸–39vb32) and *Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs* (fols. 40r–81v). Although *Pétrs saga postula* and *Andrés saga postula* also occur in AM 239 fol., they apparently were not used as exemplar by H2. Despite the version of *Pétrs saga postula* found in SÁM 1 and AM 239 fol. being the same, namely “Pétrs saga postula I,” Ólafur Halldórsson asserts that the exemplar used in SÁM 1 is unknown, thus excluding the possibility that H2 copied it from leaves in AM 239 fol.⁵⁹ Ólafur does not expand on the textual relationship of the *Pétrs sögur* found in the two manuscripts further, but probably would have done so if it would have further strengthened the connection between them, and consequently the Helgafell-group. Other scholars working with this material are silent on the relationship of the two texts. It cannot be ruled out that both H2 and H3 used the same exemplar for *Pétrs saga postula*, but to dive deeper into any possible textual relation goes beyond the scope of this article.⁶⁰

The version of *Andrés saga postula* contained in SÁM 1 differs from AM 239 fol., meaning that AM 239 fol. did not serve as an exemplar for

57 Ólafur Halldórsson, ed., *Sögur úr Skarðsbók* (Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagið, 1967), 11–12. The older scribal discussion by Desmond Slay only suggested two scribes. See Desmond Slay, ed., *Codex Scardensis*, Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 2 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1960), 10.

58 The rubric initiating the text is in the last line of fol. 36rb.

59 Ólafur Halldórsson, *Sögur úr Skarðsbók*, 27. Kirsten Wolf catalogues the version of *Pétrs saga postula* “Pétrs saga postula I,” and lists both AM 239 fol. and SÁM 1 as text witnesses for this version. See Kirsten Wolf, *The Legends of the Saints in Old Norse-Icelandic Prose*, Toronto Old Norse-Icelandic Studies 6 (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 314–15. An earlier overview of saints’ lives in Old Norse literature lists both SÁM 1 and AM 239 fol. under *Pétrs saga postula* I; however, SÁM 1 is catalogued as I a and AM 239 fol. as I c, see Ole Widding et al., *The Lives of the Saints in Old Norse Prose. A Handlist*, Medieval Studies XXV (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1963), 329.

60 In the introduction to *Pétrs saga postula*, Unger categorizes both SÁM 1 and AM 239 fol. as manuscript group A, together with a third manuscript, AM 639 4to (Unger, *Postula Sögur*, p. xiv). Unger does not elaborate on the connection between these manuscripts. A source that might shed more light on the matter is a PhD dissertation from 1994, but unfortunately the thesis is not accessible (H. C. Carron, “A Critical Edition of *Pétrs Saga Postula* I, Based on the *Codex Scardensis*” (University of London, 1994).

this text.⁶¹ The version of *Andrés saga* found in AM 239 fol. is “Andrés saga postola I,” while the version in SÁM 1 is categorized as “Andrés saga postola III.” Both *Pétrs saga postula* and *Andrés saga postula* precede *Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs* in SÁM 1, suggesting that they were probably written first. This, together with Ólafur’s hypothesis that different exemplars were used for these two texts, strengthens the assumption that PU₃ had not yet been added to the manuscript when H₂ copied *Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs*. Whether PU₂, which contains *Jóns saga baptista*, was already part of the manuscript at that point, cannot be determined, as this saga was not included in SÁM 1. The likely possibility remains, though, that H₂ made use of AM 239 fol.’s first production unit before H₃ expanded its scope either for the first or the second time. H₂ copied *Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs* also into another manuscript that is preserved as two fragments, AM 653 a 4to and JS fragm. 7. Due to the fragmentary state, it is impossible to assert whether the original manuscript included other texts, and if so, what they were.

Conclusion

As the presented analysis has shown, AM 239 fol. consists of three major production units from the second half of the fourteenth century. PU₁ extends from fol. 1 to fol. 35. PU₂ begins on fol. 36 and ends on fol. 52v15, with the elongated “Amen”. PU₃ begins on the same line as PU₂ ends, on fol. 52v15 with the “prologus” rubric. It extends from there until fol. 85 and again from fol. 95 to fol. 109. The two parts of PU₃ are separated by a later production unit, PU₄, which dates to the seventeenth century and supplies the lost end of *Pétrs saga postula*. Table 1 provides an overview of the major units and their production features.⁶² Note that both the end of *Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs* (ca. six leaves) and the beginning of *Jóns saga baptista* (ca. one leaf) are missing.⁶³ This reconstruction does *not* indicate a quire boundary co-occurring with a text boundary, and, as is discussed above, it remains uncertain where exactly the original boundary between PU₁ and PU₂ was located.

61 Wolf, *The Legends of the Saints in Old Norse-Icelandic Prose*, 30.

62 A more detailed version of this table can also be found on the Helgafell-project website: <https://hirslan.arnastofnun.is/>.

63 These defects are marked with * in the table.

PU	Quire no.	Quire size	Lacunae	Writing supp.	Mise-en-page	Pricking/ruling	Texts/contents	Script	Illumination	Ink main text	Rubrics
PU ₁	1 (1–4)	2 bifolia	5 leaves missing	Vellum	1 column: 32–33 lines (except f. 2r: 28 lines)	Slit-like pricking marks	1v–35v Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs*	H1 (ff. 1v–35v): Gothic textualis with influences of Gothic cursive (except 2r6–7: Unknown scribe)	Illuminated initials: dark red, turquoise, white	Black	No rubrics, two versals highlighted in red (f. 33v)
	2 (5–12)	4 bifolia	–								
	3 (13–20)	4 bifolia	20 leaves missing								
	4 (21–28)	4 bifolia	–								
	5 (29–34)	3 bifolia	2 leaves missing								
	35	1 sgl	7 leaves missing								
PU ₂	6 (36–37)	2 sgl	4 leaves missing	Vellum	1 column: 30–35 lines	Slit-like and round pricking marks	36r–52v:15 Jóns saga baptista*	H3; Gothic textualis with influences of Gothic cursive	Illuminated initials; dark red, turquoise	Black	Rubrics in dark red
	7 (38–45)	4 bifolia	6 +2 leaves missing								
	8 (46–53)	4 bifolia	–								
PU ₃	9 (54–61)	4 bifolia	–	Vellum	1 column: 30–32 lines	Slit-like pricking marks	52v:15–95v Péturs saga postula	H3; Gothic textualis with influences of Gothic cursive	Illuminated initials; dark red, turquoise, dark green, yellow	Brown-black	Rubrics in dark red and turquoise (fol. 64r)
	10 (62–69)	4 bifolia									
	11 (70–77)	4 bifolia									
	12 (78–85)	4 bifolia									
PU ₄	13 (86–95)	5 bifolia	Later replacem.	Paper	1 column: 38 lines	None	Magnús Jónsson: cursive	None	Brown	None	
PU ₃	14 (96–103)	4 bifolia	–	Vellum	One column: 29–40 lines	Slit-like pricking marks	96r–101v Andrés saga postula	H3; Gothic textualis with influences of Gothic cursive	Illuminated initials; dark red, turquoise, dark green, yellow	Black	Rubrics in dark red
	15 (104–109)	3 bifolia	1 leaf missing				101v–109v Viðræður Gregoríusar				

Table 1: Major production units contained in AM 239 fol. in its present form. Thin lines indicate a boundary between gatherings, texts or scribes; thick lines indicate a boundary between production units.

The composite structure of AM 239 fol. presented in this article offers a possible explanation for the difference between exemplars used for SÁM 1. It thus highlights the importance of a deeper understanding of the genesis of a codex, obtained through the identification of production units, and its relevance for related fields such as literary studies as well as the interpretation of the nature of other related manuscripts. Drechsler has claimed that the structure of AM 239 fol. suggests that it was not unusual to produce composite manuscripts at the Augustinian house of Helgafell.⁶⁴ While this article shows that AM 239 fol. contains three production units from the late fourteenth century and thus highlights the compositeness of the manuscript, it is not possible to verify that all parts were, in fact, produced at Helgafell. Furthermore, the relationship between PU2 and PU3 does not appear to be the product of meticulous planning, but rather of convenience. Still, the fact that both of these units were written by the same scribe might point towards a continuity in the personal and perhaps even spacial production of at least PU2 and PU3, not consecutively, but as a continuation of a compilatory work. The investigation of a potential connection between scribes H1 and H3 is dependent on the relationship between PU1 and PU2. Yet, due to the likely change of illuminator and the sudden presence of rubrics, it is unlikely that these units are the result of close scribal cooperation.

This article has shown that AM 239 fol. in its present form grew over time. The manuscript that started with *Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs*, written by H1, was extended twice with texts written by H3, first *Jóns saga baptista* and, later, *Pétrs saga postula*, *Andrés saga postula* and *Viðræður Gregoríusar*. The composite structure of AM 239 fol. strongly suggests that the manuscript's users deemed it appropriate or necessary to combine and add content. The perception of local manuscripts as "interactive"⁶⁵ objects open to adjustments and change is akin to their Insular and Continental European contemporaries and represents a significant aspect of the history of Icelandic book production. Whether or not all its medieval production units were written at Helgafell, the ownership note indicates that the book was most likely housed there, and its content and the two surviving copies of *Tveggja postula saga Jóns ok Jakobs* suggest that it found much use there.

64 Drechsler, *Illuminated Manuscript Production*, 117.

65 Rudy, *Piety in Pieces*, 10. illuminators, book binders

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AM 156 4to	SÁM 1

Den Arnemagnæanske Samling, Copenhagen

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SUMMARY

The Genesis of a Composite. The Codicology of AM 239 fol.

Keywords: Codicology, medieval manuscript production, Helgafell, AM 239 fol., exemplar

Manuscript AM 239 fol. is central for the so-called Helgafell-manuscripts, as it connects the group of some sixteen manuscripts and fragments to the Augustinian house of Helgafell on Snæfellsnes in west Iceland. The manuscript's significance lies not only in the ownership note on fol. 1r, but also in the fact that it was used as an exemplar for two manuscripts, AM 653 a 4to (with JS fragm. 7) and SÁM 1. The codicological structure of the manuscript is complex and was recently described as a composite consisting of two late-fourteenth-century production units. This article revisits the codicology of AM 239 fol; it shows there are, in

fact, three production units from that period and explores the ways in which these relate to one another. The genesis of the manuscript is important to keep in mind when discussing AM 239 fol. as exemplar, as it offers a possible explanation as to why only one of its texts was copied into SÁM 1.

ÁGRIP

Ferill samsetts handrits. Efnisleg einkenni handritsins AM 239 fol.

Efnisorð: efnisleg handritafræði, bókagerð á miðöldum, Helgafell, AM 239 fol., forrit

Handritið AM 239 fol. skipar sérstakan sess í hópi svokallaðra Helgafells-handrita af því að það tengir þau, þ.e.a.s. um það bil 16 handrit og handritabrot, við klaustrið á Helgafelli á Snæfellsnesi. En handritið er ekki einungis athyglisvert vegna upplýsinga um eiganda sem er að finna á bl. 1r heldur líka vegna þess að það er forrit tveggja annarra handrita, AM 653 a 4to (ásamt JS fragm. 7) og SÁM 1. Efnisleg gerð handritsins er margþætt og samkvæmt nýlegri greiningu er það sett saman úr tveimur framleiðslueiningum frá seinni hluta fjórtándu aldar. Í þessari grein eru efnisleg einkenni AM 239 fol. rakin og sýnt fram á að handritið inniheldur ekki tvær heldur þrjár framleiðslueiningar frá þessu tímabili; enn fremur er sýnt hvernig þessar einingar tengjast. Tilurð handritsins skiptir máli þegar hlutverk AM 239 fol. sem forrits er haft í huga, ekki síst af því að hún býður upp á hugsanlega skýringu á því hvers vegna einungis einn texti í því var skrifaður upp í SÁM 1.

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BRYNJA ÞORGEIRSDÓTTIR

“EYRSILFR DRUKKIT, ÞAT GERIR BANA”

The Earliest Old Norse Medical Book, AM 655 xxx 4to, and its Context

A thirteenth-century Icelandic manuscript fragment of only four leaves, bearing the shelf mark AM 655 XXX 4to, stands as the earliest surviving evidence of a medical book in the vernacular within medieval Scandinavia. Although the manuscript clearly used to be larger, the extent of its original size remains uncertain. The fragment contains fifty-two articles, all of which focus on medicinal topics, describing various ailments and their cures as well as the medical effects of different plants and other materials.

The origins of this manuscript remain enigmatic, with little known regarding its provenance and the circumstances of its acquisition by the manuscript collector Árni Magnússon. Only its Icelandic origin and estimated writing date in the latter half of the thirteenth century are evident. This essay offers an examination of the manuscript AM 655 XXX 4to in order to shed what light is possible on its origins and use. It includes a description of the manuscript’s physical characteristics, an analysis of its literary and sociological context, and a critical discussion of what this may tentatively tell us about the production, purpose, and use of the medical codex to which the fragment once belonged. An English translation of the fragment’s text is appended.

Historical background of the manuscript and research history

The fragment is one of only six surviving manuscripts of medieval medical books written in Old Norse.¹ The six manuscripts are all translations or adaptations derived from non-native sources.

¹ Additionally, a Danish fragment of a medical book, AM 187 8vo, is preserved in the Arnamagnæan collection, written in Danish and Latin, dated to 1400–1424. It was bought

Table 1. Medieval fragments and manuscripts of medical books in Old Norse

Collection	Shelf mark	No. of leaves	Dating	Origin
1. Copenhagen, Arnarnagnæan Institute	AM 655 XXX 4to	4	1250–1300	Iceland
2. Copenhagen, Arnarnagnæan Institute	AM 696 I 4to	2	c. 1350	Norway or Iceland
3. Reykjavík, Arnarnagnæan Institute	AM 673 a II 4to	[27 lines]	c. 1370	Iceland
4. Copenhagen, Arnarnagnæan Institute	AM 194 8vo	12	1387	Iceland
5. Copenhagen, Arnarnagnæan Institute	AM 434 a 12mo	40	1450–1500	Iceland
6. Dublin, Royal Irish Academy	23 D 43 [8vo]	74	1475–1500	Iceland

Three scholars have dated AM 655 4to to the second half of the thirteenth century.² This date means the fragment was produced towards the end of an exceptionally transformative period in Europe, marked by significant social changes and prolific cultural activity. These transformations occurred broadly from c. 1050 to 1250, spanning what is known as the long twelfth century, with periods of transitions before and after.³ This was a time of robust economic and population growth, the development of towns and cities, the emergence of new institutions and structures for learning, and the rise of the international orders of the Roman Catholic Church. Extensive translations of Arabic and Greek philosophical and scientific works into Latin were made at the beginning of this period. The

by Árni Magnússon at an auction in Denmark, and there is no indication that this manuscript has ever been in Iceland. The text is printed in Viggo Saby, ed., *Det Arnarnagnæanske håndskrift nr. 187 i oktav, indeholdende en dansk lægebog* (Copenhagen: Thieles, 1886).

- Hreinn Benediktsson, ed., *Early Icelandic Script, as Illustrated in Vernacular Texts from the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Icelandic Manuscripts: Series in Folio II (Reykjavík: Manuscript Institute of Iceland, 1965), xlix; Kristian Kälund, *Katalog over den Arnarnagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, 2 vols., vol. II (Copenhagen: Kommissionen for det Arnarnagnæanske legat; Gyldendal, 1889–1894), 66; and Konráð Gíslason, *Um frumparta íslenzkrar tíngu í fornöld* (Copenhagen: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1856), lxxxv.
- On the demarcation of the period, see Robert Norman Swanson, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 212–213.

translations introduced a renewed medical corpus to the Latin West, creating a flow of ideas that had a decisive influence on intellectual thought and science in Europe.⁴ Consequently, interaction with this new information stimulated the production of additional medical writings, both practical and theoretical, which drew upon the translated canonical works. One of the notable figures of the translation movement was Constantine the African (d. before 1099), who was associated with the medical school in Salerno, Italy, which soon became one of the most important sources of medical knowledge in Europe.⁵ Constantine’s translations were copied and circulated in Europe throughout the Middle Ages, both as separate treatises and as parts of compilations of medical texts. One of the “medical bestsellers” of the long twelfth century, Monica Green concludes, was Constantine’s Latin translation of an Arabic text, *De gradibus* (On the Degrees of Medicines), by the Tunisian physician Ibn al-Jazzar.⁶ Marius Kristensen has shown that *De gradibus* was transmitted to Scandinavia through the Danish translations and adaptations of the physician Henrik Harpestræng (d. 1244).⁷ Some of Harpestræng’s herbal pharmacology was subsequently translated into Old Norse, of which the two-leaved fragment

- 4 Literature on the translation movement and the transformation of Europe in the long twelfth century is ubiquitous; see, e.g., Thomas F. X. Noble and John Van Engen, eds., *European Transformations: The Long Twelfth Century* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012); Johann P. Arnason and Björn Wittrock, eds., *Eurasian Transformations, Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries: Crystallizations, Divergences, Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).
- 5 On Constantine, see Charles Burnett and Danielle Jacquart, eds., *Constantine the African and ‘Alī ibn al-‘Abbās al-Mağūsi: The Pantegni and Related Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1994). A recommended introductory reading on medieval medicine is by Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
- 6 Monica H. Green, “Medical Books,” in *The European Book in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Erik Kwakkel and Rodney Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 281.
- 7 Marius Kristensen, ed., *Harpestræng: Gamle danske urtebøger, stenbøger og kogeboøger, udgivne for Universitets-jubilæets samfund* (Copenhagen: Thieles, 1908–1920), xi, xxii. Harpestræng’s work survives in two main manuscripts, both from c. 1300; NKS 66 8vo (Copenhagen, Royal Library) and K 48 (Stockholm, National Library), published by Marius Kristensen in *ibid.* A table showing the corresponding chapters and examples can be found in *ibid.*, xix–xxii. Harpestræng is thought to have been the canon of Roskilde and a royal Danish physician, who possibly studied or worked in Orléans. Among Harpestræng’s other identified main sources was the widely read Latin medical poem *De viribus herbarum*, written under the pseudonym Macer.

AM 696 I 4to (no. 2 in Table 1) has been established to be a later copy.⁸ AM 655 4to, like the other five Old Norse medical manuscripts, contains clauses originating in *De gradibus*, serving as a material illustration of the dissemination of medical knowledge across the continent in the long twelfth century: “Gras þat er rubea heitir, þat er roðagras – Þat hrindr út ór óléttri konu, þó at barn sé dautt.” (The plant called rubea, that is *roðagras* [lit: reddening plant], expels a baby out of a pregnant woman, even if it is dead).⁹ A similar clause can be found in Harpestræng’s herbal pharmacology, and the corresponding clause in *De gradibus* reads: “Radix rubeæ mulieribus supposita menstrua prouocat, fœtum que mortuum expellit” (the root of rose madder induces menstruation if put beneath a woman and expels a dead foetus).¹⁰ Nevertheless, all six manuscripts in Table 1 also include clauses that are absent from any known writings of Harpestræng. For this reason, it has been speculated that Harpestræng may have written another medical book, on diseases and cures, which no longer exists but could have served as a source for the Old Norse manuscripts.¹¹ The possibility of alternative sources cannot be ruled out, but current knowledge of Latin sources that were available in the medieval north is obfuscated by the fact that the textual evidence is extremely fragmentary. For the north as a whole, it has been estimated that 99 per cent of the Latin manuscript leaves that existed at the start of the Reformation are now lost.¹²

A surge of interest in the Old Norse medical books around the turn of the twentieth century led to almost all the existing editions and publica-

8 See Marius Hægstad, ed., *Gamalnorsk fragment av Henrik Harpestræng*, Skrifter udgivne af Videnskabs-Selskabet i Christiania. II. Historisk-filosofisk Klasse (Christiania [Oslo]: Jacob Dypwad, 1906), 9–10; Kristian Kålund, ed., *Den islandske lægebog Codex Arnarnagæanus 434 a, 12 mo*, Den Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskabs Skrifter (Copenhagen: Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, 1907), 8–9.

9 Fabian Schwabe, ed., *AM 655 XXX 4to – Órléknisbók*. Version 2.2, <http://www.menota.org>. Medieval Nordic Text Archive (2020), fol. 2^v. All translations in the essay are mine.

10 Kristensen, *Harpestræng*, 90; Constantine the African, *De gradibus quos uocant simplicium liber*, in *Constantini Africani post Hippocratem et Galenum ...* (Basel: Heinrich Petri, 1536), 351.

11 See Kristensen, *Harpestræng*, v; Kålund, *Den islandske lægebog*, 10.

12 Áslaug Ommundsen and Tuomas Heikkilä, “Piecing Together the Past: The Accidental Manuscript Collections of the North,” in *Nordic Latin Manuscript Fragments: The Destruction and Reconstruction of Medieval Books*, ed. Áslaug Ommundsen and Tuomas Heikkilä (New York: Routledge, 2017), 4.

tions of the texts of the six Old Norse medical books (from 1860–1931), some accompanied by extensive introductions – an interest that seems to have declined abruptly before and during World War II. The majority of studies on the Old Norse medical corpus are thus a century old or more. Finnur Jónsson’s 1912 monograph on medicine in the medieval north, along with a medical section in his history of Old Norse literature, was followed by Ingjald Reichborn-Kjennerud’s writings on the history of medicine in the north, published in five parts from 1928.¹³ At the same time, Danish scholars took great interest in the Danish medical author Henrik Harpestræng, whose texts were edited and published.¹⁴ As for Old Norse medical books, scholarly publications have, since the middle of the last century, mostly been limited to entries in encyclopaedias and overviews, such as the comprehensive essay by Jón Steffensen in the series *Íslensk þjóðmenning*.¹⁵ An essay on the lapidaries in AM 194 8vo (no. 4 in Table 1) by Adèle Kreager was recently published, and Arngrímur Vídalín writes on the scribe of the same manuscript and the part of it known as *Leiðarvísir*.¹⁶ Little has been written specifically about AM 655 XXX 4to, save Kristian Kålund’s discussion of it in relation to a later medical book, AM 434 (no. 5 in Table 1).¹⁷

- 13 Finnur Jónsson, *Lægekunsten i den nordiske oldtid*, ed. Vilhelm Maar, Medicinsk-historiske smaaskrifter (Copenhagen: Vilhelm Trydes forlag, 1912); Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 2 ed., 3 vols. Vol. II (Copenhagen: Gad, 1920–1924), 909–946; Ingjald Reichborn-Kjennerud, *Vår gamle trolldomsmedisin*, 5 vols., Skrifter utgitt av det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo, Hist.-Filos. Klasse (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1928–1947).
- 14 Most important are Marius Kristensen’s editions of the herbal pharmacology in *Harpestræng*. See also, e.g., the Latin text *De simplicibus medicinis laxativis*, ed. John William Schibby Johnsson (Copenhagen: Vilhelm Priors Kgl. Hofbogshandel, 1914); Henrik Harpestræng, *Liber herbarum*, ed. Poul Hauberg (Copenhagen: Hafnia, 1936).
- 15 Jón Steffensen, “Alþýðulækningar,” in *Alþýðuvísindi: Raunvísindi og dulfræði*, ed. Frosti F. Jóhannsson, Íslensk þjóðmenning VIII (Reykjavík: Þjóðsaga, 1990), 103–191. See also a recent book aimed at the public by the folklorist Ólína Kjerúlf Þorvarðardóttir, *Lifgrös og leyndir dómur: Lækningar, töftrar og trú í sögulegu ljósi* (Reykjavík: Vaka-Helgafell, 2019).
- 16 Adèle Kreager, “Lapidaries and *lyfsteinar*: Health, Enhancement and Human–Lithic Relations in Medieval Iceland,” *Gripla* (2022); Arngrímur Vídalín, “Óláfr Ormsson’s *Leiðarvísir* and Its Context: The Fourteenth-Century Text of a Supposed Twelfth-Century Itinerary,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 117.2 (2018).
- 17 Kålund, *Den islandske lægebog*, 359–360, 379–384.

AM 655 XXX 4to as an artefact

While there is no documented information regarding the provenance of AM 655 4to, the fragment itself may provide insights into the context in which it was created. The manuscript, as a physical object, inherently “represents a culture,” as Stephen Nichols points out; its features convey how it was used and for what purpose.¹⁸ The specific dynamics of the Icelandic society, economy, and culture during the thirteenth century affected the production of AM 655 XXX 4to. As a result, the fragment can be meaningfully interpreted through examining its distinct features and aligning them with the characteristics and culture of its period. The author of this essay examined the fragment at the Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen, where it is preserved. It is catalogued with thirty other parchment fragments of different origins and content under the same shelf mark, differentiated by the numbers I–XXXIII.¹⁹

The fragment consists of four conjoint vellum leaves (two bifolia). The text is continuous and uninterrupted through all eight pages but ends *in medias res*. It can, therefore, be assumed that the leaves formed an inner part of a quire. The vellum is worn and brown in colour with scattered signs of rot or mould. All four leaves show marks of regular horizontal and lateral folds, indicating that the fragment had once been used in some type of packing or binding or stored in a folded state.

Even though the shelf mark indicates quarto size, the dimensions of the fragment correspond to the smaller octavo size, measuring 157 x 123 mm. The text is written neatly in a single column, and each page has exactly seventeen lines. The margins are 10–15 mm at the left, right and top of each page, and on average 30 mm at the bottom. There are signs of pricking at the outer margins but no signs of ruling. The leaves have not been trimmed.

The text is written in one hand, in proto-Gothic script. The ink is dark brown in colour, sometimes black, and appears dense and clear on the pages. There are no rubrics or illuminations in the manuscript, but eight

18 Stephen G. Nichols, “Why Material Philology? Some Thoughts,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 116 (1997). Quote at 14.

19 Discrepancy in the numbers (thirty fragments, numbered I–XXXIII) is caused by two of the fragments having two numbers. Brief descriptions of all the fragments can be found in Kälund, *Katalog* II, 58–67.

black initials appear in the text. Additionally, at the points where most new articles begin, scattered small, faint guide letters appear on the far edges of the outer margins, clearly to indicate where initials should later be placed, perhaps by a separate illuminator. These would have been cut off if the manuscript had been trimmed. Where an initial is intended, the corresponding letter is missing in the text itself. Most articles start at the beginning of a new line, and a space is left blank where the previous article ends. This results in many 20–40 mm long gaps at the end of the lines where the articles end.

No slip accompanies the fragment, and there is no record, marginalia, or other information regarding its provenance or how it came into the hands of Árni Magnússon. However, the fragment is referred to in Jón Ólafsson’s catalogue of the manuscripts in Árni Magnússon’s collection, which dates from *c.* 1731.²⁰ The manuscripts grouped under the shelf mark AM 655 I–XXXIII 4to are all fragments, predominantly dating back to the thirteenth century, with some among the oldest in the collection (*c.* 1200). Fragment 655 XXX is not the sole example in this group for which Árni Magnússon omitted details regarding its acquisition. In the instances where he did make such a record, he often notes that they were discovered embedded within the bindings of other books, whether in the spine, acting as a cover, or affixed to a cover.²¹ This may have been the fate of 655 XXX, given the folding marks on its vellum support, or it may have been retrieved like one of the other fragments in the group, which was found discarded in the trash at a farm.²² Such findings were characteristic of Árni’s approach, which distinguished him from many other collectors, as he meticulously pursued every vellum fragment, tear, and snippet, regardless of condition.²³

The fragment is currently in a modern conservation binding, sewn onto a guard and preserved in a cardboard cover, and bears no immediate trace of its original binding. Kålund remarks (in 1894) that the leaves are

20 AM 477 fol., 44^v (*Catalogus Librorum Msstorum Arnæ Magnæi*).

21 See Kålund, *Katalog* II, 58–67.

22 This is AM 655 V 4to; see *ibid.*, 59.

23 On Árni’s methods, see, e.g., Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, “Manuscripts on the Brain – Árni Magnússon, Collector,” in *66 Manuscripts from the Arnamagnæan Collection*, ed. Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, Matthew James Driscoll, and Sigurður Svavarsson (Copenhagen: Arnamagnæan Institute, 2015).

damaged and contain numerous small holes.²⁴ These holes have since been repaired (1958–1959), but the signs are clearly visible.²⁵

The text of 655 was published by Konráð Gíslason in 1860 in a normalised version that contains small errors.²⁶ In 2008 this edition was replaced by Fabian Schwabe's digital edition on the website of the Medieval Nordic Text Archive, with a second edition published in 2020.²⁷ Schwabe's edition includes a facsimile, a diplomatic version, and a normalised version. A close examination of the fragment's linguistic features and orthography has yet to be conducted. However, Kristian Kålund concludes in his 1907 examination of AM 434 4to, published with variants from AM 655 4to, that both these Icelandic manuscripts include some Danish and Norwegian words and word forms, indicating that they both stem from a Norwegian translation of a Danish text.²⁸ Their common ancestor, predating 655, is likely to have been transmitted through this route.

As for the content of the fragment, each of the fifty-two articles is fairly short and concise, and most refer to common general health problems one might reasonably expect in a thirteenth-century household. For instance, there are cures for insect bites, infections, cough and lung problems, hoarseness, eye problems, problems of digestion and bad breath, as well as ways to exterminate mice and flies. There is also advice for stopping bleeding, for healing wounds and broken bones, and for getting rid of warts. There is counsel for how to minimise lasciviousness, prevent conception, and on obstetrics. The medical conditions discussed in the fragment are quotidian rather than extraordinary and thus reflect a selection of cures based on common functionality.

The articles are generally of the two types that are most common in medieval European medical manuscripts in the vernacular: ailments listed with recipes for their cures, and herbal pharmacology (on the medical

24 Kålund, *Katalog* II, 66.

25 I am thankful to Anne Mette Hansen, curator at the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen, for providing me with additional information on the repair and preservation of the fragment.

26 Konráð Gíslason, ed., *Fire og fyrretve for en stor deel forhen utrykte prøver af oldnordisk sprog og litteratur* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1860), 470–475.

27 Schwabe, *Ór læknisbók*.

28 Kålund, *Den islandske lægebog*, 398–400.

effects of mainly plants, but also minerals and animal substances).²⁹ The former is characterised by presenting the ailment, followed by a remedy, beginning for example by “Við beinbrot” (for a broken bone) or “Við of feitan kvið” (for a belly that is too fat), sometimes organised by ailments from head to foot. The pharmacology in the fragment follows the usual format of other texts of the same nature, such as Harpestræng’s writings, by naming the plant or the substance, followed by its effects: “Eyr silfr drukkit – Þat gerir bana” (Drinking quick-silver, that brings death), or “Gras þat er heitir feniculum – Stappa þat við vín. Þat er gott við bløðrusótt.” (The plant which is called fennel – mash it with wine. That is good for disease of the bladder.) The pharmacology is heavily abridged compared to Harpestræng’s pharmacology, which also contains the above clause on fennel. There, however, the clause is included among explanations of various other effects of the plant in over two hundred words, compared to only fourteen in 655.³⁰

The brevity of the articles, along with the selection of remedies being grounded in their usefulness in everyday situations, highlights the practicality of the medical book. Supporting this aspect of functionality, Norse words are written for some of the medicinal plants mentioned. Among examples are *læknisgras* (lit.: healing-plant, possibly a small plant called the plantain), *skógarsúra* (sorrel), *mynta* (mint), *malurt* (wormwood), and the Latin word *rubea* is further explained by reference to the word *roðagras* (*rubia tinctorum*, or rose madder), a plant also used to dye cloth. Thus, the translated material was adjusted to better fit the target audience. Furthermore, the arrangement of the manuscript’s layout, characterised by gaps in the writing field that arise from starting new articles on separate lines, implies that the scribe’s primary concern was not to maximise the use of the expensive vellum. The writing field of the parchment is not completely filled, but the text is laid out in such a way that primarily facilitates quickly finding the desired information. This implies that the

29 On the contents of medieval medical texts in the vernacular, specifically in German and English contexts, see essays in Margaret R. Schleissner, ed., *Manuscript Sources of Medieval Medicine: A Book of Essays* (London: Routledge, 1995). A good overview of English texts is provided by Faye Getz, *Medicine in the English Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 35–64.

30 Kristensen, *Harpestræng*, 15. Pharmacology was sometimes organised alphabetically by plant names, such as in AM 696 I 4to.

book was valued as a functional tool. Furthermore, the compact size of the leaves (octavo) suggests that the original codex was crafted to be portable. The above indicates that the manuscript was considered both practical and important, and that its purpose was to be carried around as a handbook and used in practice.

The other five manuscripts

For the purpose of comparison, the other five manuscripts will be briefly described. The fragment *AM 696 I 4to* is the second oldest of the six, dated to c. 1350.³¹ Its importance lies in its status as evidence of an Old Norse translation of Henrik Harpestræng's herbal pharmacology, with a possible Norwegian source text which is no longer extant as an intermediary.³² It consists of two leaves from two different parts of a manuscript, of which the rest is now lost. The leaves are very damaged, apparently from being used in a binding, and the text is illegible in places. It appears to have once been an elegant manuscript; it is of quarto size, and each article starts with a pen-flourished initial in colour (and partly in gold, Marius Hægstad contends),³³ but now very faded. The text is written in a single column and the plants are listed in an alphabetical order, followed by long clauses, about 100–200 words each, on their effects. Hægstad argues, on the grounds of orthography and language, that the fragment was written in northwest Norway.³⁴ Stefán Karlsson, on the other hand, points out that this demonstrates only that it was “possibly copied from a Norwegian exemplar” and is just as likely to be of Icelandic origin.³⁵ Marginalia indicate that the manuscript was in Iceland in the seventeenth century.³⁶ The text was published with an introduction in Norwegian by Hægstad in 1906.³⁷

The medical text in *AM 673 a II 4to* is in the plainest format of all six.

31 Stefán Karlsson, ed., *Sagas of Icelandic Bishops: Fragments of Eight Manuscripts in the Arnarnagnæan Collection* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1967), 52; Hægstad, *Gamalnorsk fragment*, 15–16.

32 Hægstad, *Gamalnorsk fragment*, 9–10.

33 *Ibid.*, 1.

34 *Ibid.*, 10–12.

35 Stefán Karlsson, *Sagas of Icelandic Bishops*, 52.

36 Fol. 2r: “Þetta kuer a eg Biorn pettur Son med riettu | Anno 1692”. See Kristian Kålund, *Katalog II*, 110. Árni Magnússon acquired the fragment from north-Iceland.

37 Hægstad, *Gamalnorsk fragment*.

It consists of only twenty-seven lines, added *c.* 1370 to fols. 6^v and 7^r of a manuscript which is almost two centuries older, the Old Norse translation of *Physiologus*, next to a text about the elephant and a drawing of one.³⁸ The lines are uneven and dense, the text flowing continuously, and the scribe made good use of the space by extending the lines well beyond the original text’s margins. The medical advice is selective. Most of it pertains to various pains, such as headaches, and digestive problems, such as “Tak urriðagall ok súrt vín ok ambra, allt saman, ok smyrr umhverfis kviðinn. Þá batnar þat.” (Take bile from sea trout and sour wine and spermaceti, all together, and apply it around the stomach. Then it will get better.)³⁹ There is also advice for scalp infection and intoxication. It may be speculated that the owner of the manuscript had access to another medical manuscript and wanted to make use of the empty space in *Physiologus* to copy down selected advice that could benefit their own specific health conditions. The provenance of the manuscript can be traced back only to the seventeenth century, to the West fjords of Iceland.⁴⁰ The text was edited by Marius Hægstad and published with an introduction in Norwegian in 1913.⁴¹

AM 194 8vo is much larger, fifty-two leaves in total. It contains encyclopaedic material, spanning various sciences known at the time of writing. The main scribe identifies himself as the priest Óláfr Ormsson and dates his writing to the year 1387 at Geirrøðareyri (Narfeyri) in Snæfellsnes, which is near the Augustinian monastery at Helgafell.⁴² The condition of the manuscript is poor, and the text is illegible in many places.⁴³ The

- 38 On 6^v there is also a later addition of the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in Latin. See manuscript details of AM 673 a I and II 4to on *handrit.is*, Icelandic Manuscript Catalog with Digital Reproductions. National and University Library of Iceland, <https://handrit.is>; Kålund, *Katalog* II, 90–91. On the dating of the medical text, see Marius Hægstad, *Eit stykke av ei austlandsk lækjabok fraa 14 hundradaaret*, Kristiania Videnskapselskaps Forhandlinger, (Christiania [Oslo]: Jacob Dybwad, 1913), 8–9; *ONP: Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, Den Arnamagnæanske Kommission, <http://onp.ku.dk/>.
- 39 Hægstad, *Eit stykke*, 4. The normalisation of the text to Old Icelandic orthographic standard is my own.
- 40 See Kristian Kålund, ed., *Arne Magnussons i AM. 435 A–B, 4to indeholdte håndskriftfortegnelser med to tillæg, udgivne af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske legat* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1909), 15.
- 41 Hægstad, *Eit stykke*.
- 42 Kristian Kålund, ed., *Alfræði islenzk. Islandsk encyklopædisk litteratur*, 3 vols., vol. I. Cod. Mbr. AM. 194, 8vo (Copenhagen: Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 1908), 54f.
- 43 A description of the manuscript is provided in Kålund, *Alfræði islenzk*, i–iii.

text runs continuously throughout in a single column, with occasional pen-flourished black initials and without headings. The medical material appears on twelve leaves (37^r–48^v). The section includes an introduction, a short chapter on prognostics (the signs of death), on seasonal regimens (a monthly calendar of diet and bloodletting), a section on diseases and cures, herbal pharmacology, and a lapidary. The manuscript was edited and published by Kristian Kålund in 1908 with an extensive introduction in Danish.⁴⁴

AM 434 a 12mo is a charming, almost miniature, medical book the size of a hand, dated to c. 1450–1500. It contains forty leaves, but the beginning is missing. Despite its small size, the text is written neatly in two columns, heavily abbreviated. Most articles start with a pen-flourished initial in red and other colours, some of them large and decorated. The manuscript contains charms and conjurations (along with some magic runes and symbols), a section on prognostics and seasonal regimens, diseases and cures, herbal pharmacology, a chapter on hydrotherapy (on the benefits of baths), a short section on physiology and embryology (about the development of the foetus), information on infertility, and a lunar prognostication (prognoses according to the lunar day). This manuscript contains much of the text of the medical book in *AM 194 8vo* and nearly all the text of 655 in almost the same order. However, neither of these two manuscripts is the exemplar of 434.⁴⁵ Both 434 and 655 contain clauses that do not appear in the other, and 434 often contains a better reading. The text was published by Kristian Kålund in 1907 with a thorough introduction in Danish.⁴⁶

Royal Irish Academy 23 D 43 (hereafter: D) is the most recent and most extensive of the six manuscripts, dated to the last quarter of the fifteenth century, in octavo size (146 x 114 mm). It is an attractive manuscript, neatly written in a single column, with rubrics and coloured, pen-flourished initials. All the other Old Norse medical books contain sections that are also found in this manuscript. The manuscript contains ten gatherings, of which two are incomplete, or seventy-four leaves in total. It comprises charms and conjurations, a herbal pharmacology with a section on phlebotomy, prognostics, seasonal regimen of diet and bloodletting, a section

44 Ibid.

45 See, Kålund, *Den islandske lægebog*, 360.

46 Ibid.

on diseases and cures (including a long chapter on the eyes), a chapter on hydrotherapy, another on compound drugs (antidotarium), a fragmentary lapidary, and a cookbook. It was edited and published in 1931 by Henning Larsen with an introduction in English, an index, and an English translation.⁴⁷

Discussion

A handful of stemmas have been constructed to describe the relationship among the six manuscripts and/or their relationship to other sources, such as the herbal pharmacology of Harpestræng.⁴⁸ The results are conjectural, considering that although all the six manuscripts are clearly related through common foreign sources, this kinship manifests to a varying degree in different sections in each work, and each individual manuscript has additional material which cannot be found in the others. In addition, the manuscripts are each preserved in a more or less fragmentary state.

To further illustrate this issue, the appendix below contains an overview of my results of the comparison of each of 655's fifty-two articles to the texts of the other five medical books. The comparison highlighted that the closest relatives of the thirteenth-century 655 are the late fifteenth-century AM 434 and D. However, 655's relationship to each of the two is very different. Forty-four of 655's fifty-two articles (85%) are also found in D, often nearly verbatim – but they are scattered throughout the manuscript. In contrast, forty-seven (90%) of 655's articles also exist in 434, but in this case at the same place, almost in the same order, and often verbatim. AM 194 8vo contains nine of 655's articles (17%) in different places, and the wording is not as similar as in the other two manuscripts. AM 673 a II 4to contains one article also found in 655, about how to quench a man's thirst (no. 13 in 655), with very similar wording,⁴⁹ but none can be found in AM 696 4to.

47 Henning Larsen, ed., *An Old Icelandic Medical Miscellany*. MS Royal Irish Academy 23 D 43 with Supplement from MS Trinity College (Dublin) L-2-27 (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1931). See Larsen's linguistic and non-linguistic arguments for the dating on 15–23.

48 See Kristensen, *Harpestræng*, xxix, xxxv; Larsen, *Medical Miscellany*, 29; Jón Steffensen, “Alþýðulækningar,” 134; see also stemmas in Fabian Schwabe, “Den norrøne legemiddelboktradisjonen,” in *Translation – Adaptation, Interpretation, Transformation. Proceedings from the 28th Study Conference of IASS, Lund* (2010), 6, 10.

49 Hægstad, *Eit stykke*, 4, line 15.

The obscurity concerning the textual relationships among the six manuscripts is quite commonplace in the study of medieval medicine in the vernacular, as Faith Wallis points out, because it often results from the specific production culture of medical texts in the Middle Ages.⁵⁰ As opposed to medical texts within scholastic education, which were more uniform, medical texts in the vernacular and those from earlier times when medicine was not taught through institutions were “subjected to radical and unabashed reworking, dismemberment and de-authorization.”⁵¹ The rewritings were tailored to their individual specific purposes and contexts, and because pharmacology was the most popular subject within medieval medicine, that is where “the most disturbed textual traditions are found.”⁵² This poses a problem for the modern scholar striving to deduce from the extant material what people in the Middle Ages knew and believed. But, as Wallis points out, the selection and reorganisation in each medical manuscript are “not mechanical or random; choice and arrangement almost invariably mean something,” and this rearrangement communicates information about their users and purpose.⁵³ Despite sharing the same topic and having many similarities, the six manuscripts exhibit notable differences in terms of their size, style, and content, which speaks to the different interests and aims of each maker or owner. Within the group, one (696) appears to have formed a part of a substantial, handsome codex with more or less unabridged clauses from the original material, Harpestræng’s pharmacology; judging from the length of the clauses and the fragment’s quarto size, it was possibly intended as a manual. Another (673) consists of only twenty-seven lines of selected short cures, scribbled unevenly like notes within an older manuscript. The third (194) can be characterised as a type of florilegium, where medical content is presented alongside other encyclopaedic knowledge encompassing diverse subjects. The youngest two manuscripts (434 and D), although small in size, are lengthy, and seem to

50 Faith Wallis, “The Experience of the Book: Manuscripts, Texts, and the Role of Epistemology in Early Medieval Medicine,” in *Knowledge and the Scholarly Medical Traditions*, ed. Don Bates (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 102–107.

51 Ibid., 125. On this topic, see also Peter Murray Jones, “Medical Books Before the Invention of Printing,” in *Thornton’s Medical Books, Libraries and Collectors: A Study of Bibliography and the Book Trade in Relation to the Medical Sciences*, ed. Alain Besson (London: Gower, 1990).

52 Wallis, “The Experience of the Book,” 109.

53 Ibid., 105.

have only included content of medicinal nature. Additionally, they encompass the most diverse assortment of medical material among all of them.

The last two manuscripts bear the closest textual resemblance to 655, especially 434, and they are also of a small handbook-size, similar to 655. This raises the idea that the codex to which 655 belonged may have included additional medical topics, similar to those found in 434 and D. The missing outer part of the quire, and possibly additional quires, might have included a more substantial list of diseases and cures, as well as a richer herbal pharmacology, in addition to other topics frequently found in medieval medical texts, such as sections on seasonal regimens, prognostics, phlebotomy, and so on. However, any attempt to estimate the length and possible other content of the codex to which the fragment originally belonged can only be speculative. As the descriptions of the other five manuscripts show, the extant Old Norse medical manuscripts are far from uniform. The same applies to the surviving medical manuscripts in other vernacular languages, such as English, of which the vast majority is derived from Latin source texts: they exhibit significant variation in complexity and range of subjects covered.⁵⁴ Comparing 655 XXX with 434 and D is further complicated by the fact that they are separated by two centuries.

Turning to the practice of medicine, it has been argued here that 655 was made to be used as a practical handbook and that the manuscript's features indicate that it was valued as such. But if it was really used, then how, and by whom? The available knowledge concerning actual medicinal practices in Iceland during this period is unfortunately very limited.⁵⁵ There is evidence suggesting that medical practice was somewhat regulated. The contemporary law code contains a clause addressing liability for medical adverse effects: the lawbook *Grágás* includes a section on the exemption from punishment of a well-intentioned healer if the patient suffers death or harm due to cauterisation, phlebotomy, or other healing practices.⁵⁶

54 Linda Ehrensam Voigts provides a handy list of the most common topics in “Multitudes of Middle English Medical Manuscripts, or the Englishing of Science and Medicine,” in *Manuscript Sources of Medieval Medicine: A Book of Essays*, ed. Margaret R. Schleissner (London: Routledge, 1995), 192. For an overview, see also Getz, *Medicine in the English Middle Ages*, 35–64.

55 An overview is provided in Finnur Jónsson, *Lægekunsten*. See also Jón Steffensen, “Alþýðulækningar”.

56 *Grágás. Lagasafn íslenska þjóðveldisins*, ed. Gunnar Karlsson, Kristján Sveinsson, and Mördur Árnason (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1992), 267. A similar paragraph is in the

An account of such an incident indeed exists, as *Sturlunga saga* states that the chieftain Ormr Jónsson underwent bloodletting on his artery (“gjósæðinni”) in 1241 but died as a result of complications stemming from the procedure.⁵⁷ In the contemporary sagas (*Sturlunga saga* and the bishops’ sagas), a healer (*læknir*), or healing, is often mentioned. Setting aside miracle healings described in the hagiographies, accounts of the practice of medicine are few.⁵⁸ The most thorough description is found in *Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar in sérstaka*, a contemporary saga with hagiographical features, estimated to have been written c. 1230–1260.⁵⁹ It tells of the best-known medieval Icelandic physician, the chieftain Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson (d. 1213). Hrafn is described in the saga as “inn mesti læknir ok vel lærðr ok eigi meir vígðr en krúnuvígslu” (the greatest of physicians and of fine learning, and not ordained above having received the tonsure).⁶⁰ The saga explicitly mentions and emphasises that Hrafn did not seek payment for his medical services.⁶¹ This implies that there existed other practitioners of medicine in contemporary society who did charge a fee for their assistance. *Hrafn saga* is unique in its detailed account of how Hrafn performed lithotomy (surgical treatment for bladder stones), supported by the prayers of the clergy present. The saga also includes descriptions of phlebotomy, cauterisation, and other methods. Guðrún P. Helgadóttir concludes in her study of the saga that the described surgical methods accurately reflect the Latin medical doctrine of the thirteenth century.⁶² The saga further highlights Hrafn’s connections to Europe by recounting his wide-ranging travels to Saint-Gilles in Provence, Compostela, and Rome, as well as England for a meeting with St Thomas Archbishop of Canterbury.⁶³ In the saga,

Jónsbók law code, which came into effect in 1281. *Lögbók Magnúsar konungs, Lagabætis, handa Íslendingum, eður; Jónsbók hin forna; lögtekin á alþingi 1281*, ed. Sveinn Skúlason (Akureyri: [s.n.], 1858), 43.

57 *Sturlunga saga*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, 3 vols., vol. II, *Íslenzk fornrit XXI*, (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2021), 516–517.

58 On miracles in the bishops’ sagas, see Diana Whaley, “Miracles in the Sagas of Bishops. Icelandic Variations on an International Theme,” *Collegium medievale* 7 (1994).

59 Guðrún P. Helgadóttir, Introduction to *Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, ed. Guðrún P. Helgadóttir (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), lxxxviii.

60 *Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, ed. Guðrún P. Helgadóttir (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 2.

61 *Ibid.*, 4.

62 Guðrún P. Helgadóttir, Introduction, xciv–cviii.

63 *Hrafn saga*, 3–4.

naturalistic and religious approaches to healing appear as complementary. This mirrors the prevailing contemporary attitudes in Europe. Katharine Park observes that in Europe, a diverse range of healing practices coexisted, including religious, supernatural, and naturalistic methods.⁶⁴ A healer could be any knowledgeable individual, male or female, including family members and priests – a diversity that one would expect in medieval Iceland as well. Monks and nuns are well documented as healers in Europe during this time, as medicine was integrated into the broader learned culture in monastic and cathedral schools – although these were replaced to an increasing degree in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by secular medical practitioners.⁶⁵

The text recommends the use of some plants that are not native to Iceland, which raises the question of how the users of the medical books would be able to follow some of its advice. Apothecaries, where ingredients for healing were sold, were a blooming business in medieval urban Europe, and the earliest record of a “pepperer” in England dates from the late twelfth century.⁶⁶ It is not inconceivable that medical ingredients were imported to Iceland to some extent, along with the wax, honey, wine, oil, balsam, incense, and other goods imported for the church and the lifestyles of aristocrats,⁶⁷ as well as some of the ink and pigments used for manuscript production.⁶⁸ The text of 655 XXX recommends the use of some of these churchly ingredients, such as myrrh, incense, oil, and balsam, as well as honey.⁶⁹ Some of the plants may have been cultivated in Iceland. Archaeological evidence combined with pollen analysis and ethnobotanical findings at twelve monastic sites in Iceland has revealed that there were

64 Katharine Park, “Medical Practice,” in *The Cambridge History of Science*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Michael H. Shank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 616–617.

65 Ibid. See also, on this development, Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, 17–47.

66 See Park, “Medical Practice,” 618–620; Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, 18–20. On the *Gilda Piperarorium* in England, see T. D. Whittet, “Pepperers, Spicers and Grocers – Forerunners of the Apothecaries,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* 61.8 (1968).

67 Helgi Þorláksson, “Frá landnámi til einokunar,” in *Liftaug landsins. Saga íslenskrar utanlandsverslunar 900-2010*, ed. Sumarliði R. Ísleifsson (Reykjavík: Háskóli Íslands, Sagnfræðistofnun; Skrudda, 2017), 112–116.

68 Soffía Guðmundsdóttir and Laufey Guðnadóttir, “Book Production in the Middle Ages,” 51–53.

69 See Appendix below, articles no. 44, 30, 46, 3, 14, 29, and 37, respectively.

botanical gardens where medicinal plants were grown at monasteries in Iceland during the Middle Ages.⁷⁰ Additionally, species of healing plants that are not a part of the Icelandic flora have been identified.⁷¹ Further archaeological research on this topic awaits, but these findings correspond with the understanding of how contemporary European monasteries and abbeys operated; some had large herb gardens with medicinal plants.⁷²

AM 655 4to may very well have been produced in association with a monastery, although this remains obscure. The scribe of another medical manuscript, AM 194 8vo (no. 4 in Table 1, written in 1387), was a priest, living in the vicinity of a monastery.⁷³ The 655 scribe's omission of the initials implies a collaborative process in the production of the manuscript, and therefore a potential association with a scribal centre or an illuminator. However, book production in medieval Iceland was not centred on monastic institutions to the same extent as in Europe.⁷⁴ Large estates of wealthy families are thought to have been essential centres for literary production, as are monasteries and cathedral schools.⁷⁵ The scribes of

70 See Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir, Inger Larsson, and Per Arvid Åsen, "The Icelandic Medieval Monastic Garden – Did It Exist?" *Scandinavian Journal of History* 39.5 (2014). See also, on plants in medieval Nordic monasteries, Johan Lange, "Lægeplanter," in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingetid til reformationstid*, ed. Johannes Brøndsted et al. (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1966), 88–90.

71 Inger Larsson, Per Arvid Åsen, Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir, and Kjell Lundquist, eds., *Medeltida klostergrunder på Island – vegetation och flora, kultur- och relikväxter, samtida växt-namn* (Alnarp: Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet, 2012). See on some of the plants mentioned in AM 655 4to, such as wormwood (*Artemisia*), caraway (*Carum carvi*), pimpinella (*Sanguisorba officinalis*, *Sanguisorba alpina*), plantain (*Plantago*) and sweet gale (*Myrica gale*), in *ibid.*, 51–80. See also on willow (*Salix*), opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*), rue (*Ruta graveolens*), sage (*Salvia officinalis*), mint (*Mentha*), and lovage (*Levisticum officinale*), in *ibid.*, Appendix 3, 8.

72 Park, "Medical Practice," 616. It has been established that Skriðuklaustur monastery (1493–1554) was a medical centre; see Steinunn Kristjánsdóttir, "Skriðuklaustur Monastery".

73 See above and Kälund, *Alfræði íslenzk*, 54f.

74 Soffía Guðmundsdóttir and Laufey Guðnadóttir, "Book Production in the Middle Ages," in *The Manuscripts of Iceland*, ed. Gisli Sigurðsson and Vesteinn Ólason (Reykjavík: Árni Magnússon Institute in Iceland, 2004), 54; Stefán Karlsson, "Íslensk bókagerð á miðöldum," in *Íslenska sögubíngið 28.–31. maí 1997: Ráðstefnuvit*, ed. Guðmundur J. Guðmundsson and Eiríkur K. Björnsson (Reykjavík: Sagnfræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands and Sagnfræðingafélag Íslands, 1998), 289–290.

75 For an overview of possible locations of book production in Iceland, see Haraldur Bernharðsson, "Scribal Culture in Thirteenth-Century Iceland: The Introduction of Anglo-Saxon 'f' in Icelandic Script," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 117.3 (2018): 282–285.

medieval Icelandic manuscripts that have been identified are not many, but among those that have been identified – writing both secular and religious texts – are monks and priests as well as secular chieftains and their scribes.⁷⁶ In the absence of any indications on the identity of the scribe of 655 XXX, or the origins of the manuscript, one can only reasonably contend that the maker or owner of 655 belonged to the literary elite – a group of learned individuals of high social standing that included wealthy landowners and clerics.⁷⁷

Conclusion

This essay has sought to examine AM 655 XXX 4to as a physical artefact and contextualise this unique fragment alongside other surviving Old Norse medical books and the medical practices of medieval Europe and Iceland. While the history of the manuscript is enigmatic, its value for its thirteenth century owner is evident from its well-crafted production. Its layout, vernacular language adjustments, compact leaf size, concise articles, and selection of remedies tailored for everyday situations underscore its practicality as a medical book – a portable GP’s handbook, if you like, based on a European medical bestseller.

While the six Old Norse medical manuscripts exhibit many similarities, some of them also manifest notable differences in size, style, and content. These variations reflect the adaptation of the foreign material to suit individual contexts, indicating the diverse interests and intentions of each maker or owner. 655 XXX is a valuable representative of the learned European knowledge system and intellectual trends in the thirteenth century. Further research into the medieval Icelandic medical literature could yield a more comprehensive history of medicine in Iceland than we have at this time, and in turn, enhance even further our understanding of 655 XXX’s origins and usage.

76 For a discussion on the identified scribes, see Stefán Karlsson, “Íslensk bókagerð á miðöldum”; see also Ólafur Halldórsson, “Skrifaðar bækur,” in *Munnmenntir og bókmenning*, ed. Frosti F. Jóhannsson, Íslensk þjóðmenning, VI (Reykjavík: Þjóðsaga, 1989), 82–87.

77 Essays in Stefka G. Eriksen, ed., *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Scandinavia, c. 1100-1350* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), present a thorough discussion on the topic of the literary elite in the medieval North.

Appendix: Translation of the text of AM 655 xxx 4to with notes

The original text follows the normalised version in Fabian Schwabe's digital edition of the manuscript, published at the Medieval Nordic Text Archive.⁷⁸ The references to other Old Norse medical books and page numbers in parenthesis are coded as follows: D = RIA 23 D 43 as printed in Larsen, *Medical Miscellany*; 434 = AM 434 a 12mo as printed in Kålund, *Den islandske lægebog*; 194 = AM 194 8vo as printed in Kålund, *Alfræði íslensk*; 673: AM 673 a II 4to as printed in Hægstad, *Eit stykke*.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Við svefnleysi – Tak gras þat er heitir migon⁷⁹ ok stappa í súru víni. Ok ríð þat um allan líkam manns ok gef honum súrur at eta. Þat gerir svefn allvel.
(D:125; 434:379)</p> | <p>For sleeplessness – take the herb called poppy and mash it in sour wine. And apply it all over a man's body and give him sorrel to eat. This will produce a very good sleep.</p> |
| <p>2. Við sár – Tak saur⁸⁰ ok legg við um dag ok nótt. Ok síðan tak svína gall eða nauta eða geita ok stappa við salt svá sem pipar ok legg við sár um kveld ok morgin í annat sinn. Þat gróðir einkum vel.
(D:126; 194:65)</p> | <p>For wounds – take dirt [or: excrements] and apply it during day and night. And then take the gall of swine, or cattle, or goat, and mash it with salt as with pepper, and apply to the wound in the evening and in the morning for a second time. This will heal it especially well.</p> |
| <p>3. Við ormsbit – Tak lög af læknisgrasi ok oleu ok salt ok gef honum drekka. Þat hrindr eitri ór.
(434:379)</p> | <p>For a snake bite – take the juice of healing plant⁸¹ and oil and salt, and give it to him to drink. This will expel the poison.</p> |

78 Schwabe, *Ór læknisbók*. English translation is mine. Silent modification of "in" to "enn" in article 41. Translations of plant-names were aided by Larsen, *Medical Miscellany*, Kristensen, *Harpestræng*, and Lange, "Lægeplanter."

79 "Migon" refers to *meconium* (ancient Greek *mēkōnion*) meaning poppy, or the thickened juice of the opium poppy. See "meconium, *n.*" in *OED Online. Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, <http://oed.com>.

80 "salt" (salt) in D and AM 194 8vo.

81 The word *læknisgras* (lit.: healing plant) is likely to refer to the plant *Plantago major*, or plantain (*græðisúra*).

4. Við beinbrot – Tak hana ok stappa allan með fjøðrum ok bitt við. Þat grøðir skjótast.
(D:129; 434:379)

For a broken bone – take a cock and mash [or: stuff] it all with the feathers and bind this to it. This will heal it the quickest.
5. Við of feitan kvið – Tak rugbrauð eigi blandat við annat korn ok brjót í vín eða ölðr ok lát standa nætr sjau. En síðan drekk af því hvern morgin ok hvern aftan of tolf mánuðr. Þá muntu svengjask.
(D:128; 434:379–380)

For a belly that is too fat – take rye bread that is not mixed with other grain, and break it down in wine or ale and let it stand for seven nights. And then drink from it every morning and every evening for twelve months. Then you will grow thinner.
6. Ef kveisa er komin í hönd þér, þá tak kott ok drep ok stikk hendi þinni í hann, ef hann er varmr. En síðan bitt um til annars dags ok ger svá fjórum sinnum, ef þarf. Ok hvern dag tak kvikan kott. En ef í oðrum stað er í holdi manns, þá bitt við varmt kattarhold nýdrepit til þess er kólnar. Þat dregr út hvarvetna kveisu ór mannsholdi.
(D:127; 434:380)

If a boil has come upon your hand, take a cat and kill it and stick your hand inside it, if it is warm. And then apply bandages until the second day, and do so four times, if needed. And every day take a living cat. But if it is in another part of a man’s flesh, then bind warm cat-flesh to it, freshly killed, until it grows cold. This will pull out a boil everywhere in a man’s flesh.
7. Við augnamyrkva – Tak ál kvikan ok ríst hann ok tak ór honum bæði blóð ok gall ok blanda bæði saman ok berr í augun. Þat birtir sýn manns.
(D:121; 434:380; (194:71))

For dim eyes – take a living eel and cut it open, and take out of it both the blood and the gall, and mix both of these together and apply to the eyes. This will clear a man’s sight.
8. Við blóðrás – Tak gras þat er vex í hveitiakri með sínum blöðum ok rauðu fræ ok stappa í víni eða ölðri ok syng meðan pater noster ok gef honum drekka.
(434:380)

For bleeding – take the herb that grows in a wheat field, with its leaves and red seeds, and mash it in wine or ale while singing Pater Noster, and give it to him to drink.

9. Við þá blóðrás, ef sár blóðir – Tak náttlauk ok stappa vel ok legg þar í sárit sem blóðir ok bitt við. (434:380) For that bleeding when a wound bleeds – take a night-leek and mash it well, and apply it to the wound where it is bleeding and bind up.
10. Við spenbolga – Tak læknisgras ok bitt við. (D:129; 434:380) For swollen nipples – take a healing plant and bind up with it.
11. Ef þú vill þik hefta at lostasemi, tak gras þat er ruta heitir ok et í þola. Þá mun linask. (D:114; 434:380) If you want to restrain your lust, take the herb called rue and eat it incessantly. Then it will ease.
12. Við ormsbit – Tak rutam ok bitt við. (434:380) For a snake bite – take rue and bandage with it.
13. Við þat, ef maðr er þorstlátr – Tak centauream ok stappa við vatn ok drekk fljótt. (D:129; 434:380; 673:4) For that, if a man is thirsty – take centaury and mash it in water and drink quickly.
14. Við höfuðverk – Tak rutam ok stappa við skíra oleu ok ríð um enni. Þat tekr verk af ok bótir augun. Þetta er oft reynt. (D:119; 434:380) For headache – take rue and mash it with clear oil and rub it on the forehead. This will remove the ache and improve the eyes. This has often been tested.
15. Við lendaverk – Tak gras þat er centaurea heitir ok stappa í vatni ok drekk oft kalt. (D:129; 434:380) For pain in the loins – take the grass called centaury and mash it in water, and drink it often cold.
16. Við sár – Tak dust af því grasi er centaurea heitir ok dreif á sárit. Þat gróðir ok hreinsar. (D:126; 434:380) For a wound – take the powder of the grass called centaury and sprinkle it on the wound. This will heal and cleanse.
17. Við augnaverkerk – Tak rót af því grasi er verbena heitir ok bløð þess gras er feniculum heitir ok stappa bæði saman ok berr í augun. (D:122; 434:380; (194:70)) For pain in the eyes – take the root of the grass called vervain, and the leaves of the herb called fennel, and mash them together and apply to the eyes.

18. Við augnamyrkva – Tak gras þat er heitir minna pulegium ok stappa vel ok drekk þat fastandi oft. Þat bætir ok birtir augu. (434:381) For dim eyes – take the herb that is called lesser pulegium [pennyroyal]⁸² and mash it well, and drink it often while fasting. This will improve and clear the eyes.
19. Við tár mild augu – Tak skógarsúru ok blanda við fornt vín ok hirt þat í glerkeri ok neyt af því oft. (434:381) For teary eyes – take sorrel and mix it with old wine and keep it in a glass vessel and consume it often.
20. Við nasraufadaun – Tak lög af mintu ok hell í. Þat tekr óþef af. (D:120; 434:381) For a stench in the nostrils – take a liquid of mint and pour it in. This will remove the odour.
21. Við augnamyrkva – Tak malurt ok stappa vel ok egg ok sjóð hart. Sker síðan í sundr ok tak ór it rauða ok legg í staðinn malurtina stappaða. En þá er þú ferr sofa, þá legg við útan á hvarmana sem þú mátt hafa. Þat skírir ok birtir augun. (D:122; 434:381) For dim eyes – take wormwood and mash it well, and an egg and hard boil it. Then cut it and take the yolk out of it and put the mashed wormwood in its place. And when you go to sleep, then apply this outside your eyelids, as you can. This will clear and brighten the eyes.
22. Gras þat er vitrum heitir þurrkat ok gort at dusti – Blanda þat við vín ok gef manni drekka. Þat brýtr stein í blöðru manns. (D:113; 434:381) The plant that is called [woad],⁸³ dried and made into powder – mix it with wine and give a man to drink. This will break a stone in a man’s bladder.
23. Þors grønn stappaðr vel ok blandaðr við súrt vín – Þat er gott at þvá hofuð við. (D:119; 434:381; 194:64–65) Sweet gale, green, mashed well and mixed with sour wine⁸⁴ – that is good to wash one’s head with.

82 *Mentha pulegium*, see Kristensen, *Harpestræng*, 308.

83 This is uncertain. *Vitrum* may here possibly refer to glass rather than the plant woad, misunderstood as “gras” (grass). See Larsen, *Medical Miscellany*, 237; Kristensen, *Harpestræng*, 312. In *De gradibus*, the same effects are attributed to *Aros* (arum lilies?). Constantine, 350.

84 That is, vinegar.

24. Gras þat er acacia heitir – Legg við enda þarms, ef út snýst, þá mun afttr snúask ok svá sár, ef um vendisk. (D:112; 434:381) The plant that is called acacia [gum Arabic] – apply it to the rectum if it twists out, then it will turn back, and also wounds if they become twisted.
25. Gras þat er rubea heitir, þat er roðagras – Þat hrindr út ór óléttri konu, þó at barn sé dauft. (D:88; 434:381) The plant that is called rubea [rose madder], that is *roðagras* [lit.: red-dening plant] – it expels a baby out of a pregnant woman, even if it is dead.
26. Jörð sú er á innsigli er lögð ok manns líkneski er á – Hon er góð við ormsbit ok annarra flugorma. Ok ef manni er gefinn ólyfjansdrykkur, þá drekki hann af þessi jörðunni. Þat hrindr eitri út, en sakar ekki. (D:124; 434:381) The soil on which a seal is impressed and a man's likeness – it is good against a snake bite and the bite of flying insects. And if a man is given a poisonous drink, then he should drink from this soil. This will expel the poison, but does no harm.⁸⁵
27. Muskus heitir forað. Þat elsk í kviði eins dýrs. Þat er kiðlingi glíkt þeim er elsk á Indíaland. Þat renn saman af blóði þess dýrs ok ystisk sem mjolk. En þá er þat er fullvaxið, þá óðisk svá dýrit, at þat þolir hvergi, nema renn til trés eða staura. En þá staurask þat svá lengi við í óviti, at þat raufar á sér kviðinn. En forað þat fellr út. (D:124) Muskus is the name of a monster [or: mud].⁸⁶ It grows in the belly of an animal that is similar to the kid that exists in India. It runs from the blood of that animal and curdles like milk. And when it is fully grown the animal becomes so mad that it cannot rest unless it runs into a tree or a post. And then it ramps on for so long in its folly that it tears its belly. And that monster falls out.
- 85 This is a reference to the so-called *terra sigillata*, “small moulds of clay containing iron oxide exported from the island of Lemnos. It was considered a good antidote for all poisons.” (Larsen, *Medical Miscellany*, 208 f3). See also Kålund, *Den islandske lægebog*, 381–382f; Constantine, *De gradibus*, 353.
- 86 *Forað* can mean “mud” or “wet dirt,” “pit,” “morass,” and the like, as well as “monster.” The male musk deer produces a red-brown paste in its abdominal glands, used in perfumery. Here, *forað* seems more likely to refer to the mud-like substance, and the translation “monster” (Larsen, *Medical Miscellany*, 208) may perhaps be a mistranslation. See a corresponding Latin text in Constantine, *De gradibus*, 354; Kristensen, *Harpestræng*, 41, 131. Among the described effects of *muskus* are that it strengthens the body with its pleasant smell and combats infections. *Ibid.*, 41.

28. Steinn sá er koralus heitir – Hann er góðr við augu ok augnamyrkva. (D:122; 434:382) The stone that is called coral – it is good for the eyes and the dimness of the eyes.
29. Balsamum bötir myrk augun ok skírir. ((D:121); 434:382) Balsam⁸⁷ improves and clears dimness of the eyes.
30. Reykelsi stöðvar blóðrás, hvaðan sem renn. Ok þat linar saur⁸⁸ í endaþarmi eða í öðrum stað lætr eigi vaxa. Ef þat er temprat við mjólk ok við lagt, þá er þat lækning. (D:51; 434:382; 194:67–68) Incense stops blood from flowing, wherever it runs from. And it loosens excrements in the rectum or prevents it from growing in other places. If it is tempered with milk and applied, then it is a cure.
31. Dioskurides segir af grasi því er peonia heitir: „Ek sá svein einn átta vetra gamlan, er hafði þat gras hengt á hals sér. En þá barsk svá at of daginn, at þat gras féll af honum. En þegar jafnskjótt féll sveinninn niðr ok hafði brotfall. En þá var þat aftr horfit í annat sinn á hann ok þá sakaði sveinninn ekki meðan hann hafði þat á sér. En þá féll af honum í annat sinn, en jafnskjótt féll hann í ina sömu sótt sem hann hafði fyrr. En þá var grasit bundit á hann enn ok bættisk jafnskjótt. Ok sömu lund fór sinn it þriðja: Spiltisk er af var, en batnaði er á var bundit.“ Sama vitni berr Galienus, inn spakasti maðr, of þat sama gras. (D:120; 434:382) Dioscorides says about the plant called peony: “I saw a boy, eight years old, who had that plant hung around his neck. And then it happened one day that the plant fell off him. And immediately the boy fell down and had an epileptic fit. And then it was put on him again and the boy was in no harm while he had it on him. And then it fell off him a second time, and immediately he fell into the same sickness as he had before. And then the plant was put on him again and he recovered straight away. And the same thing happened for the third time: deteriorated when it was off but recovered when it was put on him.” Galen, the wisest of men, testifies in the same way about that same plant.

87 This presumably refers to balm of Gilead, or balsam of Mecca, the mastic of the tree *Commiphora gileadensis*, the Arabian balsam tree. See Larsen, *Medical Miscellany*, 228. However, balsam can be collected from a variety of plants. It was used by the church, mixed with olive oil, to make chrism.

88 “sar” (wound) in D (Larsen, *Medical Miscellany*, 51) and AM 194 8vo (Kálund, *Alfræði islensk*, 67).

32. Børkr af selju við súrt vín stappaðr
– Þat tekr af vortur.
(D:127; 434:382)
33. Svá mælti Galienus: Mjolk sú er
riðin er ór seljubørk þá er hon er
blómgud – Þat birtir in augu ok
bøtir mjøk.
(D:122; 434:383)
34. Løgr af seljukvistum ok blómi, ef
hann er drukkin – Hann stöðvar
blóðrás ok meinar konum þorn at
geta.
(434:383)
35. Mínta styrkir kvið ok gerir munn
vel þefaðan.
(D:120,77); 434:383)
36. En plástr gørt af mintu ok salti –
Þat er gott við óðs hunds bit.
(D:126,77; 434:383)
37. Gras þat er heitir elleborum hvítt
blandat við mjolk ok temprat við
hunang – Þat drepr mýs, ef eta því.
En af því blandat dust við vatn ok
støkt of hús – Þat drepr flugur.
(D:129; 434:383; (194:73–74))
38. Gras þat er cimum heitir drukkit
með víni – Þat hreinsar bit flugdýra.
En ef þat er blásit í nasraufar manns
– Þat heftir nefdreya.
(434:383)
39. Løgr grass þess er chelidonia heitir
– Þat hreinsar ok hvessir sýn ok
þunga vøkva í manni þurkar þat.
(D:122; 434:383; (194:69))
40. Gras þat er ruta heitir – Þat drepr
lostu í manni ok hreinsar bit flugdýra.
(D:122; 434:383)
- Bark of willow, mashed with sour
wine – that removes warts.
- So said Galen: The milk that is
wrung from willow bark when the
willow has bloomed – that clears the
eyes and improves them greatly.
- The juice of willow twigs and
flowers, if it is drunk – it stops a
bleeding and prevents a woman
from conceiving children.
- Mint strengthens the stomach and
makes the mouth smell pleasantly.
- A plaster made of mint and salt –
that is good against a mad dog's bite.
- The plant that is called white helle-
bore, mixed with milk and tempered
with honey – this kills mice if they
eat of it. And its dust, mixed with
water and sprinkled about the house
– that kills flies.
- The plant called caraway, drunk
with wine – that cleans the bites
of flying insects. And if it is blown
into a man's nostrils – that stops a
nosebleed.
- The juice of the plant called
celandine – that cleans and sharpens
the vision and dries heavy humours
in a man.
- The plant which is called rue – it
kills lust in a man and cleanses the
bites of flying insects.

41. Salt ok línfrá gørt af því plástr – Þat hreinsar enn flugdýrabít.
(D:122) Salt and flax seed, made into a plaster – that also cleanses the bites of flying insects.
42. Eyrsilfr drukkit – Þat gerir bana. Því at í hvern lim er þat renn, þá skefr þat innan. En ef þat verðr í eld lagt, þá gerir þat meinsaman reyk. Þann flýja ormar ok af þeim reyk deyja flugdýr.
(D:122–123; 434:383) Drinking quick-silver – that brings death. For it scrapes every limb it flows into from the inside. And if it is laid in a fire, it produces a harmful smoke. Worms flee from that smoke and flying insects die from it.
43. Malurt blandin við ufsagall⁸⁹ ok smurt of eyru manns – Þat styrkir þau ok hrindr frá óhljóð. En ef þat er lagt í klæðaðark, þá mun mqlr eigi spilla. Ok ef blek verðr gørt af því vatni er malurt er í – Þær ritningar munu haldask. Þær þora eigi mýss skeðja.
(D:123; 434:383–384) Wormwood mixed with coalfish-gall and rubbed on a man’s ears – that strengthens them and repels noise. And if it is laid in a clothes-chest, then moths will do no damage. And if ink is made from water that contains wormwood – those writings will last. Mice will not dare to destroy them.
44. Við hósta – Tak reykelsi þat er mirra heitir ok halt lengi undir tungurótum.
(D:110; 434:384; (194:67)) For a cough – take that incense which is called myrrh and hold it for a long time under the roots of the tongue.
45. En við þat sama – Tak rót af grasi því er levesticum heitir ok stappa við vín ok drekk.
(D:110; 434:384) And for the same – take the root of that plant which is called lovage and mash it with wine and drink.
46. En við þat sama ok svá at hreinsa lungu – Tak þat er vex á viði ellifu korn ok ellifu piparkorn ok ellifu af feniculo, mel þat alt í dust ok blanda við hunang. Ok et af þvísa hvern dag spán fullan fastandi. Þessa er opt freistat.
(D:110; 434:384) And for the same and to clean the lungs – take eleven seeds that grow on a willow and eleven pepper corns and eleven of fennel, grind all this to a powder and mix it with honey. And then eat from this, a spoonful every day fasting. This has often been tried.

89 D reads “uxa gall” (ox-gall). See Larsen, *Medical Miscellany*, 123.

47. En við hósta – Gras þat er heitir
pimpinella blanda við súrt vín ok gef
honum drekka. Þá mun batna.
(D:110–11; 434:384)
48. Gras þat er heitir feniculum –
Stappa þat við vín. Þat er gott við
bløðrusótt.
(D:113; 434:384)
49. En við þat sama – Þá er þú ferr sofa,
tak rúgbrauð ok svið við eld ok et
þat svá sviðit með vørmu víni.
(D:113; 434:384)
50. Við siklan – Tak gras þat er salvia
heitir ok stappa við súrt vín ok
drekki. Þá mun létta.
(D:112n5)
51. En við þat sama – Haf baðar hendr
þínar í vatni vørmu ok drekk lítit
súrt vín.
(D:112)
52. Til skírar raustar – Tak pipar ok
tygg ok haf í munni þér lengi ok
svelg síðan hrákann niðr ok spýt út
fl[osinu].⁹¹
(D:115; 434:384; 194:68)
- Again, for a cough – mix the plant
which is called pimpinella with sour
wine and give it to him to drink.
Then it will improve.
- The plant which is called fennel –
mash it with wine. That is good for
disease of the bladder.
- And for the same – when you go
to sleep, take rye bread and toast it
over fire and then eat it toasted with
warm wine.
- For a flowing of the spittle⁹⁰ – take
the plant which is called sage and
mash it with sour wine and drink.
Then it will improve.
- And for the same – keep both your
hands in warm water and drink a
little sour wine.
- For a clear voice – take pepper and
chew it and keep it in your mouth
for a long time, and then swallow
the spit and spit out the sh[ells].

90 For the translation of this word, “siklan,” which does not occur elsewhere, see Kålund, *Den islandske lægebog*, 384f. He points out that the word exists in Norwegian dialects, in this meaning.

91 The clause continues in 434. See Kålund, *Den islandske lægebog*, 384.

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SUMMARY

“Eyrsilfr drukkit, þat gerir bana”: The Earliest Old Norse Medical Book, AM 655 XXX 4to, and Its Context

Keywords: AM 655 XXX 4to, medieval medicine, Old Norse medical books, history of medicine, Henrik Harpestræng, vernacular medical books, Old Norse medicine

This essay offers an examination of an Icelandic thirteenth-century manuscript fragment which represents the earliest extant traces of a medical book in the vernacular in medieval Scandinavian culture. The fragment contains fifty-two articles, describing various ailments and their cures as well as the medical effects of different plants and other materials. The origins of this manuscript remain enigmatic. The essay aims to shed what light is possible on its origins and use. It includes a description of the manuscript’s physical characteristics, an analysis of its literary and sociological context, and a critical discussion of what this may tentatively tell us about the production, purpose, and use of the medical codex to which the fragment once belonged. The manuscript materially exemplifies the movement of Arabic and Latin medical knowledge from Italy to Denmark through Norway to Iceland. The essay further argues that the manuscript’s obscure relationship to five other Old Norse medical books illustrates the common medieval tradition of freely reworking medical material into individual specific contexts. The physical features of the fragment indicate that the codex which it

represents was considered both practical and important, and that its purpose was to be used as an instrument in healing practices in thirteenth-century Iceland. An English translation of the fragment's text is appended.

ÁGRIP

„Eysilfr drukkit, þat gerir bana“: Elsta norræna lækningabókin, AM 655 XXX 4to, og samhengi hennar

Efnisorð: AM 655 xxx 4to, lækningar á miðöldum, fornorrænar lækningabækur, Henrik Harpestræng

Í greininni er tekið til skoðunar íslenskt handritsbrot frá þrettánda öld sem inniheldur elsta varðveitta lækningatextann á norrænu tungumáli. Í handritinu eru fimm tíu og tvær klausur sem lýsa ýmsum krankleikum og viðeigandi lækningum við þeim, ásamt útlistunum á lækningamætti jurta og annarra efna. Handritið er birtingarmynd útbreiðslu arabískra og latneskra lækningatexta sem bárust til Íslands að öllum líkindum í gegnum Danmörku og Noreg. Uppruni þess er að öðru leyti óljós og er markmið greinarinnar að varpa ljósi á tilurð þess, notkun og sögulegt samhengi. Í greininni eru færð rök fyrir því að torrætt samband handritsins við fimm aðrar íslenskar lækningabækur frá miðöldum endurspegli þá algengu aðferð að endurrita læknisráð frjálsglega, fyrir hvert og eitt einstakt samhengi. Efnisleg sérkenni handritsbrotsins benda til þess að handritið hafi verið talið gagnlegt og mikilvægt, og að tilgangur þess hafi verið að nota það sem handbók við lækningar á Íslandi á þrettánda öld. Í viðauka við greinina er ensk þýðing á texta handritsins með athugasemdum.

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THE LIBRARY AT BRÆÐRATUNGA

Manuscript Ownership and Private Library-Building in Early Modern Iceland¹

Iceland's medieval manuscripts were the subject of growing interest from European scholars in the early modern period. Organised efforts to collect and export Icelandic manuscripts of antiquarian value began in the seventeenth century and arguably reached their height in the early 1700s through the work of Árni Magnússon (1663–1730), professor at the University of Copenhagen.² Unlike Denmark and Sweden, Iceland did not have formal archival or library institutions for the collection and preservation of books and manuscripts during the early modern period. Libraries and literary activities at Iceland's medieval religious houses have been the subject of significant interest in recent years.³ Following the Reformation (1541–1550), Iceland's religious houses fell under the control of the Danish crown. There is no evidence of systematic destruction of moveable property during or following the Reformation (Gunnar Kristjánsson 2017).⁴ However, neither was any centralised effort made to preserve the older

- 1 I am grateful to Beeke Stegmann for permission to read the manuscript of her forthcoming book, as well as to the editors and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments. The research for this article was supported by the Icelandic Research Fund, grant no. 218209-051.
- 2 On Árni Magnússon's activities, see Már Jónsson 2012. For a recent discussion of collectors and collection activities predating Árni Magnússon, see Gottskálf Jensson 2019.
- 3 For an overview, see Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2016. Book production at Helgafell was the subject of a recent symposium, held 3–4 March 2023 in Reykjavík in connection with the ongoing project Book Production at Helgafell Monastery in the Fourteenth Century (PI: Beeke Stegmann).
- 4 Hannah Ryley (2017) makes a convincing argument that dismantling books for use as bookbinding material was a common pre-modern practice, including recycling of outdated or worn-out liturgical manuscripts. That Icelandic bindings containing fragments of pre-Reformation liturgical manuscripts do not date overwhelmingly from the mid-sixteenth century is evidence against systematic, violent destruction of books and libraries as a performative act against Catholicism.

monastic libraries that did survive. The premises of manuscript-holding religious houses were converted into residences for the secular elite, who paid rents to the Danish king in exchange not only for control of the former monastery or nunnery but also associated tenancies and resource rights. An interest in medieval books or literary culture did not factor into their appointment.

One such elite family was that of Magnús Björnsson (1595–1662) and his wife Guðrún Gísladóttir (1588–1671). They managed the property of the former Benedictine monastery at Munkaþverá in Eyjafjörður in North Iceland, and the manor farm of Munkaþverá had also been Magnús's childhood home: his parents, Björn Benediktsson (1561–1617) and his wife Elín Pálsadóttir (1571–1637), had managed the monastery property from 1601. Magnús, the first documented owner of the famous Möðruvallabók codex, was one of Iceland's most powerful civil servants and is a well-known figure in Icelandic history. His active interest in the literature of the past is clear: he inherited, acquired and gifted medieval Icelandic manuscripts, as documented by Sigurjón Páll Ísaksson (1994). As discussed below, the family library included both the remnants of Munkaþverá's medieval library and their own acquisitions.

While Magnús Björnsson seems to have had a personal passion for medieval books, or at the very least to have recognised their value through interactions with philologists such as his cousin Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson of Skálholt (1605–1675), elite family libraries in early modern Iceland were not exclusively managed by male household heads. Indeed, as Susanne Arthur (2012) has demonstrated, many private manuscript owners in seventeenth-century Iceland were women who had received codices as part of their inheritance or dowry. The gendered aspect of manuscript ownership within Icelandic families and communities differed from that encountered in male-dominated early modern archival spaces (Parsons 2022).

The focus of this article is on the library of Magnús and Guðrún's second daughter, Helga Magnúsdóttir (1623–1677). Helga's namesake was her great-grandmother, Helga Aradóttir (c. 1538–1614), whose father Ari Jónsson, uncle Björn Jónsson and grandfather Jón Arason—the last Catholic bishop of Hólar—were hastily executed at Skálholt on 7 November 1550 for their role in the political and religious conflict sur-

rounding the Reformation.⁵ From birth, Helga Magnúsdóttir's life was deeply connected to that of her powerful ancestors; Jón Arason had spent time at Munkaþverá as a young man, and she belonged to the third consecutive generation of his descendants to occupy the former monastery.

A key source on Helga Magnúsdóttir's life is a biography composed a few days after her death by the Rev. Einar Einarsson (1649–1690) and preserved in AM 96 8vo alongside a eulogy read at her funeral by Bishop Þórður Þorláksson of Skálholt (Margrét Eggertsdóttir 1998). One aspect of Helga Magnúsdóttir's life that does not receive attention in her biography is her manuscript collection at her home in Bræðratunga. However, two vellum manuscripts from Bræðratunga were among the Icelandic manuscripts lost in the Fire of Copenhagen in 1728. Helga Magnúsdóttir was also the owner of the surviving medieval codex AM 152 fol., which she inherited from her father and has received considerable scholarly attention (cf. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir 2014a, 2014b). Late in her life, her cousin Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson of Skálholt bequeathed half of his own library of Icelandic manuscripts to Helga, meaning that Bræðratunga would have briefly housed one of the most important manuscript collections in the country.

As discussed in this paper, an inventory of the Bræðratunga estate from 1653, prepared the year after the death of Helga's husband, suggests that there were no more than a handful of books at Bræðratunga at this time. In contrast to her parents' book collection at her childhood home of Munkaþverá, which may have contained titles that had been at the monastery from the fifteenth century onwards (see below), Bræðratunga does not seem to have been a "bookish" household on Helga's arrival. Helga's books thus give an opportunity to examine practices of private library-building and the movement of manuscripts between regions of Iceland and generations of owners, expanding on earlier research by Susanne Arthur (2012), Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir (2016) and others.

5 Helga Aradóttir's namesake was probably her grandmother Helga Sigurðardóttir (d. after 1559), who was Bishop Jón Arason's partner.

The library at Munkaþverá

Helga Magnúsdóttir, like her brothers Gísli and Björn and sisters Jórunn and Solveig, spent her childhood in her parents' household at Munkaþverá. Her impeccable handwriting and surviving evidence of her adult correspondence demonstrate that she received an education that included writing and composition in addition to basic reading skills (see Parsons forthcoming). An emphasis on women's literacy beyond a basic reading ability was not unusual for her extended family, particularly among those living at or near the ecclesiastical centres of Skálholt and Hólar (Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2017).⁶

The children at Munkaþverá grew up in an environment where medieval vellum books were not only present but continued to be in active use: as reading objects, as material for bookbindings and as tools for developing childhood literacy. Munkaþverá's transition from sacred to secular space in 1551 was non-violent, and there is evidence that remnants of the medieval library survived at Helga Magnúsdóttir's childhood home some seventy-five years after the monastery's closure.

The former monastic library at Munkaþverá would mainly have contained volumes dating from the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century. A devastating fire in 1429 had claimed the lives of two of Munkaþverá's monks and destroyed the original complex, although individual books belonging to the older library may have been on loan elsewhere and thus survived.⁷ Einar Ísleifsson became abbot in 1435 and invested much of his effort in rebuilding the monastery and securing its finances.⁸ Liturgical books were among the items needed for the monastery, and an inventory from 1525 confirms that the monastery was well supplied with such books (DI 9, 305–7). At least two liturgical books were produced by Finnbogi Einarsson (d. 1532), who became abbot of Munkaþverá in 1524 (DI 9, 307).

As Kalinke points out, Munkaþverá housed numerous texts relating to Marian devotion in Latin and the vernacular. Finnbogi Einarsson copied

6 Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir (2016, 241) insightfully observes that the attitude of a girl's parents towards female literacy likely mattered more in determining whether she would learn to write than her social status in the community.

7 On the fire and the history of the monastery buildings, see Guðrún Harðardóttir 1996.

8 On Einar Ísleifsson's activities as abbot, see Janus Jónsson 1887, 206–8.

Mariúmessur allar ('the Masses of Our Lady'), and there was a *Mariú saga hin stærri*, a *Mariú saga hin minni* and a *Mariú historia* that Kalinke identifies as the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Kalinke 1994, 45). There were vernacular legends of saints and apostles: *Ólafs saga*, *Tómas saga*, *Benediktus saga*, *Martínus saga*, *Jóns saga biskups*, *Guðmundar saga*, *Jóns saga postola*, *Barlanus saga*, *Péturs saga* and a volume identified as *Meyja sögur* (i.e., virgin martyr saints' legends). In 1525, the prior Jón had in his keeping two manuscripts containing offices: the aforementioned *Mariú historia* and *Dýradags historia* (Office of the Feast of Corpus Christi). At least some of these manuscripts may have come from other religious houses to replace books lost in the 1429 fire, but the inventory provides evidence that book production took place at Munkaþverá as well.

The monastery's Latin liturgical books lost their religious function in post-Reformation Iceland, and their vellum was put to other uses over time. Unfortunately, no inventory survives of the books at Munkaþverá in the seventeenth century. Gísli Baldur Róbertsson (2006) has plausibly suggested that a paper copy of the Life of St Anne, now AM 82 8vo, was produced in the first half of the seventeenth century at Munkaþverá from an older exemplar still kept at the former monastery and subsequently bound in leaves from a fourteenth-century gradual that had been part of Munkaþverá's library. In 1525, Munkaþverá had a chapel for St Anne, with an altarpiece and a statue of St Anne (DI 9, 305). A Life of St Anne is not found in the 1525 inventory, but it might have been produced or entered the library after the inventory was compiled, not least given that the source text of the Icelandic translation was the 1507 Low German *De historie von hiligen moder sunte Anna* or the *St. Annen-Büchlein* (Bekker-Nielsen 1964; Wolf 2001).

One manuscript of saints' legends at Munkaþverá in Helga's childhood was the manuscript AM 232 fol., which contains *Barlaams saga og Jósafats*, *Mariú saga* with miracles, *Framför Mariú* (Transitus Mariae), *Jóns saga baptista* and *Heilagra feðra ævi* (Vitae patrum). It was discovered at Munkaþverá by Sveinn Torfason (c. 1662–1725), who received control of Munkaþverá after Helga's brother Björn lost his position as its proprietor in 1695 after accusations of mismanagement. Sveinn gave the manuscript to Magnús Jónsson (1679–1733), who presented the codex to Árni Magnússon in 1698. Helga's nephew Guðbrandur Björnsson (c.

1657–1733), who had grown up at Munkaþverá, recognised the book and told Áрни Magnússon that AM 232 fol. had belonged to his father Björn; he thought that Sveinn must have found it in some chest in the former monastery complex (AM 435 a 4to, 9v–10r). The presence of *Barlanus saga* in the 1525 inventory is evidence that this codicological unit had belonged to Munkaþverá since before the Reformation. However, only the codicological unit containing *Framför Maríu* could be hypothesised to have been written at Munkaþverá and kept there for the duration of its pre-Reformation history, as other sections of the manuscript predate the 1429 fire.⁹

Guðbrandur informed Áрни that his father taught him to read using AM 232 fol. (AM 435 a 4to, 9v–10r). Helga and her siblings too might have been given this manuscript for reading practice: a large vellum manuscript with generous margins would have been a durable reading primer. The manuscript shows signs of use for beginner writing practice: traces of a beginner writer's pen-strokes are visible in the outer margin on f. 22v. Other marginalia include rows of letters on ff. 5v and 30r.

According to a note by Áрни Magnússon in AM 645 4to, Guðbrandur Björnsson remembered that a very old vellum manuscript containing sagas of apostles had been at Munkaþverá in his childhood, which Áрни identified as AM 645 4to. Guðbrandur claimed that only one man in Eyjafjörður had been able to read it. The smaller manuscript's provenance is difficult to verify, as Áрни neglects to mention where or from whom he acquired it, but Áрни seems confident in his statement. AM 645 4to contains *Jarteinabók Þorláks biskups*, *Clemens saga*, *Péturs saga postola*, *Jakobs saga postola*, *Bartholomeus saga postola*, *Matheus saga postola*, *Andreas saga postola*, *Páls saga postola*, *Niðurstigningar saga* and *Martinus saga biskups*. The book was likely monastic property before it circulated among a secular

9 On *Framför Maríu* and the provenance of this manuscript, see Bullitta 2021. Bullitta suggests that some sixteenth-century names in the manuscript may have belonged to Helga's paternal ancestors and that AM 232 fol. was kept at the former monastery at Möðruvellir in Hörgárdalur before the Reformation. While this may be correct, the names in question (Björn, Benedikt, Sigurður Jónsson and a priest named Jón) are common enough that secure identification is impossible, nor is the presence of names in marginalia always equivalent to ownership: long-term borrowing of manuscripts was common. After several generations at Munkaþverá, boundaries between family and monastery property were blurred. Guðbrandur, an evidently unbookish child who enrolled in the Danish army rather than the University of Copenhagen, believed that his father owned the book, but Björn presumably left it at Munkaþverá because he did not view it as his property.

readership, but it is impossible to know whether it came to Munkaþverá before or after 1550 (DI V, 288).¹⁰

Finally, a vellum copy of *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* and *Ólafs saga helga* (now AM 61 fol.), gifted by Magnús Björnsson to his wife's niece Jórunn Hinriksdóttir (c. 1614–1693), could possibly have been the *Ólafs saga* mentioned in the inventory of Munkaþverá. This manuscript has been identified as originating from a scribal network broadly associated with the Helgafell monastery (Ólafur Halldórsson 1966, 22, 27–29; see also Jón Helgason 1958, 67, 69–70). Jórunn moved north around 1630 to marry her second cousin Benedikt Halldórsson (1607–1688), whose parents managed the monastery at Möðruvellir in Hörgárdalur. Jórunn later gave the manuscript to her daughter Ingibjörg (d. 1673), who married Bishop Gísli Þorláksson in 1664.¹¹

Other manuscripts in Helga Magnúsdóttir's childhood library belonged to her parents Magnús and Guðrún. Sigurjón Páll Ísaksson's list of manuscripts belonging to Magnús Björnsson contains ten manuscript items (including *Möðruvallabók*) that can be linked with some certainty to Magnús, three manuscript items that can be reasonably hypothesised to have been Magnús's and one instance of a lost manuscript that was probably borrowed from Magnús by Þorbergur Hrólfsson of Seyla (1573–1656), although it is unknown whether it was a paper or vellum copy (Sigurjón Páll Ísaksson 1994, 142–45).

One vellum manuscript belonging to Helga Magnúsdóttir, AM 152 fol., certainly had belonged to her father, as it contains a single-stanza verse on f. 138v proclaiming Magnús Björnsson's ownership, in addition to his signature on f. 57r. It is likely that the now-lost copy of *Þiðreks saga af Bern* that Árni Magnússon called *Bræðratungubók* also came from Munkaþverá.

10 A vernacular book of *postula sögur* and a copy of *Martinus saga* were at the monastery at Möðruvellir in Hörgárdalur when an inventory was made in 1461.

11 Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir (2016, 241) raises the interesting question of whether Jórunn Hinriksdóttir could write. As she points out, a surviving legal document from 1688 is signed by her tenants, but Jórunn's name is not written in her own hand. However, Jórunn would have been around seventy-four years old at the time. Before eye surgery was an option, many older Icelanders had cataracts and other vision problems that prevented them from writing, including some former scribes. Jórunn wrote Bishop Brynjólfur a letter that he received in 1665; his response is preserved in AM 277 fol., 74v–77r. Her letter does not survive, so it cannot be seen whether she dictated her letter or directly held the pen.

The library at Bræðratunga to 1653

Most of Helga's close male relatives held secular administrative posts, including her brothers Gísli (1621–1696) and Björn (c. 1624–1697), both of whom held the position of *sýslumaður* or district administrator—Gísli in South Iceland, Björn in North Iceland. Helga's sisters Jórunn (1622–c. 1704) and Solveig (1627–1710) each married a *sýslumaður*. Although laws on consanguinity were strict, all five of Magnús and Guðrún's children married either a second cousin or a second cousin once removed, and Björn and Solveig married siblings.

Helga's biography emphasises her spiritual development rather than her secular accomplishments, but it gives an outline of major events in her life: she was engaged in her fifteenth year to her cousin *sýslumaður* Hákon Gíslason (1614–1652), married in 1639, widowed at twenty-nine. She and her husband lived first at Munkaþverá in her parents' household and later at Hólar in the household of Hákon's sister, Kristín Gísladóttir (1610–1694), who was married to Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason of Hólar (1597–1656). The couple remained at Hólar until 1643, when they left to establish their own household at Bræðratunga, which had been the home of Hákon's parents, Gísli Hákonarson (1583–1631) and Margrét Jónsdóttir (c. 1573–1658). Their seven children were born at Bræðratunga in 1644–1652, four of whom survived infancy: Elín (1644–1717), Vigfús (1647–1670), Sigríður (1648–1733) and Jarþrúður (c. 1651–1686). Helga was pregnant with their seventh child, a son, when news reached her at Bræðratunga that her husband Hákon had collapsed suddenly on 27 September 1652 and died. Sadly, their youngest child also died shortly after birth a few weeks later.

An inventory of moveable property in Hákon's estate from 1653 is preserved in AM 268 fol. Surprisingly, it lists only four books at Bræðratunga, all printed: a new Bible (printed at Hólar in 1637–1644 and obviously a gift from Hákon's brother-in-law, Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason); a New Testament; a book of house postils; and an old hymnal (AM 268 fol., 117v). Several factors may contribute to the near-complete absence of books at Bræðratunga in the 1653 inventory:

- Hákon does not seem to have been particularly bookish: he owned a large stable of horses but did not invest in a large personal library of printed books;

- Hákon's widowed mother, Margrét Jónsdóttir, was still alive and would presumably have remained the primary keeper of her family's books and manuscripts; and
- family manuscripts were not necessarily considered inventory in the same way as items of clothing, farming implements or other objects.

One extant manuscript that did belong to Hákon Gíslason is GKS 3672 8vo, a tiny copy of the law code *Jónsbók*, tightly bound in leather over wooden boards, with two intact metal clasps. The manuscript is plain but neatly written, and the leather binding has been stamped to produce an elegant volume. Two inscriptions, in different hands, on the first leaf declare Hákon Gíslason to be the owner.¹² His signature is also found on the inside of the rear board. The manuscript was copied in 1631 by an unknown scribe and is one of 103 surviving manuscript copies of *Jónsbók* from the seventeenth century, of a total of 286 manuscript copies in all (Már Jónsson 2004, 26–27). Hákon Gíslason's book is in an excellent state of preservation and seems to have been a practical “travel copy” of *Jónsbók* that could be taken on work-related journeys, with extensive marginal notes in the section on personal rights but no observed doodles, verses or other casual uses of the page that might suggest use outside administrative settings.¹³ On the verso side of the back flyleaf is a unique key to reading (or perhaps writing?) common manuscript abbreviations. This would have aided a less expert reader or writer whose main interactions were with printed books.

While conclusively demonstrating that inventories are not reliable sources of information on manuscript ownership, the inventory also makes it clear that library-building at Bræðratunga was Helga's project rather than Hákon's. His death was likely a motivation for acquiring a larger library: her biography states that she became a mother and father to her children following her loss (Margrét Eggertsdóttir 1998, 273), yet she lacked the formal education from which Hákon had benefited. Before their marriage,

12 “Hakon Gyslason A Mig med Riettu Enn Einginn Annar” (‘Hákon Gíslason is my rightful owner and none other’) and “Hakon Gyslason A Bokena med Riettu Enn Einginn Annar” (‘Hákon Gíslason rightfully owns the book and none other’) (1r).

13 The only other known manuscript with a potential connection to Hákon Gíslason, ÍB 315 a 4to, is highly fragmentary but might have once contained his notes as district administrator (see below).

Hákon had completed Latin school and spent time making connections abroad, and their son Vigfús needed to do the same to follow in his father's footsteps as a high-ranking administrator. Vigfús's biography (preserved in AM 96 8vo) highlights Helga's role in providing him with an excellent education, beginning alongside his sisters with the books at Bræðratunga. He next spent two winters in the household of the Rev. Erasmus Pálsson and two winters in the household of the Rev. Torfi Jónsson before he entered the Latin school at Skálholt in c. 1660 (Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2004, 238).¹⁴ Based on this, Vigfús learned at home until he was around nine, when he began learning the rudiments of Latin with some of the best-reputed educators in the country. After graduating in c. 1666, he was in Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson's service for two years before sailing for university studies in Copenhagen in 1668, returning in 1670.

Helga was financially independent and fully capable of managing her family's affairs herself, but she received support in her widowhood from her cousin Brynjólfur Sveinsson. She in turn provided unwavering support for his daughter Ragnheiður (1641–1663) when the young woman evidently confided to the older Helga in 1661 that she was pregnant by her Latin tutor. Helga kept Ragnheiður's secret, brought her to Bræðratunga to be out of the public eye, helped her birth the child and had the boy christened Þórður after her own illegitimate but highly accomplished uncle (AM 96 8vo, 71v–73v).

Skálholt is not far from Bræðratunga, and Helga's husband's family were Brynjólfur's patrons as a young man (Sigurður Pétursson 1998). Skálholt, like Hólar in the north, was an important centre of manuscript production in Iceland, not least during in the episcopacy of Brynjólfur Sveinsson in 1639–1674 (Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2010; Springborg 1977). It may have been partly due to Brynjólfur Sveinsson's interest in medieval manuscripts that Helga chose manuscripts from her father's estate as part of her inheritance; bringing codices from Munkaþverá facilitated their use in highly active scholarly circles in South Iceland.

Surviving correspondence shows that Helga and Brynjólfur remained close friends and allies for the duration of their lives, and she was the one

14 Erasmus Pálsson (d. 1677) was Árni Magnússon's great-uncle and the grandson and namesake of Erasmus Villadtsson (d. 1591), who was schoolmaster of the Latin school at Skálholt.

to prepare his body for burial, two years before her own death, and later to mark his burial site with a silver plate (Jón Halldórsson 1903–1915, vol. 1, 305, vol. 2., 376–80).¹⁵ Helga and Brynjólfur's membership to the Icelandic elite did not protect them from the loss of many loved ones: Helga's father died in December 1662, months before Ragnheiður succumbed to illness in March 1663, while Ragnheiður's brother Halldór died in Yarmouth, England, in 1666. Helga lost her beloved son Vigfús to measles in November 1670, four months after the passing of Brynjólfur's wife, Margrét Halldórsdóttir (1615–1670). The young Þórður—Brynjólfur's last living descendant—died at Skálholt in 1673.

Helga's biography indicates that her health and strength deteriorated rapidly after her son's death, although she could still hold a pen to sign her name on JS 28 fol. and AM 65 fol. on 31 January 1675. Both manuscripts had been personal gifts from Bishop Brynjólfur to Helga, which she passed to her daughters during her own lifetime: the former to her youngest daughter Jarþrúður and the latter to her eldest daughter Elín, who lived with her husband in Vatnsfjörður in the Westfjords. A comparable gift was presumably made to her middle daughter, Sigríður, and this may have been one of at least four folio volumes owned by Sigríður in the hand of Jón Erlendsson of Villingaholt, a highly favoured scribe in Brynjólfur's scholarly network, who also copied both JS 28 fol. and AM 65 fol. (see Appendix). *Bræðratungubók had already left Bræðratunga with Vigfús in 1668, as did a handwritten prayer book given to him by his sister Elín (see below) and possibly also his father's copy of *Jónsbók*. There was thus a steady inflow and outflow of books in the library of Bræðratunga, which appears to have been a key hub within a larger network of manuscript circulation and use rather than a centre of manuscript production like Skálholt or an endpoint for manuscript preservation as Árni Magnússon's library would become decades later.

15 Bishop Brynjólfur was the only pre-modern bishop of Skálholt known to have chosen a burial site outside the cathedral. Jón Halldórsson (1665–1736) is critical of Brynjólfur's nephew, Torfi Jónsson, and to a lesser degree Brynjólfur's other heirs, for neglecting the maintenance of the site, which already in Jón's day had vanished into the landscape. Part of Brynjólfur's private correspondence has survived in Árni Magnússon's collection, including copies of Brynjólfur's letters to Helga and a copy of a letter from Helga to Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason of Hólar, written only days after her husband Hákon's death. On Brynjólfur and Helga's friendship and letters, see Parsons forthcoming.

Dividing a library

According to Jón Halldórsson (1903–1915, vol. 1, 300), Brynjólfur Sveinsson's collection of printed books was worth at least 1000 *rikisdalir* in its day. He states that it left the country immediately after Brynjólfur's death: the *foged* Johan Klein brought his wife to Iceland, and she bore a son three weeks later, to whom Brynjólfur bequeathed his large collection of foreign books (in Latin, Greek and other languages). This child received Brynjólfur's printed titles, although Jón hints that Brynjólfur's mark could still often be found in books circulating in Iceland. He adds:

Sá góði biskup var og óspar að gefa hver lærðum mönnum, sem honum voru handgeingnir. En íslenzkar bækur sínar, sögur og aðskiljanlegar skrifaðar fræðibækur, gaf hann eftir sig frændkonu sinni, Helgu Magnúsdóttur í Bræðratúngu, og Sigríði Halldórsdóttur [sic] í Gaulverjabæ til helmíngaskipta (Jón Halldórsson 1903–1915, vol. 1, 300).

(The good bishop [Brynjólfur Sveinsson] was unstinting in gifting books to educated men within his intimate circles. But he bequeathed his Icelandic books—sagas and various hand-copied scholarly books—to his cousin Helga Magnúsdóttir in Bræðratunga and to Sigríður Halldórsdóttir, a half-share to each.)

A list made in 1674 by Bishop Brynjólfur of Latin, Greek and Hebrew books in his library contains 254 books (266 titles). Jón Helgason (1948) printed this list of titles but pointed out that it lacks books in the vernacular. Brynjólfur obviously owned printed books in Icelandic. He would certainly have owned a good selection of books in Danish and could hardly have owned no theology books in German. Following closer examination of all surviving sources on Bishop Brynjólfur's printed books, Jón Helgason convincingly concluded that the book list from 1674 was the collection that he bequeathed to Klein's infant son.¹⁶

Neither Helga nor Sigríður Halldórsdóttir (1622–1704), the wife of Brynjólfur Sveinsson's main heir Torfi Jónsson of Gaulverjabær (1617–

16 On Brynjólfur Sveinsson's printed books, see also Muratori and Sigurður Pétursson 2006.

1689), systematically marked books in their possession. Complicating the study of Sigríður Halldórsdóttir's books, the library at Gaulverjabær already contained many items produced, inherited or otherwise acquired by Torfi, who was Brynjólfur's nephew. One manuscript, AM 114 fol. (in Torfi's father Jón Gissurarson's hand), contains an inscription on f. 2r signed by Sigríður, dated 1691, declaring that she gave it to her son Sveinn Torfason. Immediately above this is an inscription from 1649 stating that her late husband is now the book's owner (uniquely incorporating Hebrew letters into the ownership statement). Jón Gissurarson, Brynjólfur's older half-brother, died in November 1648, and the manuscript's provenance can thus be reconstructed with unusual certainty. For other manuscripts, evidence for Sigríður Halldórsdóttir's ownership is through family ties with later owners: Páll Eggert Ólason (1927) traced the provenance of Ragnheiður Brynjólfsdóttir's copy of Hallgrímur Pétursson's *Passíusálmar* (JS 337 4to) to Sigríður Halldórsdóttir's great-grandson, Jón Björnsson (1731–1815). Similarly, a copy of the annals of Björn Jónsson of Skarðsá in Lbs 40 fol. contains marginalia in the hands of Brynjólfur Sveinsson and Sigríður's husband Torfi Jónsson; Sigríður and Torfi's daughter Ragnheiður (c. 1651–1712) received it, and it later passed to Ragnheiður's son-in-law, the Rev. Hannes Halldórsson (1668–1731). Manuscripts in Árni Magnússon's collection that may have passed from Brynjólfur to Sigríður include items from her sons Sveinn (e.g., part of AM 19 fol., AM 64 fol.) and Halldór (e.g., two leaves of AM 20 b I fol., AM 105 fol., AM 107 fol., AM 748 I b 4to) and Halldór's widow, Þuríður Sæmundsdóttir (e.g., AM 724 4to). A more extensive study of manuscript ownership among the descendants of Sigríður and Torfi would be valuable, as manuscripts may appear in catalogues under the names of spouses or other family members.¹⁷

The case of Helga Magnúsdóttir's library differs from that of Sigríður Halldórsdóttir in several important ways: (a) there is no evidence for her husband's participation in scribal networks, (b) she was a widow at the time she received the manuscripts from Brynjólfur Sveinsson and thus

17 For instance, a large volume of sagas and *þættir* copied by Jón Gissurarson and given to Árni Magnússon by Högni Ámundason (1651–1704) would have belonged to Högni's wife, Sigríður's daughter Þórunn Torfadóttir (1660–after 1709). Árni Magnússon disassembled this paper manuscript, cf. Stegmann forthcoming, potentially discarding evidence of provenance. See also Slay 1960, 146–57.

in full control of her property, and (c) any printed or manuscript books at Bræðratunga beyond the titles already mentioned would have been acquired by Helga or her children. Furthermore, while Brynjólfur's gift to Sigríður Halldórsdóttir could be interpreted as a symbolic gesture since the books would effectively become Torfi's, his gift of manuscripts to Helga Magnúsdóttir was to a woman and her three daughters. Given that Brynjólfur also hired a personal tutor for his daughter Ragnheiður so that she could learn Latin, he may have been influenced by contemporary humanist discourse on the value of women's education (Sigurður Pétursson 2001; see also Alenius 2011). Certainly, Brynjólfur's choice of recipients for his Icelandic collection points to a desire to place books in the hands of elite women.

The fate of a library

Helga's biography and eulogy mention a long-term illness that led to her death, worsening markedly after Vigfús's passing. Helga's eldest daughter, Elín, married the Rev. Guðbrandur Jónsson (1641–1690) on 25 August 1672 and moved with him to Vatnsfjörður in Ísafjarðardjúp the following year, when he also became provost for the region. Sigríður was to have married Halldór Brynjólfsson on his return from England, but he died during a plague outbreak in England. After Halldór's death, the bishop made significant gifts to Sigríður in his son's memory, including a copy of *Jónsbók* (see below). Sigríður did not seek another match until 1680, when her sister Jarþrúður married Magnús Sigurðsson (1651–1707) and the couple established their household at Bræðratunga. Sigríður married the Rev. Sigurður Sigurðsson (1636–1690) on 29 August 1680 and moved with him to Staðarstaður on the Snæfellsnes peninsula in West Iceland, where he became provost in 1681. Jarþrúður was the first of the sisters to pass away, on 3 May 1686. Her gravestone, which her husband Magnús likely commissioned, describes her death as occurring during childbirth, after three stillbirths.

The *stórabóla* smallpox epidemic in 1707–1709, which spread rapidly to West Iceland where Elín and Sigríður lived, had a devastating impact on Iceland and led to the extinction of Helga Magnúsdóttir's family line. Only two of her grandchildren survived the epidemic: Elín's youngest daughter Kristín Guðbrandsdóttir (1684–1733) and Sigríður's son Oddur Sigurðsson

(1681–1741). Oddur lost his fiancée Guðrún Gunnardóttir to smallpox and never married. Kristín married Vigfús Jónsson (1680–1727) in 1709, but the couple was childless. Like her cousin Brynjólfur Sveinsson, Helga Magnúsdóttir had no great-grandchildren, meaning that her library was not passed down from generation to generation as in the case of Sigríður Halldórsdóttir's family; Oddur was Helga's last living descendant.

Four of Elín's older children had lived to adulthood: Vigfús (1673–1707), Hákon (1677–1707), Helga (1679–1707) and Jón (1682–1707). Two siblings, Hákon and Helga, were married but had no children with their spouses, Ólöf Jónsdóttir (1685–1777) and Jón Hákonarson (1658–1748), both of whom survived the epidemic.¹⁸

Helga Sigurðardóttir (1683–1707) was the only daughter of Sigríður Hákonardóttir and Sigurður Sigurðsson to survive to adulthood. After Sigurður's death in 1690, Sigríður moved with Helga and Oddur to the farm of Rauðimelur syðri in Kolbeinsstaðahreppur in Hnappadalssýsla in West Iceland, where she continued to manage a large household. Helga Sigurðardóttir was rumoured to have been in a clandestine relationship with Oddur's assistant, Jón Sigurðsson (c. 1685–1720), to the displeasure of her mother and brother. Whether or not Jón and Helga had a tragic affair is unclear, but Jón Sigurðsson's *Tímaríma* from c. 1709 is a *roman à clef* in verse satirising Sigríður and Oddur.

The manuscript collector Árni Magnússon played a key role in ensuring the survival of several of Helga Magnúsdóttir's manuscripts, but he had a difficult relationship with some of her descendants and was unfortunate enough to lose two vellum manuscripts owned by her family in the Fire of Copenhagen, **Jónsbók* and **Bræðratungubók*. Árni Magnússon was in active contact with Vigfús Guðbrandsson before his death from smallpox in 1707, and it was Vigfús who gave him AM 152 fol. Árni's concern for preserving the manuscripts owned by Vigfús and his siblings in the wake of the smallpox epidemic can be seen in a letter to Hjalti Þorsteinsson of Vatnsfjörður from February 1708, in which he specifically asks to purchase manuscripts from Elín Hákonardóttir's family, if they can be convinced to part with them (Árni Magnússon 1920, 633–35).

Oddur Sigurðsson inherited his cousin Vigfús's saga manuscripts. Árni Magnússon had loaned Vigfús Guðbrandsson a copy of *Gull-Þóris saga* in

18 Ólöf Jónsdóttir's second husband was Sigurður Jónsson (1679–1761).

Ásgeir Jónsson's hand, AM 495 4to, and he recorded on a slip of paper at the front of the manuscript that it had taken until 1725 to reclaim *Gull-Þóris saga* from Oddur. Oddur was one of the most powerful men in Iceland at the height of his career in the 1710s, but he made many enemies and was stripped of his property and administrative position in 1724 and spent until 1730 seeking to regain control of his property. Oddur's forceful and overbearing personality and rapid rise to power in 1707–1714, in combination with a culture of heavy drinking among elite men, have long been noted as factors in creating a volatile and tense situation within the Icelandic administration (Jón Jónsson 1898). Within this context, Oddur and Árni had a complicated relationship: bitter animosity developed between them that softened somewhat in the 1720s, to the point where they corresponded and Oddur willingly lent him some manuscripts (see Már Jónsson 2012, 162–166, 186, 209).

If Árni Magnússon's relationship with Oddur Sigurðsson was poor, his relationship with Jarþrúður's widower, Magnús Sigurðsson of Bræðratunga, was worse. An initially cordial acquaintanceship deteriorated rapidly after Magnús accused Árni of seducing his much younger second wife, Þórdís Jónsdóttir (1671–1741), who was the granddaughter of Helga's brother-in-law Vigfús Gíslason. Magnús's accusations were baseless: he was an abusive husband to Þórdís, who fled to her sister in Skálholt after he beat her repeatedly while pregnant. Like many perpetrators of intimate partner violence, Magnús could not accept that Þórdís had left him to protect herself, and he spread rumours that Árni was responsible for destroying his marriage. Árni took the matter to court, demanding compensation for defamation, and he continued tenaciously to pursue the case against Magnús even after Magnús's death. Magnús's heirs (Þórdís and her children) would have been forced to compensate Árni had a final court ruling not come down in their favour. Magnús Sigurðsson inherited Jarþrúður's share of Helga Magnúsdóttir's library, which passed after his death to Þórdís and their children.

Manuscripts at Bræðratunga

The following manuscripts and fragments were either owned by Helga Magnúsdóttir or her children in the period up to her death in 1677.

1. *AM 152 fol.*

Árni Magnússon obtained this late medieval vellum manuscript of 201 leaves directly from Helga's grandson, Vigfús Guðbrandsson. Vigfús received the book from his mother Elín, and it belonged to Helga Magnúsdóttir before her. The book had earlier been the property of Helga's father Magnús Björnsson, whose ownership is solidified in a verse in his praise added to f. 139v. According to a note added to the manuscript, Árni Magnússon had previously been informed by Helga's brother Björn that she had inherited a vellum copy of *Grettis saga*, which is the first text in this manuscript. Given that this book was part of her inheritance, she would have brought it to Bræðratunga either following her father's death in 1662 or her mother's in 1671.

Stefán Karlsson (1970, 138) dated the manuscript to the first quarter of the sixteenth century. It preserves a total of eleven sagas copied by two scribes, who have been identified as the lay scribe Þorsteinn Þorleifsson of Svignaskarð (half-brother to the wealthy Björn Þorleifsson of Reykjahólar of the Skarðverjar family, who died after 1548) and the priest Jón Þorgilsson.¹⁹ Jón Helgason believed that Björn's great-grandfather Ari Jónsson had owned the manuscript, based on additions from 1545 (Jón Helgason 1958, 74–75). If this is correct, the codex could have been a family heirloom, although it should also be noted that Magnús Björnsson acquired an ancestral copy of *Jónsbók* that had passed out of the family (see below).

2. **Bræðratungubók*

*Bræðratungubók is the name given to a lost codex identified in Árni Magnússon's catalogue of vellum manuscripts as a quarto copy of *Þiðreks saga af Bern*. According to Árni Magnússon's notes, he acquired *Bræðratungubók from fellow scholar Þormóður Torfason (1636–1719), who received the book from Helga Magnúsdóttir (AM 435 a 4to, 142v–143r). Vigfús Hákonarson, Helga's son, visited Þormóður at his home in Norway in 1670 and delivered the volume. Þormóður was an appropriate recipient, given that he held the position of royal antiquary for Iceland from 1667. The gift established an advantageous connection between the

¹⁹ For a detailed study of AM 152 fol., see Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir 2014b.

young Vigfús and an influential scholar but sadly occurred within months of Vigfús's death. Áрни showed the book to the farmer Sigurður Guðnason (b. 1634) in 1704, who confirmed that the volume had belonged to Helga Magnúsdóttir.

Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson had one of his scribes, Jón Erlendsson of Villingaholt (d. 1672), make a careful copy of *Bræðratungubók (now AM 178 fol.) before Vigfús left Iceland in 1668. Sigurjón Páll Ísaksson suggests that Helga inherited *Bræðratungubók from her father, Magnús Björnsson (Sigurjón Páll Ísaksson 1994, 145). Unfortunately, Áрни Magnússon's notes on *Bræðratungubók do not survive. Virtually all that is known of *Bræðratungubók is that AM 178 fol. is a copy. Helga lent the manuscript to her cousin Brynjólfur but recognised that the recently appointed scholar Þormóður would also value this codex. Given that it was one of only two vellum copies of *Þiðreks saga af Bern* that Áрни Magnússon was able to acquire (both sadly lost in the 1728 fire), Helga's appraisal of her manuscript's worth for future scholarship was entirely correct.

3. *Jónsbók

In AM 37 b I 8vo, Áрни Magnússon describes in some detail a copy of the *Jónsbók* law code owned by Helga's daughter Sigríður Hákonardóttir, originally produced for Ari Jónsson in 1540. Áрни Magnússon had borrowed the *Jónsbók* manuscript, which regrettably was one of the volumes lost in the Fire of Copenhagen, and Sigríður's son Oddur Sigurðsson made a claim for compensation from Áрни Magnússon's estate (Áрни Magnússon 1920, 448). According to Áрни Magnússon's notes, Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson inscribed it with a statement dated 25 March 1651 that the book was his property and that he wished it to remain in the possession of Ari's descendants (AM 37 b I 8vo, 2v). Other ownership statements in the front of the book, copied by Áрни, indicate that the *sýslumaður* Hákon Ormsson (1613–1656) owned the book in 1640 and that a certain Sigurður Jónsson acquired it from a man identified as Grímur Jónsson in exchange for a printed copy of *Jónsbók*.²⁰ The latter exchange occurred after 1578, the year in which *Jónsbók* was first printed.

20 Sigurjón Páll Ísaksson (1994, 151) suggests that Grímur Jónsson was the parson for Húsafell (c. 1581–1654). The name is common enough that secure identification is impossible; Grímur may have been the well-to-do farmer at Akrar in Blönduhlíð (d. after 1618) who was a member of the *Lögretta* council in 1604–1616; Grímur could also be a nickname for Arngrímur or a similar name.

According to another note from Brynjólfur Sveinsson, he received **Jónsbók* as a gift from his cousin Magnús Björnsson, Helga's father, and gave it to his son Halldór Brynjólfsson. After Halldór's death in England in 1666, Brynjólfur had the volume rebound and gave it to Sigríður in Halldór's memory in 1668 (AM 37 b I 8vo, 7r–v). **Jónsbók* thus remained at Bræðratunga until 1680.

4. AM 65 fol.

According to an inscription signed by Helga Magnúsdóttir on f. 1r, Brynjólfur Sveinsson gifted her this large and beautifully bound manuscript of kings' sagas and skaldic poetry, and she in turn gave it to her daughter Elín Hákonardóttir on 31 January 1675. The scribe is Jón Erlendsson of Villingaholt, meaning that the manuscript was quite new when Helga received it from Brynjólfur. Árni Magnússon obtained the manuscript from Jón Hákonarson of Stóra-Vatnshorn (1658–1748), who had married Elín's daughter Helga Guðbrandsdóttir shortly before her death from smallpox in 1707.

5. JS 28 fol.

A similar inscription to that in AM 65 fol. appears on f. 3r of this neatly bound saga manuscript, which Helga Magnúsdóttir gave to her daughter Jarprúður Hákonardóttir. The date is the same: Bræðratunga on 31 January 1675. The scribe is also Jón Erlendsson of Villingaholt, and Helga Magnúsdóttir states that the manuscript was a gift to her from Brynjólfur Sveinsson. The manuscript remained in Iceland until Bogi Thorarensen sent it to scholar Jón Sigurðsson in Copenhagen in 1864.

6. AM 608 4to

This fragment of fourteen leaves in an unknown hand preserves sections of two *rímur* cycles by poet Guðmundur Erlendsson (c. 1595–1670): the biblical *Rímur af Móses* and *Rímur af Sál og Davíð* (composed in c. 1632–1634). Þórdís Jónsdóttir gave Árni Magnússon the manuscript in 1707, shortly after the death of her estranged husband Magnús Sigurðsson in Copenhagen.²¹ Its presence in Árni Magnússon's collection is somewhat unusual, as he was more interested in older literature, and the *rímur* are in

21 Árni Magnússon also borrowed AM 96 8vo from Þórdís Jónsdóttir, containing Þórður Þorláksson's eulogy for Helga Magnúsdóttir (see above).

a fragmentary state. Its provenance made it unique, however: it bears Elín Hákonardóttir's signature in the top margin on f. 15r.²²

Elín was a user of the manuscript but not necessarily an owner, as the manuscript remained at Bræðratunga until c. 1707. Magnús evidently inherited it from his first wife, Elín's sister Jarþrúður. Before Jarþrúður, it likely belonged to Helga, particularly in light of her origins in North Iceland and her years spent at Hólar. Guðmundur Erlendsson was a prolific and popular poet in North Iceland, and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir (2007, 2016) has demonstrated that he had close ties to the dynasty of bishops at Hólar, who were his patrons (see also Parsons 2020).

7. *Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. Extravagantes 315*
Margrét Eggertsdóttir (2004) identified the connection between this small (7 x 6 cm) manuscript of fifty-five leaves in Wolfenbüttel and the family at Bræðratunga in 1996. The manuscript contains Icelandic translations of prayers by Johann Habermann (1516–1590) and belonged to Elín Þorlákisdóttir (1639–1726) in 1659; she may also have been its scribe. She sent it to her much younger cousin Elín Hákonardóttir in 1668, who gave it to her brother Vigfús when he set off for his studies in Denmark. Although the prayer book is easily overlooked in comparison to an impressive volume like AM 152 fol., it is an instance of a type of woman's manuscript rarely found in Árni Magnússon's collection: a small but attractive volume of Lutheran prayers and hymns compiled for personal use. While Helga was never an owner of the manuscript, it can be considered as part of the library at Bræðratunga, if only briefly.

8. *Lbs fragm 35*

Helga Magnúsdóttir's signature is found on a fragment cut from a fifteenth-century antiphonary. Nothing is recorded of its provenance except that it came from the nineteenth-century collection of Valdimar Ásmundsson. Presumably, the fragment survived in the binding of another book, which unfortunately has been lost. Among the jottings on the fragment is the prominently written note "No. 3"—indicative of this being part of a larger book collection.

22 The writing is barely legible but appears to read: "Elena Hákonar dotter med eigin hand."

9. GKS 3672 8vo

As Hákon Gíslason's personal copy of *Jónsbók*, the manuscript would have passed to Helga Magnúsdóttir and her children. Its presence in the collections of the Royal Danish Library shows that it left Iceland at an unknown date, possibly with Hákon and Helga's son Vigfús in 1668.

?Lbs 675 fol.

Elín Hákonardóttir owned this saga manuscript and had Þorsteinn Eyjólfsson (1645–1714) rebind the manuscript for her, as stated by a note on the front flyleaf. The manuscript dates from the second half of the seventeenth century and is closely related to AM 152 fol., which was also in Elín's possession. According to the catalogue entry in the online catalogue of the National and University Library of Iceland, Lbs 675 fol. passed from Brynjólfur to Helga to Elín, which is plausible, but evidence for this provenance is not offered.²³ Since Elín, as Helga and Hákon's first-born, received presents directly from various relatives, including not only the manuscript from her cousin Elín but also high-status gifts from her grandparents Magnús Björnsson and Margrét Jónsdóttir (including two expensive chests and a painted wooden box with her name on it), it is not certain that Brynjólfur or Helga owned the manuscript before her (cf. AM 268 fol., 116r). Identification of the scribe would help clarify whether the manuscript originated from North Iceland (the scribal circles of Magnús Björnsson at Munkaþverá), South Iceland (the scribal circles of Bishop Brynjólfur) or even West Iceland (the scribal circles of Elín's husband's family at Vatnsfjörður).

?AM 178 fol.

This undated copy of *Þiðreks saga af Bern* was produced for Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson by the scribe Jón Erlendsson of Villingaholt. Árni Magnússon's notes state that he acquired it on loan from the Reverend Árni Jónsson of Hvítidalur (1666–1741) in 1707. Árni Magnússon decided that he wanted to keep it and offered in exchange a copy of *Þiðreks saga* in the hand of Þorbergur Þorsteinsson (1667/1668–1722). Árni Jónsson accepted, and the transaction was completed in 1708.

23 "Lbs 675 fol.," last updated 16 November 2021, <https://handrit.is/is/manuscript/view/is/Lbs02-0675>.

Árni Magnússon's motivation for wanting this copy of *Bræðratungubók is clear: AM 178 fol. is a meticulous scholarly copy of the original. Jón Erlendsson retains the orthography of his medieval exemplar, including abbreviations, and blank spaces are left for the first initials of each chapter—a feature of the layout possibly mirroring the original. It is in extremely good condition, with no clues as to its ownership, such as names in the margins.

If Sigurjón Páll Ísaksson (1994) is correct in assuming that *Bræðratungubók came from Munkaþverá, Jón must have copied it between 1663 and 1668. After Brynjólfur Sveinsson's death in 1675, AM 178 fol. would have passed either to Helga Magnúsdóttir or to Sigríður Halldórsdóttir. Since Helga had sent *Bræðratungubók to Þormóður in Norway, there is reason to believe that AM 178 fol. would have been of personal interest to her. Furthermore, when examining the connections between Árni Jónsson and the two women, the most obvious link is that Árni Jónsson's wife, Ingibjörg Magnúsdóttir, was Helga Magnúsdóttir's illegitimate great-niece.

In 1668, one of Helga's nephews—Magnús Jónsson (1642–1694), the son of Helga's sister Jórunn Magnúsdóttir and her husband Jón Magnússon—married the well-to-do Guðrún Þorgilsdóttir (1650–1705). That same year, another woman—also named Guðrún, but whose patronymic is unknown—gave birth to a daughter fathered by Magnús. The infant, christened Ingibjörg (the name of Helga's maternal grandmother), was unlikely to have been welcomed into Magnús's household by his new bride. Ingibjörg's mother was probably a servant, and responsibility for raising the baby would have fallen largely to Magnús's father's family.

Helga possibly gave or bequeathed the manuscript to Ingibjörg in anticipation of her marriage, or to help provide for her future. At the time of Helga's death, Ingibjörg would have been about twenty, and a folio manuscript in excellent condition would have been a valuable asset as cultural capital. If AM 178 fol. formed part of Ingibjörg's dowry, this would also explain why Árni Magnússon needed to trade it for another seventeenth-century copy of *Þiðreks saga*, since Árni Jónsson was not legally permitted to give away his wife's dowry but could exchange the book for another of equivalent value.

Given the significance attached to children's given names in early mod-

ern Iceland, it is notable that Ingibjörg and Árni's eldest daughter, a girl born in 1697, was given the name Helga. There was no Helga in Árni's family, nor was there a Helga among Magnús Jónsson's paternal ancestors. Certainly, providing support for illegitimate children would be in keeping with Helga's behaviour towards her pregnant and unmarried cousin Ragnheiður Brynjólfsdóttir and Ragnheiður's infant (see above).

?*ÍB 315 a 4to*

ÍB 315 a 4to preserves two codicological units that once formed separate books of correspondence and notes on legal judgments (i.e., *bréfa- og dóma-bækur*). The first dates from 1670–1680. The latter section has been dated to c. 1640–1650, and the hand is probably Hákon Gíslason's. If these were Hákon Gíslason's personal notes made in connection with his administrative position, they presumably would have remained at least temporarily with his family at Bræðratunga after his death; further study would be valuable.

?*AM 115 fol.*

This copy of *Sturlunga saga* is closely related to AM 114 fol. (see above) and is in the hand of Jón Erlendsson of Villingaholt. Brynjólfur Sveinsson initially owned the manuscript, but it became the property of Hákon Gíslason's niece, Þorbjörg Vigfúsdóttir (d. 1698), according to a marginal ownership inscription on f. 339v. She had married the steward of Skálholt, Gísli Sigurðsson (1638–1666), in 1664, but he died not long after their marriage, and their only child, Vigfús, also died young. Her nephew Þórður Jónsson (1672–1720) gave the manuscript to Þormóður Torfason, who gifted it to Árni Magnússon in 1712. It is unclear whether Brynjólfur or Helga gave the manuscript to Þorbjörg.

?*Hyndlu rímur*

In a note accompanying AM 146 b I 8vo, Árni Magnússon notes that he had received a worthless copy of Steinunn Finnsdóttir's *Hyndlu rímur* from Þórdís Jónsdóttir. Steinunn Finnsdóttir (about 1640 – after 1710) was a *rímur* poetess active in South Iceland in the second half of the seventeenth century. She had been a servant at Skálholt in 1657–1662, prior to her marriage to Þorbjörn Eiríksson (their only known child, Guðrún

Þorbjarnardóttir, was born in 1671), and Helga Magnúsdóttir may have known her personally. AM 146 b I 8vo came from the Rev. Gísli Álfsson (1653–1725) and is the only known surviving copy of *Hyndlu rímur*.²⁴ Given that Árni Magnússon felt that Þórdís's manuscript preserved a poor copy of the text, it is reasonable to assume that he discarded it after receiving what he felt was a superior manuscript. It is impossible to determine whether Þórdís's copy had previously belonged to the family at Bræðratunga (like AM 608 4to) or was Þórdís's own.

The mechanics of an early modern Icelandic library

With a few exceptions, such as the libraries of the cathedrals at Hólar and Skálholt and the fabled library of Brynjólfur Sveinsson, described nostalgically by Jón Halldórsson (1665–1736) in his *Biskupa sögur*, private libraries in seventeenth-century Iceland appear to have been comparatively small.²⁵ Pearson's (2012, 2021) research on private book ownership in seventeenth-century England suggests that the average private library for which data on size survives held over a thousand books at the century's beginning and over three thousand by its end. The proliferation of printed titles readily available to reading audiences in larger book markets was not matched in Iceland, where the publication of new vernacular titles was limited to a single press at a given time and output fluctuated (cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1916, 1922). Theology in a broad sense (Bibles, hymnals, prayer books, house postils, catechisms and devotional books as well as titles intended for a narrower readership of trained theologians) was and remained the most represented subject area.²⁶ Pearson's (2010) observation that early modern libraries in England were typically multilingual and contained a high proportion of classical and patristic writings but comparatively few

24 On Steinunn Finnsdóttir and her poetry, see Hughes 2014.

25 According to Jón Halldórsson (1903–1915, vol. 1, 289), Bishop Brynjólfur kept "sitt góða bibliothek" ('his good library') in the Skálholt cathedral.

26 This was still true of private Icelandic libraries in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, cf. Sólrún Jensdóttir 1974–1977. Probate records, which have been researched extensively by Már Jónsson, are an increasingly important source on book ownership in the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as are parish ministers' records on household ownership of core religious texts. However, it is probable that a person's private manuscripts were frequently omitted from probate records (a person's correspondence and personal papers were not included in such records).

literary titles would likely also have been true of learned Icelanders' libraries. However, a library such as Helga's was not built through commercial transactions with booksellers.

In contrast to the stationary nature of manuscript use within archives, where manuscripts' movements are tightly regulated and monitored, intact manuscripts in early modern Iceland appear as objects on the move. Practices of reading aloud to households from literary manuscripts meant that such manuscripts were widely in demand among scholars and non-scholars alike, and regular exchange of manuscripts between households enabled fewer manuscripts to cover greater ground and reach a larger readership. In such an environment, not everyone needed a private copy of every saga or romance title. Manuscripts belonged to a culture of active circulation: borrowing and lending across physical distances.²⁷ Within this context, the outright gift of a manuscript was a deeply meaningful act.

The marginalia on f. 1r of AM 61 fol. includes an inscription from an anonymous borrower, thanking both the person who had lent the book and the person who read it aloud and wishing pleasure to the listener ("Haf[e] sa heidur er liede, sa soma sem las, sa glede er hliðde, vale"). There is also a warning at the top of the same leaf to return the book in good condition ("Heilu læne skal huðr aptur skila"). This is remarkably similar to the conditions of use for books in a modern lending library and provides evidence for the informal networks within which books circulated, which often left few material traces. While manuscripts had owners, and ownership could be transferred between individuals, they should not be understood as items constantly present at a given household. *Möðruvallabók* circulated extensively within scholarly circles in Iceland while in Magnús's library (Sigurjón Páll Ísaksson 1994, 147–149). The same was true of **Bræðratungubók* and probably other items in Helga's library at Bræðratunga during her lifetime.

27 On early modern Icelandic manuscript culture, see Davíð Ólafsson 2010. As an example of how manuscripts could be borrowed across vast physical distances, the Rev. Eyjólfur Jónsson of Vellir (1670–1745) mentions in a note in AM 569 c 4to (2r) that his grandmother Björg Ólafsdóttir (c. 1617–1690) had heard the sagas contained in two vellum manuscripts that her parents at Breiðabólstaður in Vesturhóp borrowed for three years from Ögur in the Westfjords. The manuscripts had been lent in turn to Ögur by Gísli Hákonarson of Bræðratunga, Helga's father-in-law. Björg moved to Hólar as an adult in the early 1640s, where she married Rev. Sveinn Jónsson (1603–1687). She and Helga may thus have known each other.

Women and men could equally participate in networks of community exchange in early modern Iceland, as seen in the case of Helga Magnúsdóttir, Jórunn Hinriksdóttir and others. Women likewise participated enthusiastically in the project of building scholarly collections—lending books to be copied, selling or donating their personal libraries to collectors and acting as facilitators within their families and communities. These activities have greatly benefited the academic community, but the survival of manuscript heritage in archives came at a cost. Once manuscripts were securely stowed in a repository, women were no longer encouraged to act as co-participants in literary scholarship. This was a gradual process, but with the outcome that early modern women's roles in the preservation of literature were largely overshadowed by the efforts of university-educated men with institutional support for their work. The reciprocity that characterised manuscript culture within the community was lost.

Conclusion

While a philologist such as Brynjólfur Sveinsson or Árni Magnússon sought to build as complete a literary collection as possible, libraries such as Helga's were carefully curated from objects of deep personal significance. Helga had grown up surrounded by books, and as a widow who needed to manage single-handedly the education of four young children, acquiring books for her household at Bræðratunga was an important social strategy. Her library told the story of who her family was and where they had come from: from the printed Bible gifted by her husband's brother-in-law during their years at Hólar to the vellum leaves that spoke of a childhood spent at a former monastery.

Our understanding of seventeenth-century Icelandic libraries and manuscript ownership is heavily filtered through the lens of the interests of collectors such as Árni Magnússon. Strikingly under-represented among the manuscripts associated with Helga Magnúsdóttir are devotional works or books of hymns and religious poetry, with the exception of the highly fragmentary AM 608 4to and the Wolfenbüttel manuscript. As head of her household from 1652 to her death in 1677, Helga was responsible for both the financial and the spiritual well-being of Bræðratunga. Her biography

confirms that she knew and loved Hallgrímur Pétursson's *Passíusálmar*, first published at Hólar in 1666 (Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2017, Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2007).²⁸ Like the *Passíusálmar*, a good proportion of the books acquired by Helga after 1653 may have been religious titles, which would have had an important function at Bræðratunga but were not enticing acquisitions for Árne Magnússon. In particular, didactic and conduct literature for women is a popular genre not represented in the surviving manuscripts but surely present in the household of a pious seventeenth-century matriarch and her three daughters (cf. Van Deusen 2017, 2021, 2022; Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2017a, 2017b).

Helga Magnúsdóttir's management of her manuscripts displays both knowledge of their worth as antiquities and a desire to share them among family members and the scholars of her day. It is suggested here that she was motivated to choose *Bræðratungubók, AM 152 fol. and possibly other vellum manuscripts as part of her inheritance from her father in North Iceland because of her close connection with Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson of Skálholt and his scribal network. In this sense, Helga can be considered an active participant in scribal and scholarly circles, facilitating the movement of manuscripts between the north and south of the island, and it was no coincidence that Bishop Brynjólfur bequeathed half of his precious Icelandic manuscript collection to her. This was not only a final token of thanks and friendship but also a signal that he trusted her to ensure that his scholarly manuscripts would be used by future generations, something that he valued above preservation for preservation's sake alone.²⁹

28 She may even have met the poet in person at Skálholt, as Bishop Brynjólfur was his long-term patron (Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2014, 195, 199–200).

29 Cf. his comment to the Danish royal librarian Villum Lange in a letter of 10 July 1656 that “to shut manuscripts up in libraries abroad, where no one will ever be able to understand them, and thus keep useful sources away from capable readers forever [...] is indeed not to preserve old lore but to destroy it” (Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir 2009, 7).

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AM 114 fol.	AM 608 4to
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AM 152 fol.	AM 748 I b 4to
AM 162 c fol.	AM 37 b I 8vo
AM 268 fol.	AM 59 8vo
AM 277 fol.	AM 82 8vo
AM 243 4to	AM 96 8vo
AM 244 4to	AM 146 b I 8vo
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AM 262 4to	

Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, Institut for Nordiske Studier og Sprogvidenskab, Københavns Universitet, København

AM 19 fol.	AM 178 fol.
AM 20 b I fol.	AM 232 fol.
AM 61 fol.	AM 435 a 4to
AM 64 fol.	AM 645 4to
AM 65 fol.	

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Appendix: Manuscripts from Oddur Sigurðsson

In addition to the manuscripts listed in the article, Árni Magnússon received a significant number of manuscripts and documents from Oddur Sigurðsson, not all of which came from Helga Magnúsdóttir. Many (e.g., AM 59 8vo, AM 243–245 4to, AM 416 a I–III 4to and possibly AM 262 4to) appear to have been inherited from his father and his paternal grandfather, Bishop Oddur Einarsson of Skálholt. However, some of Oddur's manuscripts have an obvious connection with Bishop Brynjólfur and his scribal network, indicating a connection with Helga Magnúsdóttir. Árni Magnússon acquired some of these manuscripts from Oddur personally, but he also bought a number of items at an auction of Oddur's books in Copenhagen. In 1730, following Árni Magnússon's death, Oddur made a list of items for which he demanded compensation (Árni Magnússon 1920, 444–51), including **Jónsbók*. Of these, seven folio volumes are specifically stated to have belonged to his mother Sigríður and likely came from Bræðratunga ((a) a copy of *Sturlunga saga*, (b) a legal codex, (c) a copy of *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Laxdæla saga* and (d) a copy of *Hungurvaka* and a number of other items, all in the hand of Jón Erlendsson of Villingaholt; (e) a copy of *Stjórn* in an unknown hand; (f) a book containing annals in an unspecified hand; and (g) a copy of "Sæmundar Edda" in Brynjólfur Sveinsson's hand), as did letters from Jón Vestmann to Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson and Helga's husband Hákon Gíslason from 1647 and three parchment documents relating to Bræðratunga. Unfortunately, many of these items were plainly lost in the fire. The following items from Oddur in Árni Magnússon's collection are also worth mentioning:

AM 1g fol. ff. 1r–3v

The manuscript contains three genealogies. The first (ff. 1r–3v) is in the hand of Jón Erlendsson of Villingaholt and traces the ancestry of Brynjólfur Sveinsson to Jón Arason and from Jón to Adam. The second and third are in an unknown hand. The second traces the ancestry of Helga Magnúsdóttir's brother-in-law Vigfús Gíslason (1608–1647) to Odin (f. 4r–v), while the third traces the ancestry of Vigfús's son Jón.³⁰ The first

30 Vigfús had two sons named Jón: Jón the Elder (1639–1681), who held the administrative position of *sýslumaður*, and Jón the Younger (1643–1690), a *sýslumaður* who infamously became bishop of Hólar in 1684.

genealogy was almost certainly commissioned and owned by Brynjólfur himself, and that it was combined with genealogies of Oddur's great-uncle and cousin supports the hypothesis that these leaves passed to Helga and from her to either Sigríður or Elín's son Vigfús.

AM 162 c fol. ff. 8–11

Árni Magnússon reconstructed this fifteenth-century vellum manuscript from fragments that, judging by the creases and wear marks, had been repurposed as binding material. Stefán Karlsson (1970, 138) identified the scribe as Ólafur Loftsson of Hvassafell (c. 1395–1458). According to Árni Magnússon, four leaves of *Sálu saga og Nikanórs* (ff. 8–11) had been used to bind a law codex copied by the scribe Jón Erlendsson of Villingaholt. Árni Magnússon believed the former owner or commissioner to have been Brynjólfur Sveinsson. Árni received the leaves in 1725 from Oddur Sigurðsson. This suggests that the law codex could have been among the manuscripts inherited by Helga Magnúsdóttir, particularly as Oddur Sigurðsson mentions a law manuscript owned by his mother Sigríður in Jón Erlendsson's hand. There is no indication of how, when or where Árni acquired the other seven leaves.

AM 429 b 1 4to

Árni obtained two leaves from Oddur Sigurðsson preserving a compilation of entries from four different historical annals for the years 1193–1210 in Jón Erlendsson of Villingaholt's hand. Given the scholarly nature of the work and the identity of the scribe, Brynjólfur Sveinsson is a plausible candidate for the commissioner of this work, and the manuscript may have passed from Brynjólfur to Helga. Given that only two leaves remain of this manuscript, however, it is impossible to determine its provenance with any certainty.

SUMMARY

The Library at Bræðratunga: Manuscript Ownership and Private Library-Building in Early Modern Iceland

Keywords: Helga Magnúsdóttir of Bræðratunga, Icelandic manuscript culture, circulation of manuscripts before 1700, private book ownership, early modern women's libraries

Library institutions did not exist in early modern Iceland, meaning that private ownership was central to the preservation of pre-modern manuscripts and literature. However, personal collections are poorly documented in comparison to the activities of manuscript collectors such as Árni Magnússon. This article examines the case study of Helga Magnúsdóttir (1623–1677) and book ownership at her home of Bræðratunga in South Iceland, concluding that Helga Magnúsdóttir engaged in library-building as a social strategy following the death of her husband, Hákon Gíslason (1614–1652). The inventory of the Bræðratunga estate from 1653 includes only four books, all printed. However, nine manuscripts are conclusively identified as having been at Bræðratunga at least briefly during the period from c. 1653 to 1677, and evidence for the presence of another five items is discussed.

Examination of surviving volumes suggests that Helga's goal was to participate in an active culture of sharing manuscript material across distances, rather than to accumulate a large stationary collection of printed books and codices for Bræðratunga. She thereby played an important but easily overlooked role in the survival of Old Norse-Icelandic literature in the early modern period. Of the manuscripts at Bræðratunga, at least two likely came from Helga's childhood home of Munkaþverá in North Iceland, the former site of a Benedictine monastery. Her cousin Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson of Skálholt (1605–1675) also gifted books to Helga and her family, and on his death she inherited half of his collection of Icelandic books and manuscripts, making her the owner of one of the most significant collections of Icelandic manuscripts in the country. The survival of books from Helga's library was negatively impacted by the Fire of Copenhagen in 1728, the extinction of her family line in the eighteenth century as a long-term consequence of the 1707–1709 smallpox epidemic and collector Árni Magnússon's antagonistic relationship with two of her children's heirs. Árni's relationship with Oddur Sigurðsson (1681–1741), Helga's grandson and last living descendent, did eventually improve; an appendix includes a list of manuscripts that Oddur loaned to Árni and may have come from the library at Bræðratunga.

ÁGRIP

Bókasafnið í Bræðratungu: handritaeygn og einkabókasöfn á Íslandi eftir siðaskipti

Lykilorð: Helga Magnúsdóttir í Bræðratungu, íslensk handritamenning, dreifing handrita fyrir 1700, bókaeygn einstaklinga, bókasöfn kvenna á árnýöld

Á Íslandi voru ekki sett á fót bókasöfn eða aðrar stofnanir til þess að halda utan um dýrmæt handrit og bækur á 17. öld heldur skipti handritaeygn einstaklinga sköpum fyrir varðveislu bókmennta. Þó er mun minna vitað um bókakost einstaklinga og einkabókasöfn á þessum tíma en um vinnu handritasafnara á borð við Árna Magnússon. Við andlát Brynjólfs biskups Sveinssonar (1605–1675) varð bókasafnið í Bræðratungu í Biskupstungum eitt mikilvægasta handritasafn hérlendis til skamms tíma en Brynjólfur arfleiddi frænku sína Helgu Magnúsdóttur í Bræðratungu (1623–1677) að öllum íslenskum bókum og handritum sínum til helmingaskipta við Sigríði Halldórsdóttur í Gaulverjabæ (1622–1704). Bókasafnið í Bræðratungu og hlutverk Helgu Magnúsdóttur við að byggja það upp er meginefni þessarar greinar. Færð eru rök fyrir því að Helga hafi átt frumkvæði að því að styrkja bókakost Bræðratungu strax eftir fráfall eiginmanns síns Hákonar Gíslasonar (1614–1652). Farið er yfir þau handrit sem tengja má við Helgu en að minnsta kosti níu handrit og handritabrot voru í Bræðratungu á tímabilinu um 1653–1677. Handritaeygn Helgu og barna hennar mun hafa verið liður í að styrkja samfélagslega stöðu fjölskyldunnar í Bræðratungu enda fól hún í sér virka þátttöku í handritamenningu samtímans. Því miður er varðveisla Bræðratunguhandritanna ekki góð. Tvö skinnhandrit frá Bræðratungu glötuðust illu heilli í brunanum í Kaupmannahöfn árið 1728 (*Bræðratungubók og *Jónsbók) en aðrir þættir koma einnig til. Aðeins tvö barnabörn Helgu lifðu stórubóluna af og bæði voru þau barnlaus þannig að safnið tvístraðist fljótt. Samband Árna Magnússonar, handritasafnara og prófessors, við erfingja barna Helgu var fjandsamlegt á köflum en hann deildi við Odd Sigurðsson lögmann (1681–1741) sem var síðasti eftirlifandi afkomandi Helgu og einnig við Magnús Sigurðsson í Bræðratungu (1651–1707) sem var ekill Jarþrúðar, yngstu dóttur Helgu, og sakaði Árna um ástarsamband við Þórdísi síðari konu sína eins og frægt er orðið. Þíða kom þó í samskipti Odds við Árna sem olli því að Árni fékk nokkur handrit að láni frá honum. Í viðauka er farið stuttlega yfir nokkur handrit Odds sem komu hugsanlega úr Bræðratungu.

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HAUKUR ÞORGEIRSSON

HÁA-ÞÓRA OG ÞORGERÐUR HÖLGABRÚÐUR

Inngangur

Í *Griplu* 22 (2011) gaf ég út Þóru-ljóð, kvæði undir fornyrðislagi sem skrifað var upp eftir munnlegri geymd á 17. öld. Ég benti þar á ýmis fornleg ein-kenni í kvæðinu og rökstuddi að það væri ort á miðöldum. Enn fremur tók ég upp tilgátu frá Sigurði Guðmundssyni málara um að tengsl séu milli Þóru-ljóða og hins ærslafulla Háu-Þóruleiks sem heimildir eru um frá 17. öld og síðar. Sitthvað reynist sameiginlegt með Háu-Þóru í leiknum og Þóru í Þóru-ljóðum og meðal annars að báðar Þórunar eru einhvers konar tröll sem skjóta fólki skelk í bringu.

Í þessu framlagi er gerð frekari tilraun til að tengja Háu-Þóru og Þóru-ljóð við norrænar miðaldabókmenntir með því að bæta við samanburði við Þorgerði Hölgabruði sem getið er um í ýmsum fornum heimildum og er ýmist goð eða tröll. Fyrst reifa ég þær heimildir sem til eru um Háu-Þóru og fer síðan nokkrum orðum um Þóru-ljóð. Þar næst er rakið það sem segir í miðaldaheimildum um Þorgerði Hölgabruði og jafnóðum bent á það sem hún á sameiginlegt með Þórunum tveim. Þar reynist svo margt líkt að vart getur verið um tilviljun að ræða heldur fremur sameiginlegan uppruna.

Háa-Þóra og Háu-Þóruleikur

Elsta heimild um Háu-Þóruleik er í íslenskri þýðingu á Crymogæu Arngríms lærða. Bók Arngríms var prentuð 1609 en þýðingin er varðveitt í NKS 1281 fol. og þar rituð af Jóni Erlendssyni (d. 1672). Ekki er kunnugt um höfund þessa texta en þótt hann sé að stofni til þýðing inniheldur hann einnig nokkrar sjálfstæðar viðbætur og þar á meðal upptalningu á íslenskum leikjum. Háu-Þóruleikur er hér talinn til dansleika sem kveðskapur er hafður við. Taldir eru upp átta slíkir leikir og eru þeir allir kunnir úr yngri heimildum nema frantzensleikur.

Og ef so er, að nokkur vill fleiri dansleika upptelja, so sem að er hringbrot, frantzensleikur, Þórildarleikur, hindarleikur, Háu-Þóru leikur, hestreiðarleikur, hjartarleikur, fingálsleikur og aðrir þess háttar sem kveðindisskapur til brúkaðist, þá mega þeir þó víst heimfærast og reiknast annað hvort með dansi eður vikivaka. En eg tala alleinasta um þá leiki sem duglegir menn hafa haft skemmtun af að iðka.¹

Næsta heimild sem getur um Háu-Þóru er vísa í Skautaljóðum eftir Guðmund Bergþórsson (1657–1705). Guðmundur orti í gamansömum stíl um nýja tísku í höfuðbúnaði kvenna sem hann líkir meðal annars við horn á einhrynningi og rófu á ketti. Nálægt lokum kvæðisins eru þessar þrjár vísur, hér teknar eftir Thott 489 8vo IV, handriti frá 18. öld:

Í Fróðárundrum finna má
fyrirmyndan hér upp á
þegar sig rétti rófan grá
rastarbúa hlaðanum frá.

Oft hef eg séð hann Ása-Þór
uppmálaðan þá tuskast fór
og hefur hans úr heila kór
hreykt sér strýtan mjó og stór.²

Af Háu-Þóru hygg eg víst
hafa þær lært þó eigi síst,
oft er það þá um hún býst
áfram slútir skautið þrýst.³

- 1 Jón Samsonarson (1964, bls. xxxi).
- 2 Ekki er mér fyllilega ljóst hvað Guðmundur á við með þessari vísu. Í andsvari sínu við Skautaljóðum bregst Jón Grímsson á Hjaltabakka við vísunni og talar þar um „málverk“ en dregur jafnframt í efa að Guðmundur hafi nokkurn tíma séð Ása-Þór. Guðmundur svaraði Jóni með þessari vísu: „Að höfuðbúning á hausi Þórs / heilt vil eg þér leggja / með spottglósunum spélur Þórs / spyr þú hann Yrjar-Skeggja.“ Skeggi af Yrjum var blótmaður sem getið er um í *Ólafs sögu Tryggvasonar*. Enn segir Guðmundur: „Viltu skoða vöxtinn hans / og vipurs húfu ljóta / í Valhallar kanntu krans / kosta þeirra að njóta.“ (Thott 489 8vo IV, 35v). Ég þekki aðeins eina teikningu af Þór frá 17. öld (AM 738 4to, 35r) en þar hefur hann engan höfuðbúnað. Á þessum tíma virðist hafa verið nokkur áhugi á goðafræðilegu myndefni. Hjalti í Vatnsfirði gaf Jóni biskupi Vídalín málverk af Valhöll og ásum árið 1714 en ekki er það varðveitt (Jón Helgason 1926, bls. 157).
- 3 Thott 489 8vo IV, 26r. Ég hef samræmt stafsetningu. Skautaljóð eru ekki til í vísindalegri útgáfu en þau eru prentuð í *Fróðlegu ljóðasafni* 1856. Þar vantar vísuna um Háu-Þóru og

Hér kemur fram eitt einkenni Háu-Þóru – hún hefur áberandi höfuðbúnað. Einnig er athyglisvert að sjá að Háa-Þóra sé hér nefnd beint á eftir Ása-Þór og gæti það bent til að fyrir skáldinu hafi hún átt eitthvað skylt við heiðin goð.

Greinarbesta heimildin um Háu-Þóruleik er ritgerðin „Niðurraðan og undirvísan hvurninn gleði og dansleikir voru tíðkaðir og um hönd hafðir í fyrri tíð“. Ekki er kunnugt um höfund þessarar ritgerðar eða aldur hennar en Jón Samsonarson getur þess til að hún sé frá síðari hluta 18. aldar.⁴ Víst er að hér er fjallað um vikivakaleiki af mikilli þekkingu og hefur öll frá-sögnin á sér það yfirbragð að höfundur hafi sjálfur tekið þátt í þeim. Um Háu-Þóruleik segir þetta í Niðurraðan:

Einn gleðileik hef eg eftirskilið sem ekki er samkynja við hina leikina. Hann er brúkaður í staðinn þingáls, þá það er ei fyrir hendi, og heitir Háa-Þóra. Hann er með soddan móti tilbúinn, að það er tekinn staur tveggja álna langur, so sem rekutindur að gildleika. Hönum er skautað, og yfir um hann er vafið með trafi, og lafir langt skott niður, því staur er látinn yfir hinn staurinn og bundinn fast við. Þar er og hengt á stórt lyklakerfi. Síðan er bundið um kragann á kvenhempu, og fer þar maður undir. Svunta er höfð að framan og málindakoffur yfirdregið, og þegar goðið er so tilfansað, fer maður undir hempuna, heldur um staurinn og pikkar í hallinn eða gólfið. Þá hann kemur í dyrnar, leggur hann staurinn hæversklega flatan og lædist milli fóta flestra þeirra er kring standa svo hægt sem hann getur, en úr þessu raknar hann við og springur um allt húsið svo langt sem staurinn nær upp í rafta, hristir og hringlar, so bæði brjálást og brotnar lyklar og listar. Skjaldmeyjar leika henni til beggja hliða. Þær láta öllum látum illum. Háa-Þóra þeytir sér upp á palla, gjörir þar óskunda so liggur við meiðsli. Ekki gefur hún heldur frían dansmanninn. Hann hefur nóg að verja andlitið fyrir hennar drætti og slætti, en þegar hún sefast, snáfar hún út og stingur öllum reiðanum aftur á milli fóta sér umsnúnunum og sundurflakandi.

fleiri vísur en ekki kemur fram hvaða heimildum útgefandinn fór eftir. Vísan er greinilega upphafleg í kvæðinu frekar en síðari viðbót enda er hún í öllum handritum sem ég hef kannað. Auk Thott 489 8vo IV eru þau JS 42 4to (bl. 130r), JS 582 4to (bl. 79v), JS 209 8vo (bl. 2r), Lbs 1070 8vo (bls. 173) og Rask 39 (bls. 68), öll frá 18. öld.

4 Jón Samsonarson 1964, bls. lii.

Hafa þá brotnað pör og lykjar úr lagi gengið. Þetta goð er sjaldan brúkað í gleði. Flestir kveða níð og narrarí við dansinn, so sem:

Eg sá eina falda fokku,
so fallega hún spann.
Óþokkinn lyfti sér upp aftan.

Og soddan fleira.⁵

Mjög mikilsvert er að hér er tvisvar notað orðið *goð* um Háu-Þóru. Þetta hefur verið skilið þannig að orðið geti merkt „brúða“ en mér eru ekki kunnug nein dæmi um slíka orðnotkun.⁶ Ég þekki engin dæmi frá fyrri öldum um að orðið *goð* merki nokkuð annað en heiðið goðmagn eða líkneski sem gert er af slíku goðmagni. Í Niðurraðan er þetta orð hvergi notað annars staðar en um Háu-Þóru þótt þar sé lýst fleiri leikmunum og kynjapersónum, til dæmis er orðið ekki notað um þingálpið eða hestinn eða kerlinguna og dóttur hennar. Hér er því eðlilegt að taka heimildina alvarlega og gera ráð fyrir að fyrir þeim sem samdi Niðurraðan á 18. öld hafi Háa-Þóra verið heiðið goð.⁷ Það kemur líka vel heim við Skautaljóð þar sem Háa-Þóra er nefnd í sömu andrá og Þór.

Önnur heimild frá 18. öld er leikjaritgerð Jóns frá Grunnavík en hann virðist heldur ófróður um Háu-Þóruleik og er óviss hvort það sé sami leikur og kerlingarleikur. Hann nefnir þó að „skrípildi“ komi við sögu.⁸

- 5 Jón Samsonarson 1964, bls. lxiii–lxiv. Gunnell (2007, bls. 289) ber þessa lýsingu saman við leiki í öðrum löndum og nefnir meðal annars að algengt sé að karlmenn leiki kvenhlutverk.
- 6 Gunnell (1995, bls. 151) þýðir orðið með „idol / doll“ og hér hygg ég að fyrri kosturinn sé betri. Sveinn Einarsson (1991, bls. 104) vekur réttilega athygli á orðinu „goð“. Hann er einnig fyrri til en ég að hafa Þorgerði Hólgafrúði til samanburðar þegar hann fjallar um fald Þóru (1991, bls. 106).
- 7 Annað dæmi um að heiðin goð komi við sögu í skemmtunum eru vítavísurnar sem hafðar voru í brúðkaupsveislum á 17. og 18. öld. Þar er látið svo heita að sendiboði Óðins komi í veisluna til að flytja gestum ávitur í bundnu máli (Ólafur Davíðsson 1894, bls. 51–75).
- 8 Jón Ólafsson ritar: „19. Hávu Þóru leikur. Ludus proceræ illius Thoræ. Huic addita sunt *skrípildi* (monstra) ut in kerlingarleik, qvi fortè idem est ludus. [Háu-Þóru leikur. Í honum er bætt við skripildum (skrimslum) eins og í kerlingarleik, sem er líklega sami leikur]. ... 36. Kerlingarleikur, (Ludus vetulæ, potius qvàm anilis) cui addita est monstrosa persona (*skrimslu*, vel *skrípildi*) idem esse videtur ac *Hávu Þóru leikur*, qvæ proceræ Thora admodum est grandiloqva, statura proceræ etc. <Í þeim leik> er einhverjum gert að <leika> ófreskju (*skrimslu* eða *skrípildi*). Þetta virðist vera sami leikur og Háu-Þóru leikur, en í honum er Háa-Þóra hávaxin og háreist o.s.frv.]“ Sólveig Hrönn Hilmarsdóttir þýddi latínutexta, sjá Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík 2023, bls. 8 og 14. Sjá einnig Jón Samsonarson 1964, bls. clxxxvi.

Einnig er leiksins getið í orðasafni frá 18. öld: „Larva persona. Torkenning, með grímu og annarlegum búnaði; so sem Háa-Þóra, kerlingarleikur“.⁹ Eftir því sem ég kemst næst er þetta eina heimildin sem bendlar grímur við leikinn. Raunar er þó varðveitt íslensk gríma frá 17. eða 18. öld eða enn eldri og eru í henni naglar sem vel mætti hugsa sér að nota „til að festa við hana eitthvað annað, svo sem húfu eða sjal“.¹⁰ Sveinn Einarsson taldi mestar líkur til að gríman hafi verið notuð í Háu-Þóruleik því að hún er óhentug til að hafa framan í sér en mundi henta betur til að festa á skaft.¹¹

Heimildir sem ritaðar eru um miðja 19. öld eru ekki eins greinargóðar enda er þá langt um liðið síðan vikivakaleikir lögðust af. Eigi að síður er rétt að tjalda því sem til er og byggt var á heimildarmönnum sem fæddust á 18. öld. Ein slík heimild er ritgerð eftir Magnús Andrésón í Langholti, rituð 1864, og segist hann byggja á því „sem eg í ungdæmi mínu heyrði ömmu mína Marínu Guðmundsdóttur segja frá. Hún var fædd 1720.“¹² Magnús segir:

Háva-Þóra var faðms langt vefskaft. Upp á það var settur stór og mikill faldur sem slútti fram, eins og bent er til í Skautaljóðum. Þessu var verið að veifa upp um rjáfur baðstofunnar áhorfendum til augnagamans.¹³

Til er ritgerð af svipuðu tagi eftir Brynjólf frá Minna-Núpi, að stofni til frá 1862, en heimildarmaður hans var Gunnhildur Jónsdóttir, fædd 1787. Brynjólfur segir:

Af þeim fáu munnmælum sem til eru um jólagleðir er það að ráða, að þær hafi verið haldnar á jólanóttina og í kirkju (með prestsleyfi væntanlega). Safnaðist þar saman fjöldi fólks og lék þar með ýmsu móti mestan hlut nætur eða hana alla. Ætlandi er, að stundum hafi allt farið þar siðsamlega fram, en þó mun hitt oftast hafa verið tilfellið, að menn hafa brúkað alls konar ólæti og gárungaskap eftir því sem þá datt hverjum í hug, og er sú sögn til merkis um það, að í

9 Jón Samsonarson 1964, bls. clxxxvi.

10 Mjöll Snæsdóttir 1990, bls. 169.

11 Sveinn Einarsson 1991, bls. 106. Sjá einnig Gunnell 1995, bls. 147.

12 Jón Samsonarson 1964, bls. lxxii.

13 Jón Samsonarson 1964, bls. lxxiii.

jólagleði hafi menn jafnan fært hempu upp á staf eða staur og settu skaut þar upp á. Þetta kölluðu þeir Hávu-Þóru, en ekki er getið, hvað þeir gjörðu við hana.¹⁴

Í viðauka við ritgerð Brynjólfs segir enn fremur:

Um vikivaka segja aðrir, að Háva-Þóra hafi verið stærsti karlmaðurinn færður í hempu og með hávan skautafald og lék svo fyrir hinum. Ekki þótti óskemmtilegt að vera Háva-Þóra.¹⁵

Þessar heimildir frá 19. öld eru fáskrúðugri en lýsingin í Niðurraðan en ber þó vel saman við hana svo langt sem þær ná.

Þóra í Þóruljóðum

Elsta handrit sem varðveitir Þóruljóð er kvæðabók Gissurar Sveinssonar sem rituð var 1665. Kvæðið er undir fornyrðislagi og er meðal þeirra sem kölluð hafa verið sagnakvæði og safnað var úr munnlegri geymd á 17. og 18. öld. Þessi kvæði bera mörg miðaldaeinkenni í máli, stíl og efnistöðum.¹⁶ Jón Helgason leit svo á að þau væru framhald eddukvæðahefðarinnar.¹⁷

Efni Þóruljóða er að „digur og há drós“ kemur í jólaveislu á höfðingjasetri í Danmörku og vill hitta Þorkel, sem virðist nýlega hafa tekið við af föður sínum sem húsráðandi. Fólkið telur að konan sé flagð og gýgur en Þorkell tekur henni vel. Þóra biður Þorkel að „lögleiða“ sig en það orðalag er notað í *Grágás* um að veita sekum manni eða leysingja lagaleg réttindi.¹⁸ Þorkell veitir Þóru vist til sumars, leiðir hana í öndvegi og veitir henni beina. Hann færir henni handlaug, höfuðbúnað og skikkju sína. Þóra launar greiðann um vorið og gefur Þorkeli segl. Hún segir að Þorkel muni aldrei skorta hamingju meðan seglið endist.¹⁹

14 Jón Samsonarson 1964, bls. xciv.

15 Jón Samsonarson 1964, bls. xcvi.

16 Haukur Þorgeirsson 2010 og 2011.

17 „Eddadigtningens tradition fortsættes i senmiddelalderen ved nogle anonyme digte i fornyrðislag med tilknytning til eventyr og folkesagn. Intet af dem kendes i ældre optegnelser end fra det 17. årh., men for enkeltes vedkommende er der åbenbart gået mundtlig tradition forud; genren er uden tvivl ældre end reformationen.“ Jón Helgason 1952, bls. 167.

18 *Grágás* 1992, bls. 102, 133–134. Sbr. einnig orðalagið „leiða e-n í lög“ sem víðar kemur fyrir.

19 Haukur Þorgeirsson 2011.

Í fyrri grein minni tók ég saman líkindin milli Háu-Þóru og Þóru í Þóruþjóðum í sex atriði:

1. Konan heitir Þóra.
2. Það er einkenni konunnar að vera hávaxin.
3. Konan er einhvers konar óvættur sem skýtur fólki skelk í bringu.
4. Konan kemur í jólaveislu.
5. Fólk flýr undan konunni.
6. Konan er búin faldi.

Þetta virtist mér nægilegt til að halda því fram að Þórunnar tvær hafi sama uppruna. Sú tilgáta var reyndar fyrst sett fram 1865 í bréfi sem Sigurður málari skrifaði Jóni Sigurðssyni.²⁰

Þóruþjóð eru fremur stutt kvæði eða 26 erindi. Ólafur Davíðsson og Finnur Jónsson töldu báðir að eitthvað vantaði í það enda þótti þeim frásögnin ekki nægilega full.²¹ Mér virðist kvæðið hins vegar heillegt en vissulega má segja að það vekir spurningar sem ekki er svarað. Skýringin á því gæti verið að Þóra hafi verið vel þekkt persóna á þeim tíma sem kvæðið var samið og að áheyrndur hafi haft betri forsendur en við til að setja textann í samhengi. Á sama hátt má segja um sum eddukvæðin að þau myndu virðast heldur glöppótt ef þau væru varðveitt ein og sér en þau hafa verið skiljanleg sinni samtíð vegna þess að þau fjölluðu um þekktar persónur og sögur.

Þorgerður Hölgabrúður – há, með fald og einnig kölluð Thora

Getið er um Þorgerði Hölgabrúði í ýmsum fornum heimildum. Fyrri liðurinn í nafninu er ýmist Hölga- eða Hörða- eða hörga- eða hölda- en síðari liðurinn er ýmist -brúður eða -tröll. Elsta skráða heimildin mun vera setning í Fyrstu málfræðiritgerðinni:

Hó dó, þá er Hølgatrøll dó, en heyrði til høddo, þá er Þórr bar hverinn.²²

20 Matthías Þórðarson 1931, bls. 98.

21 Ólafur Davíðsson 1898–1903, bls. 94; Finnur Jónsson 1920–1924 III, bls. 132.

22 Hreinn Benediktsson 1972, bls. 244. Sjá einnig umræðu um þessa setningu hjá Males 2020, bls. 165.

Hér kemur fram sem sérstakt einkenni þessarar vættar að hún sé *há* og það á hún sameiginlegt með Háu-Þóru og Þóru í Þóruþjóðum. Einnig má sjá að hún er vera sem eðlilegt er að nefna í sömu setningu og Þór, á svipaðan hátt og að Háa-Þóra er nefnd beint á eftir Þór í Skautaljóðum.

Önnur heimild um Þorgerði er *Brennu-Njáls saga* og þar er þess einnig getið að hún sé há eða „svá mikil sem maðr roskinn“. Rétt er að taka upp alla lýsinguna:

Þá fór Hákon jarl á veizlu til Guðbrands. Um nóttina fór Víga-Hrappur til goðahúss þeira jarls ok Guðbrands ok gekk inn í húsit. Hann sá Þorgerði höldabruði sitja, ok var hon svá mikil sem maðr roskinn; hon hafði mikinn gullhring á hendi ok fald á höfði. Hann sviptir faldinum hennar, en tekr af henni gullhringinn. Þá sér hann kerru Þórs ok tekr af honum annan hring. Hann tók inn þriðja af Irpu ok dró þau öll út ok tók af þeim allan búninginn; síðan lagði hann eld í goðahúsit ok brenndi upp.²³

Hérna kemur það fram að Þorgerður hefur fald á höfði eins og Háa-Þóra og Þóra í Þóruþjóðum. Einnig segir *Njáls saga* að Þorgerður sé svipt faldi og búningi og dregin út úr hofinu. Það minnir svolítið á niðurlag Háu-Þóruleiks eins og honum er lýst í Niðurraðan en leiknum lyktar þannig að „snáfar hún út og stingur öllum reiðanum aftur á milli fóta sér umsnúnum og sundurflakandi“.

Í D-gerð *Ólafs sögu Tryggvasonar hinnu mestu* er einnig sagt frá því hvernig líkneski Þorgerðar Hölgabruðar er flett góðum klæðum og dregið út úr hofi Hákonar jarls. Ólafur Tryggvason segir þar þetta:

Vit Þorkell frændi minn höfum nú forsjá þessarar konu með því at henni hefir svá borist at at hon hefir misst bónda síns þess er henni var harðla kær. Sá hefir ok háttr á verit um hríð at höfðingjar þessa lands hverr eptir annan hafa hana helzti mjök prísat. Er nú svá komit hennar högum at hon mun hlíta verða várri forsjá.²⁴

23 *Brennu-Njáls saga* 1954, bls. 214.

24 *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* 2000, bindi III, bls. 12. Ég hef samræmt stafsetningu.

Sá bóndi sem Þorgerður hefur misst er greinilega Hákon jarl og er hugsunin í sögunni þá að hún hafi verið einhvers konar eiginkona Hákonar og væntanlega forfeðra hans, Háleygjajarla.²⁵ Einn hirðmanna konungs bætir þessu við:

„Hví ertu, Þorgerður, svá háðuliga hneist ok óvirðuliga af flett þínum búnaði þeim er Hákon jarl lét þig hafa þá er hann elskaði þig?“²⁶

Í Skáldskaparmálum er einnig vikið að sambandi Þorgerðar við jarðneskja höfðingja á Hálogalandi. Þar segir þetta:

Svá er sagt at konungr sá er Hølgi er kallaðr, er Hálogaland er við nefnt, var faðir Þorgerðar Hølgabrúðar.²⁷

Margir hafa talið það kynlegt að hér er Þorgerður sögð dóttir Hölga enda bendir viðurnefnið til að hún sé brúður hans eða eiginkona.²⁸ Eldri heimild er Danasaga Saxa hins málsþaka en í þriðju bók þess mikla verks kemur fyrir Helgo Halogiae sem hlýtur að vera sami maður og Hølgi af Hálogalandi. Saxi segir frá því að Helgo vilji fá fyrir eiginkonu dóttur Guso sem var konungur Finna og Bjarma. Þessi konungsdóttir heitir Thora og þau Helgo ná saman eftir að Helgo hefur leitað hjálpar hjá konungi Dana sem nefnist Høtherus og á í höggi við hálfguðinn Balderus.²⁹

Fræðimenn hafa lengi talið að Helgo og Thora í Danasögu séu sömu verurnar og Hølgi og Þorgerður Hølgabrúður í íslenskum heimildum.³⁰ Þetta er mikils um vert fyrir samanburðinn því að þar höfum við forna heimild um að Þorgerður heiti öðru nafni Þóra og kann að vera að Þóra sé upphaflega gælunafn.

25 Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir (2020) hefur skrifað nánar um samband Hákonar og Þorgerðar.

26 *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* 2000, bindi III, bls. 12. Ég hef samræmt stafsetningu.

27 *Skáldskaparmál* 1998, bls. 60.

28 Sjá t.d. Simek 1993, bls. 326–327 og Halvorsen 1976, bls. 383

29 Saxo Grammaticus 2005, bls. 194.

30 Storm 1885, bls. 127–128; Davidson 1999 II, bls. 53; Chadwick 1950, bls. 398.

Hjálpvættur í sjóorrustum

Frægasta lýsing á Þorgerði Hölgabrúði er sú sem finna má í *Jómsvíkinga sögu*. Hákon jarl á þar í höggi við Jómsvíkinga og þegar tekur að hallast á hann orrustan leitar hann til Þorgerðar sér til fulltingis:

Ok þar kemr nú bœnarorðum hans at hann skorar á fulltrúa sinn, Þorgerði Hørðatroll. En hon daufheyrðisk við bœn jarls, ok þykkisk hann þat finna at hon mun honum reið orðin, ok býðr hann henni nú at þiggja af sér ýmsa hluti í blótskap, ok vill hon ekki þiggja, ok þykkir honum allóvænt horfa málit.³¹

Hákon grípur til þess ráðs að bjóða Þorgerði mannblót og „verðr nú of síðir at Þorgerðr þiggr af honum ok kýss nú Erling, son jarls“.³² Leggur þá jarl að nýju til sjóorrustu við Jómsvíkinga og þykist nú vita að sér muni vegna betur enda er það raunin. Í einni gerð sögunnar segir svo frá framhaldinu:

Ok síðan greiða þeir atróðrinn, ok teksk þar nú af nýju inn grimmosti bardagi. Ok því næst tekr veðrit at þykkna í norðr, ok dregr yfir skjótt ... ok því næst gørir á él mikit. Þeir Jómsvíkingar áttu at vega í gegn veðrinu. Þetta él var með svá miklum býsnum at menn máttu varla standask. ... Ok þó at þeir Jómsvíkingar kastaði grjóti eða vápnnum eða skyti spjótum þá bar veðrit þat aftr á þá allt ok þar með vápnangangr sinna óvina.³³

Með aðstoð Þorgerðar er Hákon að lyktum sigursæll í bardaganum.

Eitthvað virðist líkt með því sambandi sem Þorgerður Hölgabrúður á við Hákon jarl og því sem Þóra í Þóruljóðum á við Þorkel. Eins og Hákon er Þorkell einhvers konar höfðingi sem ræður fyrir búi og heldur úti herskipum („herskipin hafði úti“, Þóruljóð 3). Þorkell gefur Þóru höfuðbúnað og skikkju og Hákon gefur Þorgerði sömuleiðis góð klæði. Þorgerður veitir Hákonni hjálp í sjóorrustu og hefur greinilega vald yfir vindum. Eitthvað svipað virðist liggja á bak við það að Þóra gefur Þorkeli „segl gullofið“ og

31 *Jómsvíkinga saga* 2018, bls. 120.

32 *Jómsvíkinga saga* 2018, bls. 120.

33 *Jómsvíkinga saga* 2018, bls. 188.

segir að hann muni sigla til orrustu og aldrei skorta hamingju „á meðan sú hin bjarta byrvoð þolir“ (Þóruhjóð 25–26). Ekki þyrfti að teygja sig langt til að hugsa sér að Þóra sjái Þorkeli fyrir hagstæðum vindi á meðan hann hefur seglið.

Tröllið í leiknum

Í Ketils sögu hængs er minnst stuttlega á Þorgerði hörgatröll og er vert að taka lýsinguna upp:

Þat var eina nótt, at [Ketill] vaknar við brak mikit í skóginum. Hann hljóp út ok sá tröllkonu, ok fell fax á herðar henni. Ketill mælti: „Hvert ætlar þú, fóstura?“ Hún reigðist við honum ok mælti: „Ek skal til tröllaþings. Þar kemr Skelkingr norðan ór Dumbshafi, konungr trölla, ok Ófóti ór Ófótansfirði ok Þorgerðr Hörgatröll ok aðrar stórvættir norðan ór landi. Dvel eigi mik, því at mér er ekki um þik, síðan þú kveittir hann Kaldrana.“³⁴

Hér er Þorgerður talin meðal „stórvætta“ sem vænta má að sæki tröllaþing. Þessi heimild hefur nokkurt gildi í samhengi við aðra heimild sem lýsir einmitt tröllaþingi þótt hún noti að vísu ekki það orð. Í Ólafs sögu Tryggvasonar hinni mestu er sagt frá því að eftir dauða Hákonar jarls komi tveir hirðmenn Ólafs konungs leynilega að nóttu til að helli nokkrum:

Sá þeir hvar eldr brann í helli ok skunduðu þangat til. Sá þeir hvar mörg troll sátu við eld ok töluðu sín í milli. Þeir námu staðar fyrir hellismunnanum ok sýndist þeim sem einn mundi vera höfðingi þeira allra óvina.³⁵

Tröllahöfðinginn ávarpar samkunduna og umræðuefnið er sá vandi sem tröllin eiga við að etja nú þegar Ólafur Tryggvason er orðinn konungur. Síðan taka fleiri til máls og er í handritunum ýmist talað um flögð eða tröll eða óhreina anda. Enginn mælendanna er nefndur á nafn en einn óhreini andinn segist hafa átt „vináttu við Hákon jarl“ og þegið af honum gjafir

34 *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* 1943, bindi I, bls. 261.

35 *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, 1961, bindi II, bls. 138.

og talar jafnframt um sig í kvenkyni. Liggur beint við að álykta að þar sé Þorgerður Hölgabrúður komin enda er ég ekki fyrstur til að draga þá ályktun.³⁶ Óhreini andinn segir frá skiptum sínum við Ólaf Tryggvason:

Þá tók til orða eitt af þeim óhreinum öndum ok sagði svá: „Byggð mín var í Gaulardal, skammt frá Hlöðum. Átta ek vináttu við Hákon jarl ok gaf hann mér góðar gjafar. En þá er hann var ómakliga ræntr ríki ok lífi kom þessi hinn grimmi maðr í hans stað. Ok einn dag er hirðmenn konungs höfðu leik svá nær minni byggð at ek þóttumst varla mega þola hark þeira ok háreysti þá réðumst ek í leikinn með þeim leyniliga ok tók ek einn þeira höndum ok lék ek svá við þann at ek braut hönd hans. En á öðrum degi braut ek fót annars ok gengu svá meiddir frá leiknum. Ok hinn þriðja dag kom konungr sjálf ok gekk í leikinn með þeim. En ek réðumst þá enn til með þeim ok ætlaða ek at gera nökkurum manni mein. Mér vóru þar flestir menn ókunnir ok kennda ek engan frá öðrum. Greip ek þó til eins heldr harðliga. En sá tók ímóti ok setti svá fast hendr at síðum mér at mér mátti eigi verra við verða þó at þær hendr hefði verit gervar ór glóanda járn. Ok svá tók hann mik at þröngva með miklu afli at við sjálft var at ek mætti eigi óæpandi þola. En þó komumst ek ór höndum honum með mikilli nauð ok mjök brunninn.³⁷ Varð ek þá at flýja þaðan byggð mína þó at nauðig ok óviljandi til þessa staðar.“³⁸

Þessi lýsing minnir ekki lítið á Háu-Þóruleik eins og honum er lýst í Niðurraðan. Trölíð kemur „leynilega“ í leikinn og eins er sagt um

36 Chadwick 1950, bls. 399. Fyrir Chadwick er Þóra á Rimul, ástkona Hákonar jarls, einnig sama persónan. Í kenningu hennar á Guðrún Járn-Skeggjadóttir að samsvara Irpu, sem heimildir herma að sé systir Þorgerðar Hölgabrúðar. Ég tek ekki afstöðu til þessarar kenningar hér. Í Háu-Þóruleik og Þoruljóðum eru engin merki um Irpu nema ef vera skyldi að skjaldmeyjarnar sem nefndar eru í Niðurraðan séu menjar um hana.

37 Karlkynið er hér í handritinu sem útgáfa Ólafs Halldórssonar fylgir, AM 61 fol. Ólafur getur ekki um orðamun svo að væntanlega er einnig karlkynsmynd í hinum handritum. Myndin er hugsanlega komin til fyrir áhrif frá málfræðilegu karlkyni orðsins „andi“ eða einfaldlega í ógáti enda skolast *n* og *nn* oft til í handritum. Í næstu setningu er hins vegar kvenkyn í orðinu „nauðig“ í öllum handritum og er því betur að treysta.

38 *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, 1961, bindi II, bls. 139. Ég hef samræmt stafsetningu og þegar öll handrit standa saman gegn A um leshátt hef ég fylgt þeim.

Háu-Þóru í Niðurraðan að hún læðist inn svo hægt sem verða má. Í leik konungsmanna er „hark og háreysti“ og kemur það einnig vel heim við Háu-Þóruleik. Lyktirnar eru svo þær að tröllíð hröklast úr leiknum „með mikilli nauð“ og er það hliðstætt við það þegar Háu-Þóruleik lýkur og Háa-Þóra „snáfar ... út og stingur öllum reiðanum aftur á milli fóta sér umsnúnunum og sundurflakandi. Hafa þá brotnað þör og lykklar úr lagi gengið.“

Niðurstöður

Þegar ég var fyrst að fást við Háu-Þóru benti Helgi Skúli Kjartansson mér á að hún gæti átt eitthvað skylt við Þorgerði Hölgabruði. Rök Helga Skúla voru eftirfarandi:

[Þorgerðar] er getið í Fyrstu málfræðiritgerðinni, að visu stuttlega, en þó þannig að þrennt virðist liggja í orðunum:

- Hún er alþekkt á 12. öld, hægt að vísa til hennar án skýringa, a.m.k. í upplýstum kreðsum, líkt og til heiðinna goða.
- Hún er „tröll“ í eðli sínu.
- Og það einkenni hennar sem allir þekkja, það er að hún er „há“.

Er hún þá hugsanlega einhvers konar ættingi eða formóðir Háu-Þóru?³⁹

Þetta þótti mér skemmtileg tilgáta. Setningin í Fyrstu málfræðiritgerðinni virtist þó ekki nógu efnismikill grundvöllur til að bera hana uppi og því minntist ég ekki á þetta í fyrri grein minni. Smám saman fór ég þó að rekast á fleiri rök til að styðja hugmyndina. Fyrst það að Þorgerður Hölgabruður hafi fald í Njáls sögu. Síðan að hún sé nefnd Thora í Danasögu Saxa. Þegar ég rakst loks á flagðið sem laumast í leikinn í Ólafs sögu Tryggvasonar þótti mér svo mikið komið í sarpinn að ég gæti ekki annað en fallist á að Helgi Skúli hafi haft rétt fyrir sér og að Háa-Þóra sé ættingi Þorgerðar Hölgabruðar eða hreinlega hún sjálf.

Háu-Þóruleik mætti skilja sem einhvers konar útgáfu á sömu hug-

39 Helgi Skúli Kjartansson. Tölvupóstur til Hauks Þorgeirssonar, 15. desember 2010.

myndum og birtast í Ólafs sögu Tryggvasonar þar sem skurðgoð Þorgerðar er flett klæðum, niðurlægt og dregið burtu og enn fremur þar sem tröllkona laumast í leik með mönnum en er sigruð og kemst undan við illan leik. Þessar frásögur eru um sigur kristinnar á heiðninni og það gæti líka verið upphaflega inntakið í Háu-Þóruleik.

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ÁGRIP

Háa-Þóra og Þorgerður Hölgabrúður

Efnisorð: Þorgerður Hölgabrúður, sagnakvæði, grímur, leikir, tröll, kristnitaka

Elsta heimild sem vísar til Háu-Þóruleiks er frá lokum 17. aldar. Leiknum er síðan lýst í nokkrum smáatriðum í ritgerðinni Niðurraðan sem rituð var á 18. öld. Þar kemur fram að Háa-Þóra er gerð með því að faldur og traf er sett á staur og kvenhempa og svunta að auki. Þetta gervi er kallað goð í ritgerðinni en það orð er annars aðeins notað um heiðin goðmöggn og líkneski þeirra. Í Háu-Þóruleik fer maður undir kvenhempuna í gervinu og heldur á staurnum. Hann læðist inn í gleðskapinn með staurinn flatan en tekur síðan til við að ærslast. Háa-Þóra gerir „óskunda so liggur við meidslí“ og sækir mest að dansmanninum. Að lokum sefast hún og snáfar burtu með reiðann milli fóta sér.

Í íslenskum miðaldabókmenntum má finna gyðju eða tröll sem á sitt hvað sameiginlegt með Háu-Þóru, það er að segja Þorgerði Hölgabrúði. a) Í Fyrstu málfræðiritgerðinni og Njáls sögu er tiltekið að Þorgerður sé há. b) Í Danasögu Saxa kemur fyrir Thora sem virðist vera annað nafn á Þorgerði. c) Í Njáls sögu er lýst líkneski af Þorgerði sem hefur fald. d) Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar hin mesta segir frá kvenkyns trölli sem slæst leynilega í leik konungsmanna. Hún veldur meidslum þar til einn maður, væntanlega konungurinn sjálfur, sigrar hana og hún neyðist til að draga sig í hlé. Þetta tröll segist hafa átt vingott við Hákon jarl og þegið af honum gjafir – af því má ráða að þetta sé Þorgerður Hölgabrúður. Háu-Þóruleikur gæti byggst á svipaðri hugmynd og þessi kafli í sögunni og verið eins konar endursköpun á því að heiðin vættur sé knésett.

Á 17. öld voru Þóruljóð skráð úr munnlegri geymd en það er sagnakvæði undir fornyrðislagi. Þóran í kvæðinu virðist vera sama persónan og Háa-Þóra í leiknum. Í kvæðinu er Þóra há og ógnvekjandi kona sem birtist í jólaveislu hjá höfðingjanum Þorkeli. Þorkell vísar Þóru í öndvegi og gefur henni höfuðbúnað og skikkju. Við lok kvæðisins gefur Þóra Þorkeli segl sem hún hefur ofið og segir honum að það muni færa honum hamingju þegar hann siglir til orrustu. Þessi frásögn minnr á sambandið milli Hákonar jarls og Þorgerðar Hölgabrúðar í Jómsvíkinga sögu. Hákon veitir Þorgerði gjafir, jafnvel mannfórnir, og Þorgerður launar honum með því að stjórna veðri og vindum í þágu Hákonar í Jómsvíkingabardaga.

SUMMARY

Háa-Þóra and Þorgerður Hölgabrúður

Keywords: Þorgerður Hölgabrúður, Eddic fairy tales, masks, games, trolls, Christianization

The Icelandic game of Háa-Þóra (Tall Þóra) is alluded to in a late seventeenth-century source, and a reasonably detailed description of it survives in the eighteenth-century *Niðurráðan*. A man is dressed up to represent an immensely tall woman, carrying a pole with a woman's headdress and scarf. This "Tall Þóra" is referred to as a *goð* in *Niðurráðan*, a word which refers to pagan gods and idols of pagan gods. Þóra joins the party of revellers as quietly as possible, but once she is in position, a great ruckus ensues as Þóra attacks the guests and in particular the lead singer. Eventually Þóra retreats from the party with her clothes in disarray.

Medieval Icelandic sources record a goddess or ogress with similarities to Háa-Þóra, namely Þorgerður Hölgabrúður. (a) She is noted for her tallness in the First Grammatical Treatise and in *Njáls saga*. (b) In the *Gesta Danorum* she is seemingly referred to as Thora. (c) *Njáls saga* mentions an idol of Þorgerður having a headdress. (d) *The Great Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason* tells of a female troll who surreptitiously enters a game played by the king's men. She behaves violently until she is eventually defeated and forced to retreat by an unnamed man, presumably the king himself. This female troll introduces herself as a friend of Hákon jarl and a recipient of his gifts – she is presumably Þorgerður Hölgabrúður. The game of Háa-Þóra might be based on an idea similar to this scene in the saga, as a re-enactment of the defeat of a pagan spirit.

A poem in Eddic metre, Þórljóð, was recorded from oral tradition in the seventeenth century. The Þóra of the poem seems to be the same character as the Háa-Þóra of the game. In the poem, Þóra is a tall and frightening woman who arrives at a Yule feast at the farm of a chieftain, Þorkell. Þorkell welcomes Þóra to his high seat and provides her with a headdress and a cloak. Eventually, Þóra gives Þorkell a sail that she has created and tells him that it will bring him good fortune ("hamingja") as he sails into battle. This story is reminiscent of the relationship between Hákon jarl and Þorgerður Hölgabrúður as described in *Jómsvíkinga saga*. Hákon gives Þorgerður gifts, including a human sacrifice, and Þorgerður rewards him by intervening in his favour during a sea battle where she controls the wind.

The similarities between Háa-Þóra, Þóra of Þórljóð and Þorgerður Hölgabrúður are enough to suggest that the three figures have a common origin.

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RÆNINGJARÍMUR SÉRA GUÐMUNDAR ERLENDSSONAR Í FELLI OG ERLENDAR FRÉTTABALLÖÐUR

RÆNINGJARÍMUR séra Guðmundar Erlendssonar (um 1595–1670) í Felli fjalla um voðaverk sem framin voru á ákveðnum stöðum á Íslandi á árinu 1627 þegar sjóræningjar herjuðu á landið, drápu fólk eða limlestu og numu aðra á brott.¹ Aðrar eins hamfarir af manna völdum hafa ekki orðið í landinu enda hefur hið svokallaða Tyrkjarán lagst þungt á þjóðarsálina.² Fljótlega eftir atburðina fóru að birtast í handritum greinargerðir, kvæði og frásagnir, bæði eftir menn sem höfðu verið sjónarvottar að atburðunum eða orðið fyrir skaða af hendi ræningjanna og þá sem fundu sig knúna til að fjalla um atburðina þótt þeir hafi ekki beinlínis snert líf þeirra. Þetta má einnig sjá af ýmsum örnefnum sem minna á atburðina, þjóðsögum, kveðskap, bænum, sálum og meira að segja nýlegum skáldsögum og menningarviðburðum sem haldnir hafa verið til minningar um Tyrkjaránið á okkar tímum.³

Séra Guðmundur Erlendsson varð ekki fyrir árasum eða ránum sjóræningjanna enda höfðu þeir ekki viðkomu í þeim landshluta þar sem hann bjó. Árið 1627 var Guðmundur prestur í Glæsibæ í Eyjafirði, liðlega þri-tugur að aldri.⁴ Þó er augljóst að samtímalýsingar og fréttir af atburðunum hafa haft djúpstæð áhrif á hann. Í mansöng fyrstu Ræningjarímu kallar hann rímurnar „harmabréf.“ Aftar í kvæðinu kallar hann þær „annál“ og

- 1 Guðmundur Erlendsson, „Ræningjarímur,“ *Tyrkjaránið á Íslandi 1627*, útg. Jón Þorkelsson (Reykjavík: Sögufélag, 1906–1909), 465–496.
- 2 Þorsteinn Helgason hefur fjallað um Tyrkjaránið sem sameiginlegt minni þjóðarinnar, sjá „Minning og saga í ljósi Tyrkjaránsins,“ (Doktorsritgerð, Háskóli Íslands, 2013). Hann hefur einnig fjallað um frásagnirnar sem sameiginlega meðferð vegna áfalls, sjá Þorsteinn Helgason, „Historical Narrative as Collective Therapy: the Case of the Turkish Raid in Iceland,“ *Scandinavian Journal of History* 22/4 (1997): 275–289.
- 3 Í *Tyrkjarárinu á Íslandi 1627* eru prentaðar ýmsar samtímaheimildir um ránið og eftirmála þeirra.
- 4 Sveinn Nielsson, *Prestatal og prófasta á Íslandi II*, 2. útgáfa (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1950), 278.

„Tyrkja skrá“ og í fyrirsögn fjórðu rímu kemur fyrir heitið „hörmungar-rímur.“ Rímurnar eru þannig hvort tveggja í senn skýrsla (annáll/skrá) um atburðina og skáldleg tjáning harms og hörmunga. Efni rímnanna, segir séra Guðmundur í mansöng fyrstu rímu, byggist á fréttum af ránskap í Vestmannaeyjum sem hann segist hafa fengið úr skrifum Guðmundar Hákonarsonar og Arngríms Jónssonar.⁵ Skáldið hefur því stuðst við ritaðar heimildir við rímnagerðina en eflaust einnig við munnlegar heimildir þótt hann geti þess ekki. Þorsteinn Helgason færir fyrir því rök að séra Guðmundur hafi ort Ræningjarímur sínar sumarið 1628.⁶

Hvernig datt Guðmundi Erlendssyni í hug að nota rímnnaformið til að fjalla um Tyrkjaránið? Það liggur ekki beint við. Rímur á fyrri hluta sautjándu aldar voru oftast ortar upp úr fornaldar- og riddarasögum eða svokölluðum almúgabókum (d. folkebøger, þ. Volksbücher, e. chap books) sem nutu mikilla vinsælda í Evrópu á árnýöld. Þá eru nokkrar rímur varðveittar frá sautjándu öld sem ortar voru upp úr Íslendingasögum. Einnig ortu sum skáld á sautjándu öld rímur upp úr biblíunni að til-mælum Guðbrands biskups Þorlákssonar og var Guðmundur Erlendsson þar fremstur í flokki.⁷ Á þessum tíma fara einnig að birtast rímur um samtímaatburði sem kunna að vera af sama meiði og Ræningjarímur séra Guðmundar eða fjalla að minnsta kosti um samtímaatburði eins og rímur hans um Tyrkjaránið.⁸ Þær eru ekki margar en hér má nefna Víkingarímur sem fjalla um Baskavígin svonefndu eftir óþekktan höfund (eftir J.G.s. stendur í einu handrita rímnanna) og Skotlandsrímur séra Einars Guðmundssonar á Stað á Reykjanesi sem fjalla um samsæri gegn Jakobi VI. Skotakonungi árið 1600, kallað Gowrie-samsærið.⁹

- 5 Guðmundur Hákonarson (d. 1659) sýslumaður á Þingeyrum og Arngrímur Jónsson (d. 1648) lærði á Melstað í Miðfirði. Áminning Guðmundar Hákonarsonar er ekki varðveitt svo kunnugt sé en bréf Arngríms lærða um bænadagshald út af fráfalli Guðbrands biskups Þorlákssonar og Tyrkjaráninu er prentað í *Tyrkjaráninu á Íslandi 1627*, 367–370.
- 6 Þorsteinn Helgason, „Minning og saga í ljósi Tyrkjaránsins,“ 120.
- 7 Í kvæðabókum séra Guðmundar, í handritunum JS 232 4to og Lbs 1055 4to, eru að minnsta kosti 16 biblíurímur varðveittar (margar þeirra eru varðveittar víðar í handritum).
- 8 Í *Rímnatali* eru taldar upp 148 rímur frá sautjándu öld. Mér sýnast 54 vera ortar upp úr fornaldar- og riddarasögum (bæði fornur og síðari tíma), 30 upp úr biblíunni, 28 upp úr almúgabókum (eða erlendum ævintýrum), 14 upp úr Íslendingasögum og -þáttum, níu eru samtímaádeilur, sumar með siðaboðskap eða gamanmálum, fernar um helga menn og þrennar um samtímaatburði (sem getið er hér að ofan). Það sem út af stendur (sex rímur) eru um annað, t.d. gervi-sagnfræði, goðafraði og einar rímur um Esóp (Finnur Sigmundsson, *Rímnatal I–II* (Reykjavík: Rímnafélagið, 1966), 190–193).
- 9 Báðar hafa verið gefnar út: *Spánverjavígin 1615. Sönn frásaga eftir Jón Guðmundsson lærða og*

Í greininni ætla ég að færa rök fyrir því að skáldið hafi fengið hugmyndina að rímunum frá erlendum fréttaballöðum sem hann hefur komist í kynni við, líklega á þriðja áratugi aldarinnar eða fyrr (eða úr íslenskri þýðingu á fréttum af atburðunum). Séra Guðmundur hlýtur að hafa þekkt þessa kvæðagrein því hann orti ballöður eða þýddi á íslensku úr dönsku eða þýsku. Hann orti til dæmis kvæði um jarðskjálfta sem varð á Ítalíu 1627, kvæði um eyðingu Magdeborgar 1631 og kvæði um aftöku Karls I. Englandskonungs 1649. Varla hefur verið minnst á þessi kvæði í íslenskri bókmenntasögu enda voru þau lengst af ekki til prentuð.¹⁰ Í tveimur fræðigreinum sem við Þorsteinn Helgason skrifuðum saman fjöllum við um kvæðið af eyðingu Magdeborgar sem fréttaballöðu að erlendri fyrirmynd.¹¹ Katelin Marit Parsons minnst í doktorsritgerð sinni á „nýja tegund“ kvæða sem fara að birtast seint á þriðja áratugi sautjándu aldar og fjalla um samtímaatburði. Hún telur þessi kvæði ekki tilheyra einni sérstakri kvæðagrein en þau eigi það sameiginlegt að lýsa ódæðisverkum og náttúruhamförum sem minna á evrópskar ballöður samtímans.¹² Ég tel að þau þrjú kvæði séra Guðmundar Erlendssonar sem liggja hér til grundvallar tilheyri öll kvæðagreininni „fréttaballöður“ og að skáldið hafi verið undir áhrifum frá þeim þegar hann orti Ræningjarímur. Tilgáta mín er sú að skáldið hafi vitandi vits notað aðferðir og einkenni erlendra fréttaballaða í rímum sínum um Tyrkjaránið; að kynni hans af kvæðagreininni hafi haft afgerandi áhrif á form og innihald Ræningjarímna og úrvinnslu atburðanna í rímunum.

Ræningjarímur hafa verið prentaðar (sjá neðanmálgrein 1 að ofan) og kvæðið um eyðingu Magdeborgar einnig en hér verða kvæðin um jarðskjálftann á Ítalíu og aftöku Karls I. prentuð í fyrsta sinn í viðauka við greinina.¹³

Vikinga rímur, Jónas Kristjánsson bjó til prentunar (Kaupmannahöfn: Hið íslenska fræðafélag, 1950) og *Skotlands rímur. Icelandic Ballads on the Gowrie Conspiracy*, W. A. Craigie bjó til útgáfu (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1908).

10 Magdeborgarvísur voru fyrst prentaðar árið 2019. Sjá nmgr. 13.

11 Þórunn Sigurðardóttir og Þorsteinn Helgason, „Hvaða sögum fór af eyðingu Magdeborgar í Skagafirði?“ *Nýtt Helgakver. Rit til heiðurs Helga Skúla Kjartanssyni sjötugum 1. febrúar 2019*, Guðmundur Jónsson et al. (Reykjavík: Sögufélag, 2019), 103–118; Þórunn Sigurðardóttir og Þorsteinn Helgason, „Singing the News in Seventeenth-Century Iceland: The destruction of Magdeborg in 1631,“ *Quaerendo* 50 (2020): 310–336.

12 Katelin Marit Parsons, „Songs for the end of the world: The Poetry of Guðmundur Erlendsson of Fell in Sléttuhlíð,“ (Doktorsritgerð, Háskóli Íslands, 2020), 95.

13 Magdeborgarvísur eru prentaðar í: Þórunn Sigurðardóttir og Þorsteinn Helgason, „Hvaða sögum fór af eyðingu Magdeborgar í Skagafirði?“, 112–118. Þær eru einnig prentaðar ásamt

Hvað er fréttaballaða?

„Fréttaballöður“ eru kvæði um samtímaatburði og/eða samtímamenn skáldanna sem prentuð voru á einblöðunga eða tvíblöðunga og seld af götusölum eða flutt/sungin á torgum og strætum bæja og borga í Evrópu. Prentið var ódýrt og afar vinsælt á meðal almennings. Á ensku er talað um „broadside ballads“ en á Norðurlöndum tíðkast að tala um „skillings-trykk“ sem vísar til þess að um ódýrt prent var að ræða. „Skillingsstrykk“ eða „skillingsviser“ á reyndar við fleiri kvæðagreinar en fréttaballöður, til dæmis ástarsögur, drykkjuvísur og sjóhrakninga svo nokkuð sé nefnt.¹⁴ Þá má segja að fréttaballöður séu undirgrein „skillingsvísna“.¹⁵ Sjónír fræðimanna hafa í auknum mæli beinst að þessari dægurmenningu hin síðustu ár, einkum í hinum enskumælandi heimi og á Norðurlöndum. Þannig er tímaritið *ARV Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* tileinkað rannsóknum á þessum menningararfi árið 2018. Á Íslandi er ekki um slíkt prent að ræða enda var einu prentsmiðju landsins á sautjándu öld stjórnað af kirkjunnar mönnum sem hafa vafalaust ekki litið hinar grótesku lýsingar og hinn alþýðlega bókmenntahátt (e. *mode*) ballaða jákvæðum augum.

Í grein sinni „Singing the News in the Eighteenth Century“ setur Siv Göril Brandtzæg fram þessa skilgreiningu á fréttaballöðum:

A news ballad in a Scandinavian context can be defined as a literary text that reports, mediates, comments upon or moralizes about particular incident, whether it be an accident, a crime, an election, a war, and so forth. The news reported could be of a domestic, local, regional, national or international kind. [...] In the strictest sense, a news ballad gives an exact date and place of the incident in the

enskri þýðingu í: Þórunn Sigurðardóttir og Þorsteinn Helgason, „Singing the News in Seventeenth-Century Iceland,“ 330–336.

- 14 Sjá til dæmis gagnagrunn um norskar „skillingsviser,“ Skillingsvisene 1550–1950. Den forsømte kulturarven: <https://skillingsviser.no/skillingsvisene/>. — Hér má nefna að séra Guðmundur Erlendsson orti tvö kvæði um sjóhrakninga. Annað kvæðið var prentað árið 1923 undir titlinum „Grimseyjarvísur,“ í bók með siglingakvæðum frá fyrri tíð (*Hafrana. Sjávarljóð og siglinga*, safnað hefir Guðm. Finnbogason (Reykjavík: Bókaverzlun Sigfúsar Eymundssonar, 1923), 35–38). Bókin var prentuð aftur í endurskoðaðri útgáfu Finnboga Guðmundssonar (Reykjavík: Skjaldborg, 1997).
- 15 Siv Göril Brandtzæg, „Singing the News in the Eighteenth Century,“ *Arv. Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* 74 (2018): 21.

title page and/or in the text itself, emphasizing both temporal and spatial specificity.¹⁶

Ástralski bókmenntafræðingurinn Una McIlvenna hefur skrifað allmikið um enskar fréttaballöður. Í grein sinni um ballöðu sem ort var um eldsvoðann mikla í London árið 1666 heldur hún því fram að það sé einkum þrennt sem þurfi að hafa í huga varðandi þessa tilteknu ballöðu: Í fyrsta lagi eru fjölmargar staðreyndir um brunann settar fram í kvæðinu. Í öðru lagi eru áheyrendur hvattir til að iðrast til þess að komast hjá enn verra hlutskipti og í þriðja lagi er ballaðan afþreyingarefni til að syngja, segir hún.¹⁷ Það er að segja, innihald fréttaballöðu byggist á staðreyndum, það hefur siðferðislegan boðskap fram að færa og það býður upp á dægurstyttingu. Hér má bæta því við að efni og tilefni fréttaballaða er að jafnaði nýliðinn hörmulegur atburður.

Fræðimenn eru ekki öldungis sammála um meginmarkmið fréttaballöðunnar eða eins og Angela McShane Jones orðar það: „[...] the ballad functioned primarily as entertainment, instruction, comment, explanation and complaint, not as a vehicle for information“¹⁸ og enn fremur segir hún:

Ballads were certainly concerned with events, political and otherwise, and they did have information in them, but those events were used as exemplars of wider truths or warnings of generic evils and the information, when they had any, acted as advertisement, reminder or support. Balladeers saw themselves as poets — and were criticised for their failings in that sphere by contemporaries.¹⁹

Engu að síður fjalla kvæðin um atburði sem hljóta að hafa talist fréttnæmir þegar kvæðin voru ort og flutt, hvort sem áheyrendur höfðu heyrt af þeim áður eða ekki. Þau fjalla alla jafna um nýliðna atburði, greina frá því hvar

16 Siv Gøril Brandtzæg, „Singing the News in the Eighteenth Century,“ 23.

17 Una McIlvenna, „Ballads of Death and Disaster: The Role of Song in Early Modern News Transmission,“ *Disaster, Death and the Emotions in the Shadow of the Apocalypse, 1400–1700*, ritstj. Jennifer Spinks, Charles Zika (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 276.

18 Angela McShane Jones, „The Gazet in Metre; or the Rhiming Newsmonger: The English Broadside Ballad as Intelligencer,“ *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)*, ritstj. Joop W. Koopmans (Leuven, Paris, Dudley MA: Peeters, 2005), 146.

19 Sama heimild, 144.

og hvenær atburðurinn átti sér stað, lýsa honum og geta þátttakenda. Sagnfræðingarnir Joad Raymond og Noah Moxham hafa sýnt fram á að nokkurra mánaða eða jafnvel nokkurra ára gamlir atburðir gátu þótt frétt-næmir á árnýöld og að „fréttir“ voru ekki aðeins skrifaðar eða prentaðar til að vera „fyrstir með fréttina“ heldur fremur til að staðfesta hana, leiðrétta, setja í samhengi eða endurmeta fréttir sem höfðu verið að berast munnlega manna á milli.²⁰ Í ritstjórnargrein að áður nefndu *Arv*-hefti skilgreina höfundar fyrirbærið „skillingstrykk“ þannig:

As a genre and a medium, skillingstrykk made news, information, entertainment and gossip circulate within a society. The prints could move between centre and periphery, between high and low in society. They were objects of commodification, and at the same time being rewritten, collected, shared and borrowed. The form of the ballads made them easy to remember. They rhyme, there is a rhythm to them, a clear narrative and a schematic form.²¹

Flugritin upplýstu almenning um skelfilega atburði og þau hljóta að hafa vakið viðbrögð viðtakenda og haft áhrif á heimsmynd þeirra og hugsunarhátt. Þótt inntak og markmið einstakra fréttaballaða geti verið margþætt, og atburðurinn stundum notaður sem dæmi um viðtækari sannindi eða sem varnaðarorð, er heitið „fréttaballaða“ gott og gilt að mínu mati. Einnig er talað um undirgreinar eins og hamfaraballöður (e. *disaster ballads*) og aftökuballöður (e. *execution ballads*) en til þeirra falla fréttaballöður séra Guðmundar Erlendssonar sem fjallað verður um hér.

Séra Guðmundur Erlendsson og innflutt prent

Guðmundur Erlendsson fæddist árið 1595 eða þar um bil á prestsetrinu Felli í Sléttuhlíð í Skagafirði þar sem faðir hans var prestur. Fell er ekki langt frá biskupssetrinu á Hólum í Hjaltadal. Eftir útskrift úr dómkirkju-skólanum á Hólum þjónaði Guðmundur í ýmsum sóknum norðanlands,

20 Joad Raymond og Noah Moxham, „News Networks in Early Modern Europe,“ *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ritstj. J. Raymond og N. Moxham (Leiden & Boston, 2016), 1–2.

21 Line Esborg & Katrine Watz Thorsen, „Editorial. New Perspectives on Scandinavian Skillingstrykk,“ *Arv. Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* 74 (2018): 7–15.

m.a. Glæsibæ í Eyjafirði og Grímsey. Árið 1634 flutti hann á bernskuheimili sitt, var líklega fyrst aðstoðarprestur föður síns en tók síðan við prestsembættinu í Felli sem hann er ávallt kenndur við. Ýmislegt bendir til þess að lengi hafi verið sérstakt samband á milli prestanna í Felli og biskupsfjölskyldna sautjándu aldar.²² Faðir Guðmundar, séra Erlendur Guðmundsson í Felli, hafði verið aðstoðarmaður biskups við prentun bibliunnar í lok sextándu aldar og þegið eintak af bibliunni að launum. Þetta kemur fram í Minnis- og reikningabók biskups þar sem hann greinir frá ráðstöfun sinni á nokkrum eintökum bibliunnar. Þar segir m.a.: „Síra Ellendi Guðmundssyni i, merces laboris Typographici.“²³ Guðmundur sjálfur orti tækifæriskvæði til biskupanna Guðbrands Þorlákssonar og Þorláks Skúlasonar og fjölskyldna þeirra og sonur hans og eftirmaður, Jón Guðmundsson í Felli, viðhélt þeirri hefð að yrkja fyrir Hólamenn.²⁴ Náin tengsl séra Guðmundar við biskupssetrið, bæði menningarleg tengsl og landfræðileg nálægð, og þar af leiðandi við hið lærða samfélag sem tengdist biskupsembættinu og latínuskólanum, er mikilvægt til skilnings á skáldskap Guðmundar, eins og til dæmis kvæðum um samtímaviðburði. Augljóst er að skáldið hafði aðgang að bókum og prentuðum textum sem aflað var erlendis eða að minnsta kosti uppskriftum af slíkum textum á frummálum og/eða þýddum á íslensku. Vinsælasta bókmenntaverk séra Guðmundar er kvæðabálkurinn Einvaldsóður sem ortur er upp úr danskri þýðingu á kvæði skoska skáldsins Sir David Lindsay, *Dialogus, eller En Samtale Imellem Forfarenhed og en Hofftiener om Verdens elendige væsen, oc begribis vdi fire Bøger om Monarchier*.²⁵ Guðmundur notar einnig fleiri erlendar heimildir í Einvaldsóði eins og *Chronica Carionis* eftir þýska stjórnufræðinginn Johann Carion sem kom út á dönsku 1595.²⁶ Á sautjándu öld hafa erlendar bækur og bæklingar vafalaust einkum borist til landsins með embættismönnum og íslenskum stúdentum við Háskólann í

22 Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, „Á Krists ysta jarðar hala“: Um séra Guðmund Erlendsson í Felli og verk hans,“ *Skagfirðingabók* 37 (2016): 172–173.

23 [Guðbrandur Þorláksson], „Fáein atriði um bibliuna úr Minnis- og reikningabók Guðbrands biskups,“ Einar G. Pétursson bjó til prentunar, *Árbók Landsbókasafns Íslands*. Nýr flokkur 10 (1984): 30.

24 Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, „Á Krists ysta jarðar hala,“ 173.

25 Danska þýðingin kom út í Kaupmannahöfn 1591. — Í kvæðinu er farið yfir mannkynssöguna frá Nóaflóði til síðaskipta í 307 erindum undir fornyrðislagi.

26 Sjá Robert Cook, „The *Chronica Carionis* in Iceland,“ *Opuscula* VIII. Bibliotheca Arnæmagnæana XXXVIII (Hafnía, 1985): 226–263.

Kaupmannahöfn. Bær og þorp voru ekki í landinu svo heitið gæti og engar heimildir eru til, mér vitanlega, um bóksala og þess vegna hljóta skáld eins og séra Guðmundur Erlendsson að hafa komist í kynni við erlendar bókmenntir hjá starfsbræðrum sem komu að utan eða þeim sem keyptu bækur og bæklinga af slíku fólki. Vafalaust gekk slíkt efni einkum á milli manna í hinu lærða samfélagi sem tengdist Hólum í Hjaltadal (og vitaskuld öðrum lærdómssetrum í landinu, eins og biskupssetrinu í Skálholti og öðrum smærri stöðum).²⁷ Það er sennilegt að á meðal innflutts prents hafi verið prentaðar ballöður á dreifibréfum eða flugritum. Íslendingar erlendis hafa áreiðanlega orðið vitni að flutningi slíkra kvæða á torgum og strætum og vafalaust verið boðið slíkt prent til kaups. Ekkert erlent „ballöðuprent“ hefur þó varðveist hér á landi svo vitað sé enda hljóta stök blöð og bæklingar fremur að fara forgörðum í tímans rás en heil handrit, sem gjarnan eru innbundin eða haldið saman á einhvern hátt. Kvæði séra Guðmundar um hamfarir og hörmungar erlendis eru vitnisburður um að íslensk skáld hafi þekkt fréttaballöður, að minnsta kosti þau sem höfðu aðgang að erlendum bókmenntum og gátu lesið þær og skilið það sem í þeim stóð.

Fréttaballöður séra Guðmundar Erlendssonar

Fréttaballöður séra Guðmundar Erlendssonar hljóta að vera þýðingar á dönskum eða þýskum fréttaballöðum eða að minnsta kosti úrvinnsla á innfluttum textum. Kvæðin fjalla um nýliðna atburði í Evrópu og voru að öllum líkindum ort af Guðmundi fljótlega eftir að þeir gerðust.²⁸

Jarðskjálfti á Ítalíu 1627

Hinn 30. júlí 1627 varð öflugur jarðskjálfti á Suður-Ítalíu, oft kallaður Gargano jarðskjálftinn, sem lagði heilu þorpin í rúst og fórust um það bil 5000 manns í náttúruhamförunum.²⁹ Nær öruggt er að skáldið hefur

27 Sjá Þórunn Sigurðardóttir og Þorsteinn Helgason, „Singing the News in Seventeenth-Century Iceland,” 318.

28 Það á að minnsta kosti við um Magdeborgarvísur eins og Þorsteinn Helgason hefur fært rök fyrir (Þorsteinn Helgason, *Minning og saga*, 175). Sjá einnig Þórunn Sigurðardóttir og Þorsteinn Helgason, „Singing the News in Seventeenth-Century Iceland,” 219.

29 E. Patacca & P. Scandone, „The 1627 Gargano earthquake (Southern Italy): Identification and characterization of the causative fault,” *Journal of Seismology* 8 (2004): 259.

haft fyrir sér kvæði um atburðinn en ekki frásögn í lausu máli. Í fyrirsögn kvæðisins segir að þetta sé „Ein söngvísa úr þýsku“ og má gera ráð fyrir að skáldið eigi við bundið mál á þýsku sem hann hefur íslenskað. Kvæðið hefst á því að ljóðmælandi ávarpar áheyrendur og hvetur þá til að gefa gaum að teiknum um reiði Guðs:

Kristinn lýður, athuga hér
og umhugsa með sjálfum þér
hvað hörð sé herrans reiði;
teikn ýmisleg
á allan veg
oss fyrir sjónir leiðir. (1. er.)³⁰

Í kjölfarið snýr hann sér að atburðinum sem lýst er í kvæðinu, jarðskjálfta sem varð á Ítalíu árið 1627:

Þúsund sex hundruð tuttugu og tvö
tillleggjast fimm þá eru sjö,
einn jarðskjálfti er orðinn
í Ítalía
svo almennt sá;
umveltist þorp og jörðin. (5. er.)

Helsta auðkenni fréttaballöðu er að tengja stund og stað — að greina frá því hvenær og hvar atburðurinn sem fjallað er um í ballöðunni gerðist, eins og bert er af þessu erindi. Ljóðmælandi heldur áfram að fjalla um hvenær jarðskjálftinn varð í næstu erindum þar sem dagsetningunni 30. júlí er bætt við og hann greinir meira að segja frá því á hvaða tíma dagsins, þ.e. „að kveldi“ (6. erindi). Jafnframt er áheyrendum sagt að náttúruhamfarirnar hafi tekið átta daga („Jarðskjálftinn heila viku var, / víst einum degi þó frekar“ (7. er.)) og að þær hafi raskað jörðinni og lagt þorp í rúst. Þennan hluta kvæðisins gætum við kallað frétt aflutning. Áheyrendum eru gefnar upp staðreyndir áður en atburðinum er lýst ítarlega á æsifenginn hátt.

30 Tilvitnanir í fréttaballöður séra Guðmundar eru teknar úr útgáfu kvæðanna í viðauka og tilvitnaðri grein okkar Þorsteins Helgasonar í tilviki Magdeborgarvísna. Í öllum útgáfunum er handritið JS 232 4to lagt til grundvallar.

Annað mikilvægt auðkenni á fréttaballöðu er áhersla á andlega velferð fólksins sem skáldið beinir orðum sínum til. Eins og ég benti á að ofan hefst kvæðið um jarðskjálftann á því að ljóðmælandi ávarpar áheyrendur sína. Þegar staðreyndum um jarðskjálftann hefur verið komið á framfæri snýr ljóðmælandi sér aftur að áheyrendum — ekki þó almennum áheyrendum eins og áður þegar hann ávarpaði „kristinn lýð“ heldur að Íslendingum sérstaklega:

Ach! Þú hin auma Íslands byggð,
athuga slíkt með góðri tryggð
síðan og set í minni:
Sex hundruð manns
í dauða dans
drógust í þessu sinni. (9. er.)

Skáldið er ekki aðeins að segja frá skelfilegum atburðum sem gerðust erlendis; hann vill koma skilaboðum á framfæri — viðvörðun. Sex hundruð manns fórust í ítalska jarðskjálftanum, „set í minni“ segir hann. Svo heldur hann áfram að lýsa náttúruhamförunum og atvikum sem áttu sér stað meðan á þeim stóð, svo sem að fjórar meyjar hafi birst fólki í Þýskalandi sendar af reiðum Guði til að vara fólkið við yfirvofandi heimsendi. Dómsdagsspádómar eru algengir í fréttaballöðum af þessu tagi.³¹ Náttúruhamfarir og stríð eru fyrirboði heimsendis og áheyrendur eru hvattir til að hafa hinn efsta dag í huga. Í næstaftasta erindi kvæðisins áminnir ljóðmælandi áheyrendur sína aftur um að íhuga hversu nauman tíma þeir hafi í jarðvistinni:

Þau miklu teikn og margvísleg
menn sem líta á allan veg,
sjónir sem sanna drauma,
tjá oss það gjör
en tungan tér
tíðina að höfum nauma. (24. er.; leturbreyting mín)

31 Una McIlvenna, „Ballads of Death and Disaster: The Role of Song in Early Modern News Transmission,“ 282. — Heimsendalýsingar voru reyndar vinsælt yrkisefni á barokk-tímanum eins og Margrét Eggertsdóttir hefur bent á: *Barokkmeistarinn. List og lærdómur í verkum Hallgríms Péturssonar* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 2005), 216 og áfram. — Katelin Parsons hefur bent á hve upptekinn Guðmundur Erlendsson var af endalokum heimsins í mörgum kvæða sinna: „Songs for the End of the World,“ 96 og víðar.

Hér minnst ljóðmælandi á teikn sem eiga að áminna fólk um yfirvofandi heimsendi, eins og hann gerði í upphafi kvæðis. Þannig rammar dómsdags-spádómurinn inn kvæðið og atburði þess. Kvæðið endar svo á bæn fyrir okkur öllum.

Kvæði séra Guðmundar um jarðskjálftann á Ítalíu er hvort tveggja í senn frásögn af hamförum sem gerðust á erlendri grundu í samtíma skálds og áheyrenda og viðvörun til íslenskra áheyrenda um að veröldin sé hverful, fólk verði að vera viðbúið hinu versta og búa sig undir endalokin.

Magdeborgarvísur 1631

Kvæðið um eyðingu Magdeborgar hefur öll sömu almennu ballöðueinkennin og kvæðið um jarðskjálftann á Ítalíu. Ræðumaður ávarpar áheyrendur sína og biður um athygli þeirra: „Heyrið!“ er upphafsorð kvæðisins og það sem áheyrendur eru beðnir um að hlusta á er frásögn af hinum skelfilegu atburðum sem áttu sér stað í Magdeburg árið 1631. Atburðarásin er rakin allt frá því að hinir kaþólsku herir umkringja borgina og þar til þeir ráðast inn í hana, myrða, nauðga og brjóta niður múra og vegg. Röð sögulegra atburða og lýsingar á þeim í kvæði séra Guðmundar falla mjög vel að þeim upplýsingum sem finnast í evrópskum dreifiritum samtímans.³² Skáldið nafngreindir nokkra af helstu þátttakendum bardagans, tiltekur dagsetningar atburða og greinir frá fjölda þeirra sem fórust og hversu lengi lokaorrustan stóð yfir. Þannig fá áheyrendur mikið af staðreyndum; atburðalýsingar eru myndrænar og áhrifaríkar og atburðarásin spennuþrungin og kvæðið þar með góð dægrastytting.

Í Magdeborgarvísunum felst einnig siðferðisboðskapur eins og í kvæðinu um jarðskjálftann. Skáldið túlkar atburðina í Magdeborg einnig sem viðvörun til landa sinna. Í framhaldi af lýsingum á þjáningum íbúa Magdeborgar, rétt eins og hann gerði í ljóðinu um jarðskjálftann, snýr skáldið sér að sjálfum sér og samlöndum sínum sem eru ósnortnir af stríðinu sem geisar í Evrópu; þeir ættu að þakka fyrir friðinn í hinu „fátæka móðurlandi“, eins og hann orðar það:

32 Þórunn Sigurðardóttir og Þorsteinn Helgason, „Singing the News in Seventeenth-Century Iceland,” 325–326.

Vær sem nú heyrðum hörmung þá
 hvör eð á þessu fólki lá
 þakka ættum það grátandi
 að vér megum friðinn fá
 á fátæku móðurlandi. (29. er.)

Þeir sem ekki gera það ættu að vara sig; þeir geta átt von á reiði Guðs sem ekki verða sett mörk („hendi Guðs er ei markað mið / né mundang sett hans sverði“ (30. er.)).³³

Þeir sem greindu frá og lýstu hinum skelfilegu atburðum í Magdeborg 1631 og dreifðu í prentuðum flugritum hafa, hvort heldur meðvitað eða óbeint, plantað ótta í hjörtu lesenda/áheyrenda um að svipuð örlög gætu beðið fleiri borga á álfunni.³⁴ Þetta má merkja í kvæði séra Guðmundar. Hann túlkar eyðingu Magdeborgar sem fyrirboða um heimsendi: „Efst dags merki er það eitt“ (32. er.), segir hann og minnst einnig á „heimsendi“ í næsta erindi. Að því búnu biður hann Guð um að gæta okkar, hjálpa okkur að enda daga okkar á skaplegan máta og halda friðinn.

Aftaka Karls I. Englandskonungs

Þriðja fréttaballaða séra Guðmundar Erlendssonar fjallar um aftöku Karls I. Englandskonungs 1649 og fjórða kvæðið er „Sorgarkveðja“ konungs sem má einnig flokka með fréttaballöðum. Stjórnarbyltingin í Englandi og aftaka konungs og margra fylgismanna hans vakti mikinn óhug í Evrópu og voru skrifaðar skýrslur, fréttir og frásagnir af atburðunum víða um álfuna og einnig ort kvæði um þá á ýmsum tungumálum.³⁵ Kvæði Guðmundar eru ekki einu vitnisburðir um áhuga Íslendinga á þessu máli. Séra Einar Guðmundsson á Stað á Reykjanesi íslenskaði úr þýsku ritgerð um atburðina en fyrirsögn hefst á þessum orðum: „Engelskt memóriál til ævinlegrar minningar uppteiknað [...] Anno 1651.“³⁶ Í handritinu Lbs

33 Sjá umfjöllun í Þórunn Sigurðardóttir og Þorsteinn Helgason, „Singing the News in Seventeenth-Century Iceland,“ 326 og 329.

34 Jeffrey Chipps Smith, „The Destruction of Magdeburg in 1631: The Art of a Disastrous Victory,“ *Disaster, Death and the Emotions in the Shadow of the Apocalypse, 1400–1700*, ritstj. Jennifer Spinks og Charles Zika (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 253.

35 Una McIlvenna, *Singing the News of Death: Execution Ballads in Europe 1500–1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 314–326.

36 Sjá umfjöllun Jóns Samsonarsonar, „Engelskt memóriál um Karl Stúart I og fylgismenn hans sem voru teknir af lífi 1641–1649. Á íslensku útlagt af Einari Guðmundssyni Anno

1199 4to (bl. 41r–48r) er enn fremur ritgerð um stjórnarbyltinguna sem hefst svona: „Þegar kóngurinn í Englandi Carolus var af general eða foringja parlamentisins Fairfax hafður úr kastala [...].“³⁷ Ritgerðinni lýkur með þessum orðum: „Þetta er í stuttu máli stjórnar umbreyting sem nýlega skeð hefur í Englandi samt þeim processen og lagarétti sem þá viðgekkst. En hvörn enda það muni taka stendur til oooooo Guð umvendi oooooo.“³⁸ Hugsanlega er hér um að ræða útdrátt úr hinu fyrrnefnda riti en það verður ekki kannað hér. Ekki er víst að séra Guðmundur hafi ort út af þessari ritgerð, eða ritgerðum, þótt „minnisannáll“ úr fyrirsögn kvæðisins minni óneitanlega á ritgerð séra Einars „Engelskt memóriál.“³⁹ Hitt er líklegra að séra Guðmundur hafi fyrir sér aftökuballöður á dönsku eða þýsku enda voru allmargar samdar víða um Evrópu út af þessum atburði, m.a. kvæði sem lögð voru konungi í munn eins og styttra kvæði séra Guðmundar um Karl konung sem hefur yfirskriftina „Sorgarkveðja Karls Stúarts konungs.“⁴⁰

Ballaðan um aftöku Karls I. er allöng, 71 erindi, og hefst á yfirlýsingu þar sem skáldið greinir áheyrendum frá því að upplýsingar hans komi úr prentaðri króníku sem gefin var út í London:

Nýr minnisannáll einn er hér
inn í landið fenginn
hvör í Lundún letraður er,
— letraður er —
líka þar fyrst útgenginn. (1. er.)

Söguþráðurinn er dramatískur og æsispennandi, sveiflast á milli þess að konungur mælir til óvina sinna og þriðju persónu frásagnar af svikum við konung og aftöku hans. Atburðinum og aðdraganda hans er lýst nákvæm-

1651,“ *Pétursskip búið Peter Foote sextugum 26. maí 1984* (Reykjavík: Menningar- og minningarsjóður Mette Magnussen, 1984), 35–44. — Ritgerð séra Einars Guðmundssonar er varðveitt í handriti í bókasafni Uppsalaháskóla sem hefur safnmarkið H 248b. Athyglisvert er hversu fréttir af aftöku Karls I. bárust fljótt til Íslands. Þýðing séra Einars er gerð tveimur árum eftir aftökuna.

37 Lbs 1199 4to, bl. 41r. Sjá Jón Samsonarson, „Engelskt memóriál um Karl Stúart I,“ 43.

38 Lbs 1199 4to, bl. 48r. Skorið hefur verið neðan af blaðinu og nokkur orð glatast við það.

39 Jón Samsonarson, „Engelskt memóriál um Karl Stúart I,“ 43.

40 Um aftökuballöður í orðastað hins dæmda, sjá til dæmis Una McIlvenna, „Ballads of Death and Disaster,“ 280, og Siv Gøril Brandtzæg, „Singing the News in the Eighteenth Century,“ 36.

lega í gróteskum og óhugnanlegum smáatriðum. Sagt er frá því að kóngur tekur af sér hálsfesti, þá kápu og treyju, athugaði hvort allt væri í lagi með höggstokkinn, ræðir við böðulinn og spyr hvort hár sitt sé nokkuð fyrir, böðullinn kveður já við því svo kóngur dregur hárið frá hálsinum. Alls 20 erindi (47.–67. er.) fara í að lýsa sjálfri aftökunni, allt frá því að kóngur gengur upp til höggstaðarins og þar til böðullinn lyftir upp höfði hans svo hver maður sæi. Söguhneigð er augljós: Samúðin liggur öll hjá konungi og meintir svikarar, Óliver Cromwell og Tómas Fairfax, fá það óþvegið gegnum allt kvæðið. Um þá er m.a. sagt:

[...]
 fyrir því gengu furstar tveir
 – furstar tveir –
 að fádæmi soddan skeðu. (4. er.)

Annar hét Tómas Fairfax,
 forræðarinn sá versti,
 Ólafur Cromwel ávísast
 – ávísast –
 ásamt honum sá mesti. (5. er.)

Þessir grimmustu greifar tveir
 griðin brutu þau réttu;
 ríkisher öllum réðu þeir,
 – réðu þeir –
 ráðum svo kónginn flettu. (6. er.)

Í næstaftasta erindinu hótar ljóðmælandi hinum „vundu Englendingum“ illum endalokum fyrir að svíkja yfirvald sitt, kónginn. Að lokum snýr ljóðmælandi sér að sínu fólki, rétt eins og hann gerði í hinum tveimur ballöðunum, og biður fyrir sínum kóngi og þegnum hans. Lokaljóðlína kvæðisins „hér skal nú kvæðið dvína“ minnir á hefðbundin lokaorð ævintýra og þjóðsagna, sem styður þá hugmynd að fréttaballöður hafi haft afþreyingargildi.

Sorgarkveðja Karls I.

Séra Guðmundur orti aðra ballöðu um sama efni eins og getið er um hér að framan. Það er kvæði upp á 15 erindi sem er mjög dramatískt. Það hefst á því að Karl konungur er hvattur til að stíga fram og kveðja vini sína og fjölskyldu. Í næstu tólf erindum talar kóngur, ávarpar fjölskyldu og vini og þegna sína, beinir til þeirra hughreystingarorðum og sannfærir þau um að hann sé sáluhólpinn. Aftökuballöður voru oft ortar í orðastað hins dæmda og hefur séra Guðmundur haft eina slíka um Karl I. fyrir sér.⁴¹ Siv Gøril Brandtzæg hefur fært fyrir því rök að norskar ballöður noti oft nútíð til að skapa spennu.⁴² Segja má að það sé eðli fyrstu persónu ræðu eins og í þessu kvæði séra Guðmundar en nútíðin færir atburðina einnig nær áheyrendum. Í lokin stígur ljóðmælandi fyrsta erindis fram og skýrir frá því að þeir hafi nú hlustað á kveðju Karls konungs en lokaerindið er í formi siðaboðskapar til áheyrenda.

Á eftir ballöðunum tveimur um aftöku Karls I. Englandskonungs er þriggja erinda grafskrift þar sem orðum er beint til konungs, hann huggaður með því að jarðnesk kóróna taki jafnan enda en sú himneska blífi um allar aldir (3. er.). Líta má á grafskriftina sem eins konar viðauka við kvæðin tvö.

Samantekt

Fréttaballöður séra Guðmundar Erlendssonar hafa yfirbragð texta sem ætlaður er til flutnings eða söngs til að stytta mönnum stundir. Í þeim er dramatísk sviðsetning, spennandi söguþráður og siðaboðskapur sem beint er til áheyrenda í lokin. Þær byggja allar á raunverulegum atburðum sem gerðust í samtíma skáldsins, náttúruhamförum, stríðshörmungum og pólitískri aftöku. Að því leyti hafa kvæðin fréttagildi. Titlar eru langir og lýsandi, þar sem fram kemur bæði staður og stund og enda á lagboða. Kvæðin eru líklega þýðingar á evrópskum ballöðum en skáldið setur þær í samhengi við veruleika áheyrenda sinna uppi á Íslandi. Kvæðin eru vitnisburður um að kvæðagreinin fréttaballaða hefur borist til Íslands ekki seinna en snemma á sautjándu öld og hefur líklega haft áhrif á íslenskan skáldskap en það á eftir að rannsaka frekar. Hér skal aðeins minnst á kvæði og stakar rímur um sjóhrakninga sem kunna að hafa þegið ýmislegt frá fréttar- eða hamfaraballöðum en eflaust má nefna fleiri tegundir kvæða.

41 Sjá neðanmálgrein 40.

42 Siv Gøril Brandtzæg, „Singing the News in the Eighteenth Century,“ 36.

Ræningjarímur 1627

Við samanburð á efni og efnistöðum í fréttaballöðum og Ræningjarímum séra Guðmundar Erlendssonar kemur í ljós að rímurnar hafa sótt ýmis atriði til kvæðagreinarnar og segja má að skáldið blandi hér saman tveimur hefðum á skapandi hátt. Fyrir það fyrsta dregur titill Ræningjarímna dóm af titlum ballaða sem eru venjulega langir og lýsandi og greina frá atvikinu sem kvæðið fjallar um, stað og stund eins og sést af fyrirsögnum fyrir fréttaballöðum Guðmundar. Titill Ræningjarímna er langur og lýsandi, skilgreinir efnið og hefur bæði tímalega og rýmislega vídd eins og titlar fréttaballaðanna:⁴³

- Ræningjarímur um það hörmungarfulla morð og mannrán, sem skeði í Berufirði og Vestmannaeyjum 1627 þann 27. og 28. júní.
- Ein söngvísa úr þýsku um þann hræðilega jarðskjálfta sem skeði í Vallandi 1627, með öðrum fleirum stórteiknum sem þar saúst og heyrðust, svo þar umturnuðust 5 borgir sem svo nefndust: St. Paulo, St. Severo, Cassel Maiore, Cassel Minore og Corporino. Tón: Hvör hjálpast vill í heimsins kvöl.
- Um þá hörmulegu foreyðing Magdeborgar sem skeði 1631 í maí-mánuði. Sami tón.
- Stutt inntak þess fáheyrða og frábæra morðs sem sú fairfaxíska stríðsmagt á Englandi gjörði sínum kóngi Karli Stúart. Tón: Eins og sitt barn. 1648.

Hugsanlega eru þetta áhrif frá munnlegri hefð en Siv Gøril Brandtzæg telur hina löngu titla einnig bera vott um áherslu kvæðagreinarnar á líðandi stund.⁴⁴

Rímurnar hefjast á því að áheyrendur eru beðnir um að leggja við hlustir: „hlýði fólk í ranni“, segir ljóðmælandi. Algengt er að fréttaballöður hefjist á því að ávarpa áheyrendur og biðja um athygli þeirra eins og sést af þremur af þeim fjórum ballöðum sem séra Guðmundur orti og fjallað er um hér að framan. Efni Ræningjarímna byggist á fréttum af rán-

43 Fyrirsögn Ræningjarímna er tekin úr útgáfunni í *Tyrkjaráninu á Íslandi 1627*, 465, en fyrir-sagnir ballaðanna úr handritinu JS 232 4to. Fyrirsagnir í Lbs 1055 4to eru hinar sömu eða mjög áþekkar.

44 Sjá Siv Gøril Brandtzæg, „Singing the News in the Eighteenth Century,“ 30–31.

skap og óhæfuverkum sjóræningja í Vestmannaeyjum og umfjöllunum um atburðina í skrifum manna. Fréttaballöður byggjast einnig á hræðilegum samtímaviðburðum og skáldin styðjast við samtímaheimildir.

Í rímunum er atburðarás Tyrkjaránsins lýst nákvæmlega. Slóð ræningjanna er fylgt um landið og ótal örnefni nefnd frásögninni til stuðnings, sem og nöfn fólks sem ræningjarnir réðust á. Dæmi um notkun örnefna má sjá í eftirfarandi vísum úr fyrstu rímu:

Þessi norður sigldu um sjá,
sum voru hinum stærri,
austan komu yfir æginn blá
undir *Hornið* nærri. (26. er.)

Skíptust þar í skikkun lík
skaðleg ráðin sömdu
greiddust niður um *Grindavík*
og grimman ránskap frömdu. (27. er.)

Amirállinn austan fór
af því heljartogi
til *Berufjarðar* branda jór
brátt að *Djúpvavogi*. (28. er.)

Grimdarlegar létu en ljón
lýðurinn þeygi frjálsi
úr sæng þeir tóku *séra Jón*
er sat á *Beruhálsi*. (39. er.)⁴⁵

Dagsetningar koma fyrir í rímunum sem bera vott um „fréttagildi“ þeirra. Í þriðju rímu segir þannig: „Reisan byrjast þá nam því / þrítugasta dag Júlíj“ (41. er.) og „Öndverðlega í Augusto“ (58 er.). Meira að segja tiltekur skáldið tíma dags þegar eitthvað átti sér stað eins og sést í fyrstu rímu: „Að eyjum komu árla dags“ (66. er.). Þannig er bæði rými og tími stór þáttur í framvindu sögunnar. Hún gerist á ákveðnum tíma — samtíma skáldsins — á ákveðnum stöðum í landinu og snertir ákveðið fólk sem áheyrendur hafa vafalaust þekkt eða haft spurnir af, a.m.k. sumum hverjum.

45 Beinar tilvitnanir úr Ræningjarímum eru teknar úr útgáfu þeirra í *Tyrkjarárinu á Íslandi* 1627. Skáletur er frá mér komið.

Lýsingar á drápum, limlestingum og nauðgunum eru dramatískar og gróteskar eins og eftirfylgjandi dæmi úr fyrstu rímu sýnir:

Ungmennið sem létu á leið
 liggja og fyrri bundu,
 þar í fjötrum þeirra beið,
 það nú aftur fundu. (43. er.)

Ennið ristú ofanvert
 yfir með hári sléttu
 og því síðan öllu um þvert
 ofan á kinnar flettu. (44. er.)

Grimmd því meiri geðs höfum spurt
 grimmir vargar báru,
 hans og báða huppa í burt
 háðuglegana skáru. (45. er.)

Þetta er aðeins eitt dæmi af ótalmörgum lýsingum á grimmdarverkum ræningjanna gagnvart saklausu fólki.

Frásögnin af Tyrkjaráninu fer aðeins fram í þremur rímum en í síðustu rímunnni — hinni fjórðu — sem hefur yfirskriftina „Fjórða ríma, sem er ein góðviljug áminning til allra þeirra, sem þessar hörmungar-rímur heyra“ veitir skáldið áheyrendum áminningu og les þeim varnaðarorð — í stíl fréttaballaða. Hinir hræðilegu atburðir gerðust vegna almennrar óhlýðni og slæmrar hegðunar Íslendinga og skáldið kallar þá „Eyjanna straff“ eða refsingu Vestmannaeyja í fjórðu rímu:

Annað er sem einninn ber
 af *Eyjanna straffi* að læra,
 virðist mér það verðugt hér
 í víurnar inn að færa. (17. er.)

Hann brýnir samlanda sína til að hlýða drottni og biðja fyrir friði í landinu rétt eins og hann gerði í fréttaballöðum sínum.

Ræningjarímur eru ekki skáldskapur eins og rímur voru að jafnaði. Séra

Guðmundur hefði getað sett Tyrkjaránið í búning fréttaballöðu. Efnið var tilvalið fyrir kvæðagreinina og hann hafði kynnst henni og sjálfur ort eða snúið á íslensku fréttaballöðum af erlendum atburðum. Hann hefði einnig getað ort huggunar- eða minningarkvæði af þessu tilefni eins og sum önnur skáld gerðu.⁴⁶ En rímnahefðin var sterk í landinu á þessum tíma — fréttaballöður lítið þekktar — og með því að yrkja rímur um óhæfuverk sjóræningjanna hefur honum ef til vill fundist hann frekar ná til áheyranda sinna. Það að hann valdi rímnaformið sýnir einnig að hann lítur á frásögnina ekki bara sem viðvörðun og minningu um hræðilega atburði heldur einnig sem spennandi afþreyingu og það gerir einnig sú aðferð sem hann notaði, að nýta sér bókmenntaleg einkenni fréttaballaða í rímunum. Þá má benda á að hvorar tveggja kvæðagreinarnar eru ætlaðar til flutnings — söngs eða kveðandi.

Niðurstöður

Náttúruhamfarir, stríð og aðrar hörmungar hafa alltaf átt sér stað og snert mannleg samfélög og einstaklinga á ýmsa vegu. Viðbrögð við slíkum atburðum og birtingarmyndir þeirra í bókmenntum eru jafnan háð menningarlegum þáttum og aðstæðum hverju sinni. Á fyrri hluta sautjándu aldar kynntust skáld eins og séra Guðmundur Erlendsson í Felli bókmenntagreinum sem vinsælar voru erlendis og fjölluðu um slíkt efni. Skáldin tileinkuðu sér aðferðir og efnistöð þessara bókmennta til að átta sig á ógnvænlegum atburðum heima og erlendis, gefa þeim merkingu, setja þá í stærra samhengi, samsama sig örlögum annarra eða aðskilja sig frá þeim. Bókmenntagreinarnar sem hér um ræðir eru fréttaballöður. Séra Guðmundur orti eða þýddi nokkrar slíkar sem fjalla um hamfarir og hörmungar í Evrópu og hann notaði bókmenntaleg einkenni þeirra í rímum sínum um Tyrkjaránið á Íslandi 1627. Áhrifa fréttaballaða gætir vafalaust í íslenskum kveðskap síðari alda í meira mæli en hér hefur gefist ráðrúm til að rannsaka.

46 Nokkur slík kvæði eru prentuð í *Tyrkjaráninu á Íslandi 1627*, 501 o.áfr. — Löngu síðar eða árið 1665 orti séra Guðmundur erfiljóð um Benedikt Pálsson, sonarson Guðbrands biskups Þorlákssonar, sem hafði lent í klóm sjóræningja á leið sinni heim frá Hamborg. Hann var fluttur til Algeirsborgar og seldur í ánaud en keyptur heim að þremur árum liðnum. Um þetta fjallar skáldið í erfiljóðinu en hluti af því var prentaður í *Tyrkjaráninu á Íslandi 1627*, 455–463.

VIÐAUKI

SÉRA GUÐMUNDUR ERLENDSSON Í FELLI
NOKKRAR FRÉTTABALLÖÐUR

Hér eru gefnar út þrjár fréttaballöður eftir séra Guðmund Erlendsson, ein um jarðskjálfta á Ítalíu 1627, tvær um aftöku Karls I. Englandskonungs 1649 og kvæðisauki sem er grafskrift Karls konungs. Í öllum tilvikum eru uppskriftir handritsins JS 232 4to lagðar til grundvallar útgáfunni en lesbrigði úr Lbs 1055 4to gefin aftast. Bæði handritin geyma stórt safn kvæða eftir skáldið sem hann kallaði Gígju. Hið fyrrnefnda er skrifað af syni hans Skúla Guðmundssyni árið 1688. Hið síðara er skrifað af Markúsi Eyjólfssyni árið 1787 eftir eftirriti Jóns Ólafssonar á Lambavatni frá árunum 1692–1694 en hann mun hafa skrifað eftir eiginhandarriti skáldsins eftir því sem fram kemur á titilsíðu. Lengra kvæðið um aftöku Karls I. er einnig í handritinu Lbs 1529 4to sem var m.a. skrifað af Halli Guðmundssyni, öðrum syni skáldsins, og að öllum líkindum er sumt með hendi Guðmundar sjálfs.⁴⁷ Tekin verða lesbrigði úr þessu handriti. Kvæðin eru til uppskrifuð í fleiri handritum en ekki verður tekið tillit til þeirra í útgáfunni. Kvæðin eru gefin út stafrétt en leyst úr böndum með skáletri. Stafurinn æ er að jafnaði með tvípunkti (æ) í aðalhandriti en hér skrifað æ. Til hliðar eru kvæðin prentuð með nútímastafsetningu og greinarmerkjasetningu útgefanda.

*

UM JARÐSKJÁLFTA Á ÍTALÍU 1627

Ein saungvijsa wr þýsku, *vmm þann Hrædelega Jarðskjálfta*, sem skiedi j Vallannde 1627, med *ødrum fleyrumm stórteiknumm*, sem þar säust og heyrðust, so þar *vmmturnudust* 5 Borgir, sem so Nefndust, S: Paulo, S: Severö, Cassel Mäiore, Cassel Minöre, og Corporinö. Tön. Huør hialpast vill j heimsinns kuøl.⁴⁸

Ein söngvísa úr þýsku um þann hræðilega jarðskjálfta sem skeði í Vallandi 1627, með öðrum fleirum stórteiknum sem þar säust og heyrðust, svo þar umturnuðust fimm borgir sem svo nefndust: St. Paulo, St. Severo, Cassel Maiore, Cassel Minore og Corporino. Tón: Hvör hjálpast vill í heimsins kvöl.

47 Katelin Marit Parsons sýndi fram á það í doktorsritgerð sinni, *Songs for the End of the World*, að handritið varðveiti brot úr Gígju, kvæðabók séra Guðmundar.

48 Skrifað eftir JS 232 4to, bl. 52v–53v (tölusetning í handriti 41v–42v). Tölusetningar blaða miðast við myndir á www.handrit.is.

1

Christinn líður athuga hier
og vmmhuga með siälfumm þier
huað hörð sie herranz Reidi
teikn ýmisleg
ä allann veg
oss fyrir siönir leidir.

2

Þö vill einnginn athuga það
öllum teikn hafa hier líttinn stad
fullrj foröckun mäta
manneskiann blinn
þvi víkur j vinnd
vill eckj gude sæta.

3

Hvar af þess er að vænta víst
verðskulldud Reidi til vor snijst
hinna ungu sem Elldrj
nema Nidur
sig hneygi huor
hannz fyrir náðar velldi.

4

Þvi ættumm vier við synnd að siä
og siälfan IESŪM hröpa ä
víz er hann vægd að sijna
og gefa oss til
af ástar j
enn fyrir miskun sijna.

1

Kristinn lýður, athuga hér
og umhuga með sjálfum þér
hvað hörð sé herrans reiði;
teikn ýmisleg
á allan veg
oss fyrir sjónir leidir.

2

Þó vill enginn athuga það,
öllum teikn hafa hér lítinn stað,
fullri foröckun mäta;
manneskjan blind
því víkur í vind,
vill ekki Guði sæta.

3

Hvar af þess er að vænta víst
verðskulduð reiði til vor snýst
hinna ungu sem eldri,
nema niður
sig hneygi hvör
hans fyrir náðarveldi.

4

Þvi ættum vér við synd að sjá
og sjálfan Jesúm hröpa á,
vís er hann vægd að sína
og gefa oss til
af ástaryl
enn fyrir miskun sína.

5

Þúsund 6 hundrud 20 og tuð
 tilleggiast 5 þá eru sið
 Eirnn jarðskjálftj er ordinn
 j Jtaliä
 so almennt sä
 vmm velltist þorp og jörðin.

6

Þar heyrðust dunur þrátt vm skj
 þann þrijtugasta dag Julj
 og sem nü kom ad kuellid
 liömadj tijdt
 vm loptid vijdt
 leyptur af megnumm Elldj.

7

Jarðskjálftinn heila viku var
 vijst Einum deigi þö frekar
 5 störa stadi felldi
 vmvelltust 'þeir'
 so Eckj meyr |
 eru sienir ä velldj.

8

Þegar huad verða villdi sier
 vesallt folk sem j stöðunumm er
 hröpanndi hof ad mæla
 hiälpa oss þü
 herra gud nü
 hiä þier finnst Näðinn sæla.

5

Þúsund sex hundruð tuttugu og tvö
 tilleggjast fimm þá eru sjö,
 einn jarðskjálfti er orðinn
 í Ítaliá
 svo almennt sä;
 umveltist þorp og jörðin.

6

Þar heyrðust dunur þrátt um ský
 þann þritugasta dag júli
 og sem nú kom að kveldi
 ljómaði títt
 um loftið vítt
 leiftur af megnum eldi.

7

Jarðskjálftinn heila viku var,
 víst einum degi þö frekar,
 fimm stóra staði felldi,
 umveltust þeir
 svo ekki meir
 eru sénir á veldi.

8

Þegar hvað verða vildi sér
 vesælt fólk sem í stöðunum er
 hrópandi hóf að mæla:
 ‚Hjálpa oss þú,
 herra Guð, nú,
 hjá þér finnast náðin sæla.‘

9

Ach: þu hin auma Íslanndz bygð
athuga slikt með gödrj trygd
sijðan og set j minnj
6 hundrud mannz
j dauda dannz
dröust j þessu sinni.

10

Eitt mikid vatn sig vpptök þar
áður sem þesse Byggijng var
strax huad með straumj kølldumm
burt spennj senn
Bæe og menn
Braust fram m með sterkum ølldumm.

11

Kollgieck Bygdin Bændur sem hiu
Børnn og penijnga Mødann sü
allt mættj æfigrandj
allmargur þar
vppetinn var
af wlfumm A huijtumm sanndj.

12

Ein gjä so stö r þar opnadest
er 16 Mijlur vegar siest
vpphöf sig og allvíða
flöt jörðinn þä
sem fjöll ad siä
fólkið nam särt ad kuijda.

9

Ach! Þú hin auma Íslands byggð,
athuga slíkt með góðri tryggð
síðan og set í minni:
Sex hundruð manns
í dauða dans
drógust í þessu sinni.

10

Eitt mikið vatn sig upptök þar
áður sem þessi bygging var,
strax hvað með straumi köldum
burt spennit senn
bæi og menn,
braust fram með sterkum öldum.

11

Kollgekk byggðin, bændur sem hjú,
börn og peningamóðan sú,
allt mætti ævigrandi;
allmargur þar
uppetinn var
af úlfum á hvítum sandi.

12

Ein gjá svo stór þar opnaðist
er sextán mílur vegar sést,
upphóf sig og allvíða
flöt jörðin þá
sem fjöll að sjá,
fólkið nam sárt að kvíða.

13

Heyrðist j lopti hark og gniyr
 hrøpun stiarnanna sig til bijr
 Å jørð lijkast sem lidj
 yfir Severö stad
 með sanni það
 sorgar til Efnid skiedj.

14

Sem þesse ögnn j burtu bräst
 Berlega tialld j loptj säst
 wtüüid til Bardaga
 so ad huor mä
 sem heyrir og sä
 hiartanlega sig klaga.

15

Tuø suerd j kross yfir tialldj þa
 tilreidd bædi huor madur sä
 Blödug og Beinmt þar stannda
 Eirnn herra mann
 sem hygðj hann
 hegnandi nøckrumm grannda.

16

Þar heyrðist Rödd með hörðum *gnij
 hün kalladj IRA DEI
 gudz Reidi *þjdir þetta
 tuø tungl j senn
 þar säu menn
 sem Blöd til grunna detta.

13

Heyrðist í lofti hark og gnýr,
 hrøpun stjarnanna sig tilbýr
 á jörð líkast sem liði
 yfir Severöstað
 með sanni það
 sorgar tilefnið skeði.

14

Sem þessi ógn í burtu brást
 berlega tjald í lofti sást
 útbúið til bardaga,
 svo að hvör má
 sem heyrir og sä
 hjartanlega sig klaga.

15

Tvö sverð í kross yfir tjaldi þá
 tilreidd bæði, hvör maður sá,
 blóðug og beint þar standa;
 einn herramann
 sem hygði hann
 hegnandi nokkrum granda.

16

Þar heyrðist rödd með hörðum gný,
 hún kallaði: ‚IRA DEI,‘
 Guðs reiði þýðir þetta;
 tvö tungl í senn
 þar sáu menn
 sem blóð til grunna detta.

17

Fiórar Meýar frammeingu þar
fannhúijt klædi huor þeirra bar
sig drottinn sögdu senn
þriü dægur enn
vm geingu senn
med oliu kuist j hennj.

18

Aminntu þær til jdranar
j þjidskalannd voru sennar
Rö og | frid mest Rádlögdu
hagl, Elld og stríð
sem harda tíð
hardsuijrudumm tilsögdu.

19

Þegar að höfdu fólkid frædt
fyrnefndar meýar süngu sætt
heilagur er vor herra
heilagur er
heilagt ä hier
hannz lof j minnj ad vera.

20

Sendar af gudj Reidumm Riett
Rædumm vær oss því hatid prett
Metnadar og meinsæra
ofdryckia liöt
Ägyrnnd og blöt
yður j hel vill færa.

17

Fjórar meýar fram gengu þar,
fannhvít klæði hvör þeirra bar,
sig drottinn sögðu sendi;
þrjú dægur enn
um gengu senn
með oliukvist í hendi.

18

Áminntu þær til iðranar,
í Þýskaland voru sendar,
ró og frið mest ráðlögðu;
hagl, eld og stríð
sem harða tíð
harðsvíruðum tilsögðu.

19

Þegar að höfðu fólkid frætt
fyrnefndar meýar sungu sætt:
,heilagur er vor herra,
heilagur er,
heilagt á hér
hans lof í minni að vera.'

20

Sendar af Guði reiðum rétt,
ræðum vær oss því hátíð prett
metnaðar og meinsæra;
ofdrykkja ljót,
ágirnd og blót
yður í hel vill færa.

21

Enn frammar sögdu allar þá
 ord drottinnz þeir sem hier forsmä
 og hannz þienørumm þiaka
 öseigannde
 Eymmdir og vie
 wt munu seirna taka.

22

Christur snart hijngad vitia vill
 verølldinn ä ad Enndast jll
 Dömj ömilldir mäta
 hrekiast fra þvi
 helraunum j
 honum sem nu ei sæta.

23

Sem Nü duijnad j dyrlegt skraf
 drepsöttar þoka fram sig gaf
 iij hundrud fölkz þar felldi
 lijðumm so fra
 lidu þær þä
 lät vina margann hrelldj.

24

Þau miklu teikn og margvijsleg
 menn sem lijta ä allan veg
 siönir sem sanna drauma
 tiä oss það gjör
 en tungan tier
 tijðina ad höfum nauma.

21

Enn frammar sögðu allar þá:
 ,Orð drottins þeir sem hér forsmá
 og hans þénurum þjaka
 ósegjandi
 eymdir og vé
 út munu seinna taka.

22

Kristur snart hingað vitja vill,
 veröldin á að endast ill,
 dómi ómildir mäta;
 hrekjast frá því
 helraunum í
 honum sem nú ei sæta.'

23

Sem nú dvínaði dyrlegt skraf
 drepsöttar þoka fram sig gaf;
 þrjú hundruð fólks þar felldi;
 lýðum svo frá
 liðu þær þá;
 lát vina margan hrelldi.

24

Þau miklu teikn og margvísleg
 menn sem líta á allan veg,
 sjónir sem sanna drauma,
 tjá oss það gjör
 en tungan tér
 tíðina að höfum nauma.

25

Ö herra Gud, ö Christe Kiær
 Christz og fõðursinnz Anndinn skiær
 ö þú þrenninginn þijda
 ö Einijnnz sønn
 oss øllum vnn
 Eilijfa huijld að Bijda.
 Amen. Amen.

25

Ó herra Guð, ó Kriste kær,
 Krists og fõðursins andinn skær,
 ó þú þrenningin þýða,
 ó eining sönn,
 oss øllum unn
 eilífa hvíld að bíða.
 Amen. Amen.

Lesbrigði úr Lbs 1055 4to, bl. 121r–122r (tölusetning í handriti bls. 235–237):

2.5 þvi] þeim 1055. 4.3 víz er] visar 1055. 5.6 velltist] velltust 1055. 6.2 þann] ÷ 1055. 7.3
 5] sex 1055. 7.4 þeir] fyrst skrifað þar en þeir skr. utanmáls og merkt inn. 8.2 stõdunumm]
 stadnum 1055. 16.1 hõrdumm] háfum 1055. *gný] þannig 1055 grij 232. 16.3 *þijdir þetta]
 öflug röð í 232, leiðrétt eftir 1055. 16.4 j] þar 1055. 16.6 grunna] gumna 1055. 17. 5 geingu]
 fóru 1055. 19.6 að] ÷ 1055. 25.2 andinn] andi 1055. 25.4 ö] og 1055.

*

AFTAKA KARLS I. ENGLANDSKONUNGS 1649

Stutt jnntak þess fáheyrdra og frábæra mordz sem sü FairFaxiska strijdz magt ä
 Einnglannde giørde sijnum Konge, Karl Stewart. Ton. Einnz og sitt Barn. 1648.⁴⁹

Stutt inntak þess fáheyrdra og frábæra morðs sem sú fairfaxíska stríðsmagt á Englandi
 giørði sínum kóngi Karli Stúart. Tón: Eins og sitt barn. 1648.

49 JS 232 4to, bl. 92r–94v á www.handrit.is (tölusetning í handriti 81r–83v).

1

Níjr minniss Annáll einn er hier
 jnn j lanndid feinninn
 huor j Lundwn letradur er
 letradur er
 lijka þar fyrst útgeinninn.

2

Kynnir hann frá ad Karl Stewart
 köngur Einlanndz manna
 lidid hafj þar mikid og margt
 mikid og margt
 má það øll verølld sanna.

3

Hoffölkid tøk sig harla fast
 honum vpp ä mötj
 þar með tilfærði lygar og last
 lygar og last
 laga so aungra Niötj.

4

Helmijng almügannz eda meir
 vnnðann honum so Riedu
 fyrir þuj geinngu Førstar tuejyr
 Først: tuejyr
 ad fädæmi soddann skiedu.

5

Annar hiet Thömas FairFax
 forræðarinn sä vestj
 Oláfur Krømvel ävjsast
 ävjsast
 äsamt honum sä mesti.

1

Nýr minnisannáll einn er hér
 inn í landið fenginn
 hvör í Lundún letraður er,
 – letraður er –
 líka þar fyrst útgenginn.

2

Kynnir hann frá að Karl Stúart,
 köngur Englands manna,
 liðið hafi þar mikið og margt,
 – mikið og margt –
 má það öll veröld sanna.

3

Hoffólkið tók sig harla fast
 honum upp á móti,
 þar með tilfærði lygar og last,
 – lygar og last –
 laga svo öngra njóti.

4

Helming almúgans eða meir
 undan honum svo réðu;
 fyrir því gengu furstar tveir
 – furstar tveir –
 að fádæmi soddan skeðu.

5

Annar hét Tómas Fairfax,
 forræðarinn sá versti,
 Ólafur Cormwell ávísast
 – ávísast –
 ásamt honum sá mesti.

6

Þessir grimmustu Greýfar tueýr
gridinn brutu þaug Riettu
Rijkiz her øllum Riedu þeir
Riedu þeir
Räðum so konginn flettu.

7

Thömas hinndradj trúarbrøgd
og tijdsku lannðsinnz göða
Enn Nijfunnderud lög jnnløgð
lög jnnløgð
liet ä prent frambjóða.

8

Könnur þar mest ä mötj stöð
so mætti böt ä vinna
lika þö gilltj lijf og Blöd
lijf og Blöd
lanndz jnnbyggjara sinna.

9

Lög og frijheit sem honum bar
hann villdi lannðsinnz stidia
tilneiddur af vandlætjng var
vandl: var
voda slijkumm ad Rida.

10

Hoffólk og Rädid hønnum þuj
hafnar j allann Mäta
sijdann Byriudu samtök nij
samtök nij
so hann vard vnnðann läta.

6

Þessir grimmostu greifar tveir
gridin brutu þau réttu;
rikisher öllum réðu þeir,
– réðu þeir –
ráðum svo kónginn flettu.

7

Tómas hindraði trúarbrøgd
og tísku landsins göða
en nýfunderuð lög innlögð
– lög innlögð –
lét á prent frambjóða.

8

Kóngur þar mest á móti stóð
svo mætti bót á vinna,
líka þó gildi líf og blóð
– líf og blóð –
lands innbyggjara sinna.

9

Lög og friheit sem honum bar
hann vildi landsins styðja,
tilneyddur af vandlætng var
– vandlætng var –
voða slíkum að ryðja.

10

Hoffólk og ráðið honum því
hafnar í allan máta,
síðan byrjuðu samtök ný
– samtök ný –
svo hann varð undan láta.

11

Þanninn feingu frá Rádum Rícht
og Ráku með Naudunng sárrj
wt af Lundün j Eýna Wycht
j eýna W:
Einniginn kíør budust skárrj.

12

Herskipa⁵⁰ vackt þvi halldinn var
huorgi so burt má leita
j lánnga tíjma lucktur sat þar
lucktur | sat þar
lid honum aungvir veita.

13

Þö voru nøckrir þjóðnar hannz
þar sem ei burtu Runnu
hier vmm bil (máskie) hundrad mannz
hundr: mannz
honum þvi vægðar vmm.

14

Vmm þennann tíjma þeinktu Räd
þeir sem ä mötj stöðu
ad honum jrdj aptur näd
aptur näd
wr Eýnne Wycht með göðu.

15

Nija vid hann samtöku sätt
og siälfur skilldj Rita
fridar Trachtät ä feskan hätt
ä fesk: hätt
og fastmælum skilldu hnyta.

11

Þanninn fengu frá ráðum rykkt
og ráku með nauðung sárrí
út af Lundún í eyna Wycht,
– í eyna Wycht –
engin kjör buðust skárrí.

12

Herskipavakt þvi haldin var,
hvörgi svo burt má leita;
í langa tíma luktur sat þar,
– luktur sat þar –
lið honum öngvir veita.

92v

13

Þó voru nokkrir þjóðnar hans
þar sem ei burtu runnu;
hér um bil (máskie) hundrad manns
– hundrad manns –
honum þvi vægðar unnu.

14

Um þennan tíma þeinktu ráð
þeir sem á móti stóðu
að honum yrði aftur näd
– aftur näd –
úr eynni Wycht með göðu.

15

Nýja við hann samtöku sätt
og själfur skyldi rita
friðartraktat á ferskan hátt
– á ferskan hátt –
og fastmælum skyldu hnýta.

50 Litill miði er límdur yfir fyrri hluta orðsins en „Herskipa“ stendur í 1055.

16

Konünnleg *nad þad* kiørj skiött
 kostur þöttj sä bestj
 liüfann sattmäla letrar fljótt
 letrar fljótt
 lanndz fridinn so stadfestj.

17

J þuj Bilj wtsendur var
 Einn mann af Rádsinnz henndj
 Colcobet til hannz kiemur þar
 kemur þar
 með kynia lid framn vendj.

18

Könginum sijdann sögdu blijdt
 samtökinn giörvöll stædj
 Tygin herra því trwdj lijtt
 því trüdi lijtt
 tefia þö ei vid Nædi.

19

Var þuj fluttur með valldi af þeim
 vondumm wtsendara
 Liüfur herra j Lunndun heim
 j Lundun heim
 lid tök hann margt til vara.

20

Hann fyrir Rádid hafður var
 enn herrar tueyr fyrnefn<d>u
 yfirdömarar vrdu þar
 vrdu þar
 ä hannz lijf bádir stefndu.

16

Konungleg náð það kjöri skjótt,
 kostur þótti sá besti,
 ljúfan sáttmäla letrar fljótt,
 – letrar fljótt –
 landsfriðinn svo staðfesti.

17

Í því bili útsendur var
 einn mann af ráðsins hendi,
 Colcobet til hans kemur þar
 – kemur þar –
 með kynjalið fram vendi.

18

Könginum síðan sögðu blítt
 samtökin giörvöll stæði;
 tigin herra því trúði lítt,
 – því trúði lítt –
 tefja þó ei við næði.

19

Var því fluttur með valdi af þeim
 vondum útsendara,
 ljúfur herra í Lundún heim,
 – í Lundún heim –
 lið tók hann margt til vara.

20

Hann fyrir ráðið hafður var
 en herrar tveir fyrnefnđu
 yfirdómarar urðu þar,
 – urðu þar –
 á hans líf báðir stefndu.

21

Þá voru soddan sakir brátt
sagðar honum ä hendur
að hann værj ä allann hätt
<ä allann hätt>
ödäda madur kiennður.

22

Einnkummm trygdalauz týranne
talinn ä þessu þjinnngi
fólksinnz övin forrædare
forrædare
og fullkominn mordiynngi.

23

Könnur suarar: eg kiennist sijst
kløgun og frammburd yðar
gømul frijheit eg villdj vijst
eg villdj vijst
veria til lanndsinnz fridar.

24

Enn hermid mier af huorrj macht
heyrast so meigi vijða
að hafi þier ä mig hennður lagt
hennður lagt
hier skal mitt forsuar bijða.

25

Til gudz eg votta vil og mä
að villða eg yður hid besta
vijkid þvi yðar veigi frá
og verkummm frá
værj þeim hent að fresta.

21

Þá voru soddan sakir brátt
sagðar honum á hendur
að hann væri á allan hátt
– á allan hátt –
óðáðamaður kennður.

22

Einkum tryggðalaus týranni
talinn á þessu þingi;
fólksins övin forræðari
– forræðari –
og fullkominn morðingi.

23

Kóngur svarar: „Ég kennist síst
kløgun og framburð yðar,
gømul friheit ég vildi víst
– ég vildi víst –
verja til landsins friðar.“

24

„En hermið mér af hvörri makt
heyrast svo megi víða
að hafi þér á mig hendur lagt;
– hendur lagt –
hér skal mitt forsvar bíða.“

25

„Til Guðs ég votta vil og má
að vilda ég yður hið besta,
víkið þvi yðar vegi frá,
– og verkum frá –
væri þeim hent að fresta.“

26

Enn ef það vilied *eckj* siä
og áfram stunnid ad hallda
allt mun verda Eptir ä
Eptir ä
Einglannd með sorg ad giallda. |

27

Yður villir sü ærugyrnd
ecki mun hægt ad Kiefia
Betur væri j Burtu spyrnd
j Burt: spyrnd
og Bräddæmj slijkt ad tefia.

28

Fäe eg siälfur so Raudann Riett
Räda mä þar af siðann
huorsu mitt fätækt fólk er sett
fólk er sett
fram þegar stunnidur lijda.

29

Eg kref þier sijnid *ydar* magt
Eirnn Könng so ad dæma
fyrr enn atkvædi ä er lagt
ä er lagt
eg sem *vid* hliötj ad sæma.

30

Almügin giefur oss það valld
ansadj Rädid strijda
ad þü skulir hid jsta gialld
hid jsta gialld
fyrir jllskur þijnar lijda.

26

,En ef það viljð ekki sjä
og áfram stundið ad halda,
allt mun verða eftir ä
– eftir ä –
England með sorg ad gjalda.‘

27

,Yður villir sü ærugirnd,
ekki mun hægt ad kefja,
betur væri i burtu spyrnd
– i burtu spyrnd –
og bräddæmi slíkt ad tefja.‘

28

,Fái eg själfur svo rauðan rétt,
ráða mä þar af siðan
hvörsu mitt fätækt fólk er sett
– fólk er sett –
fram þegar stundir líða.‘

29

,Ég kref þér sýnið *yðar* magt
einn kóng svo ad dæma
fyrr en atkvæði ä er lagt,
– ä er lagt –
ég sem við hljóti ad sæma.‘

30

,Almügin giefur oss það vald,‘
ansaði ráðið stríða,
,að þú skulir hið ysta gjald
– hið ysta gjald –
fyrir illskur þinar líða.

93r

31

Eckert *forsuar og Einnginn* Bön
wt hiedann mä þig leýsa
þuj skalltu vpp fyrir allra siön
fyrir allra siön
ä aftøku stadinn Reýsa.

32

Þä var dömur vppsagdur sä
samtal er linn^{tj} þetta
þar skilldj plässe opnu ä
opnu ä
med Øxi könn^{ginn} Rietta.

33

Loptvyrke Eitt þar vpp var bygt
vnn^{dir} himnⁿⁱ berum^m
Næsta Mikid og Nijstärlicht
og nijstärlicht
nög Rädagiørð var hier vmm.

34

Minnunst ä þad hannz Mäiestät
med förstalega Sidj
allchristilega gefur gät
g: g:
ad geingnu döms atridj.

35

Hann stöd þar med sinn hatt vppä
hafdist so vid med prijdj
honum vid döminn huørgi Brä
og huørgi Brä
heyrdist ei neinu kuijdj.

31

Ekkert forsvar og engin bön
út héðan má þig leysa,
því skaltu upp fyrir allra sjön
– fyrir allra sjön –
á aftökustaðinn reisa.⁴

32

Þá var dómur uppsagður sä,
samtal er linn^{tj} þetta,
þar skildi plássi opnu á
– opnu á –
með öxi kónginn rétta.

33

Loftvirki eitt þar upp var byggt
undir himni berum,
næsta mikið og nýstärlicht,
– og nýstärlicht –
nóg ráðagjörð var hér um.

34

Minumst á það hans majistet
með furstalega siði,
allkristilega gefur gát
– gefur gát –
að gengnu döms atriði.

35

Hann stóð þar með sinn hatt uppá,
hafðist svo við með prýði,
honum við döminn hvørgi brá,
– og hvørgi brá –
heyrðist ei neinu kviði.

36

J Svefnherberge sitt *var* hann
 síðan fluttur að Bragdj
 Byskup Juxon huort vitia vann
 h:v:v:
 sem verðug *hannz* Näd tilsagdj.

37

Hannz Mäiestet hugleida tök
 honum huad *byskup* tiedi
 samtal það *könngi* sælum*m* jök
 sælum*m* jök
 sæta huggun og gledj.

38

Á mánudagi*nn* v*mm* morgun stund
 midt j James Kyrkiu
 tuð Børn*inn* hannz þar feinngu fund
 þar f:f:
 með fagnadartära merkium*m*.

39

Fortø lur göðar fyrir þeim
 fluttj á margar lunn*dir*
 og gladdj með Gymsteinum*m* tueim
 Gymst: tueim
 ö grátlegir harma funn*dir*.

40

Blessadj síðan Børn*inn* sæt
 Burt fyrir enn tekinn væri
 af þeim sem á þeim | giefur giæt
 g:g:
 gløgt mun þaug naudug færj.

36

Í svefnherbergi sitt var hann
 síðan fluttur að bragði;
 biskup Juxon hvört vitja vann
 – hvört vitja vann –
 sem verðug hans náð til sagði.

37

Hans majistet hugleiða tók
 honum hvað biskup téði;
 samtal það kóngi sælum jök
 – sælum jök –
 sæta huggun og gleði.

38

Á mánudaginn um morgunstund
 mitt í James kirkju
 tvö börnin hans þar fengu fund
 – þar fengu fund –
 með fagnaðartára merkjum.

39

Fortölur göðar fyrir þeim
 flutti á margar lundir
 og gladdi með gimsteinum tveim.
 – gimsteinum tveim –
 Ó, grátlegir harmafundir.

40

Blessaði síðan börnin sæt
 burt fyrir en tekinn væri
 af þeim sem á þeim gefur gæt, 93v
 – gefur gæt –
 glöggt mun þau naudug færi.

41

Vaktinn þá fylgdi hönnum heim
 í herbergi sængurinnar
 lausnarann það að líkna þeim
 að líkna þeim
 sem leitudu andar sinnar.

42

Sacramentum þá til síjn tók
 og tiedi jdran sanna
 prestur Eirnn og so Juxon jök
 J:j:
 jafnann huggun sorganna.

43

Bædi nú harma hugar síjnnz
 og hünngur vard að þola
 af því drekkur hann Eitt glas víjnnz
 e:g:v:
 og Etur lijtinn Braud mola.

44

Ad morne var dauda dagur hannz
 dijr: enn vikunnar þridie
 allt fólkið samann sueyf j kranzz
 sueyf j kr:
 suik þö ei allir stidie.

45

Rádstofann var Riddörum sett
 Runt að vtann og þegnum
 enn fólkið á Strætum för so þiätt
 för so þ:
 að færast má traudt j giegnum.

41

Vaktin þá fylgdi honum heim
 í herbergi sængurinnar;
 lausnarann það að líkna þeim
 – að líkna þeim –
 sem leitudu andar sinnar.

42

Sakramentum þá til sín tók
 og téði iðran sanna;
 prestur einn og svo Juxon jök
 – Juxon jök –
 jafnan huggun sorganna.

43

Bæði nú harma hugar síns
 og hungur varð að þola,
 af því drekkur hann eitt glas víns
 – eitt glas víns –
 og étur lítinn brauðmola.

44

Að morgni var dauða dagur hans
 dýr, en vikunnar þriðji,
 allt fólkið saman sveif í krans,
 – sveif í krans –
 svik þó ei allir styðji.

45

Rádstofan var riddurum sett,
 runt að utan og þegnum,
 en fólkið á strætum fór svo þétt
 – fór svo þétt –
 að færast má trautt í gegnum.

46

Helvyrkid Reýsta hópar mannz
 hundrudumm j krijng stödu
 margir samaumka harma hanzz
 harma hanzz
 af hiarta og sinnj gödu.

47

Vmm háar tröppur hann vppstie
 til höggstadarinnz so leiddur
 og atrúnad sinn ävijsadj
 ävijsadj
 ädur enn hann var deyddur.

48

Christumm jätar og kannast vid
 krapt pijnu hanzz og dauda
 Byrtj sier eirnninn Büinn frid
 Büinn frid
 fyrir Blödz sueita hanzz hinn Rauda.

49

Bad og Rädid ad Büa vel
 bædi ad lanndj og þegnumm
 hiälp sijna og huggiædiss þel
 huggi: þel
 högværumm lijd og giegunnum.

50

Eirnninn tiedist hann Eiga son
 wtrekinn þar frá lanndj
 og ad þess viti allir von
 all: von
 til Erfdarinnar sä stanndj.

46

Helvirkið reista hópar manns
 hundruðum í kring stöðu;
 margir samaumka harma hans
 – harma hans –
 af hjarta og sinni göðu.

47

Um háar tröppur hann uppsté,
 til höggstaðarins svo leiddur
 og átrúnað sinn ávísaði
 – ávísaði –
 áður en hann var deyddur.

48

Kristum jatar og kannast við
 kraft, þínu hans og dauða;
 birti sér einninn búinn frið
 – búinn frið –
 fyrir blóðsveita hans hinn rauða.

49

Bað og ráðið að búa vel
 bæði að landi og þegnum;
 hjálp sína og huggæðis þel
 – huggæðis þel –
 högværum lýð og gegnum.

50

Einninn téðist hann eiga son,
 útrekinn þar frá landi,
 og að þess viti allir von
 – allir von –
 til erfðarinnar sá standi.

51

Hann feck Cediuna af halse sier
 herra Juxon og tiedi
 minnst það eg seinast sagdj þier
 sagdi þ:
 senn játa hinn þuj Riedj.

52

Sijdann kápunnj siälfur af
 sier hraustlega venndi
 lijka Treyuna lausa gaf
 lausa gaf
 lüüflega sier wr henndj.

53

Hugdi sijdann höggstocknumm ad
 hann huort ei skeyka meigi
 so og lijka Bødulinn Bad
 Bød: Bad
 Brädlega ad höggguist Eije.

54

Fyrr enn hann lieti teikn j tie
 til þess med hennði sinne
 höft og ad spyr huort häríd sie
 huort här: sie
 til hinndrunar Øxinne. |

55

Knär Bødull þar vid kuedur jä
 kuadst til þess bijða vilja
 hann og verdi halsinum frá
 halsinum frá
 häríd vel burt ad skilia.

51

Hann fékk keðjuna af hálsi sér
 herra Juxon og téði:
 „Minnst það eg seinast sagði þér.“
 – sagði þér –
 Senn játa hinn því réði.

52

Síðan kápunni själfur af
 sér hraustlega vendi;
 líka treyjuna lausa gaf
 – lausa gaf –
 ljúflega sér úr hendi.

53

Hugði síðan höggstocknum að,
 hann hvört ei skeika megi,
 svo og líka böðulinn það
 – böðulinn það –
 brädlega að höggvist eigi.

54

Fyrr en hann léti teikn í té
 til þess með hendi sinni,
 hóft og að spyr hvört häríð sé
 – hvört häríð sé –
 til hindrunar öxinni.

55

Knär böðull þar við kveður já,
 kvaðst til þess bíða vilja,
 hann og verði hálsinum frá
 – hálsinum frá –
 häríð vel burt að skilja.

56

Köngur vottar sakleysid sitt
og segir *med* stilltum mödj
að hann giæfi þeim öllum kuit
þeim ø: k:
sem wthelltu sijnú Blödj.

57

Hafid tier prestur hijra lund
huxid til gödra kjöra
þier munud lokz ä litlř stund
a: l: st:
lännaga Reýsu fullgiðra.

58

Köngur jatar og kuadst þess viss
kuedur þá *byskup* báða
að fara munj hann j flödj Christz
j fl: Chr:
frelsara sijnz til náða.

59

Eirnn milldann gud og göða sök
gledia tier sig að skoda
Einglanndz Cöröna of sie lök
of sie lök
ædrj stanndj til boda.

60

Ad Nijtum prestj Nälægum þá
nätthüu sijná kallar
med Kurt vmm sig aptur Käpu brä
Käpu brä
Kiðrum nü flestum hallar.

56

Köngur vottar sakleysið sitt
og segir með stilltum móði
að hann gæfi þeim öllum kvitt
– þeim öllum kvitt –
sem úthelltu sínu blóði.

57

„Hafið,“ tér prestur, „hýra lund,
hugsið til göðra kjöra,
þér munuð loks á lítilli stund
– á lítilli stund –
langa reisu fullgjöra.“

58

Köngur jatar og kvaðst þess viss,
kveður þá *biskup* báða,
að fara muni hann í flóði Krists,
– í flóði Krists –
frelsara síns, til náða.

59

Einn mildan Guð og göða sök
gleðja tér sig að skoda,
Englands kóröna of sé lök,
– of sé lök –
æðri standi til boða.

60

Að nýtum presti nálægum þá
nátthúfu sína kallar;
með kurt um sig aftur kápu brá,
– kápu brá –
kjörum nú flestum hallar.

61

Kyrlátur tier vid Colonel
kunnjngia villd þö duijn
seinast eg bid siä þar vmm vel
siä þar vm vel
so þeir mig ei ofmiög pijnj.

62

Ädur enn nidur äfram kraup
wtrietj henndur bädar
allmörgumm tár af augumm draup
af aug: dr:
öskandj honum Nädar.

63

Vnndir hufuna härid braut
hann þä sem fastast yrdj
j naffnj drottinnz so nidur laut
s: n: l:
nu aptur þanninn spurdj:

64

Hinn drar þig nõckud härid mitt
hinn jatar: strax þuj flettj
vnndir hwfuna vm höfudid sitt
vm höf: s:
Enn hälsinn ä tried fram rietj.

65

Bad hann þö enn ad bijda þess
benndijng er litj sijna
Eirnninn Befalar huga hress
h: h:
ad höggua sig enn ei pijna.

61

Kyrrlátur tér við Colonel,
kunningia vild þó dvíni,
seinast ég bið, sjá þar um vel
– sjá þar um vel –
svo þeir mig ei ofmjög píni.

62

Áður en niður áfram kraup
útrétti hendur báðar,
allmörgum tár af augum draup,
– af augum draup –
óskandi honum náðar.

63

Undir hufuna hárið braut
hann þá sem fastast yrði,
í nafni drottins svo niður laut,
– svo niður laut –
nú aftur þanninn spurði:

64

„Hindrar þig nokkuð hárið mitt?
Hinn jatar. Strax því fletti
undir hufuna um höfuðið sitt
– um höfuðið sitt –
en hälsinn á tréð fram rétti.

65

Það hann þó enn að biða þess
bending er liti sína;
einninn befalar huga hress
– huga hress –
að höggva sig en ei pína.

66

Yfir stocknumm stöðugur lá
stunnd sijdar teiknid greiddj
hinn þui Riedj það högg ad slá
það h: ad slá
sem höfud frá Büknumm leiddj.

67

Hätt j loptj þuj heldur strax
huor madur ad það sæi
med þessu ä ad leita lagz
ad leita lagz
lanndinu so fullnægie.

68

Harmur og grätur heyrdist megnn
hinna sem könniginn þreydu
vmm Lundün alla wt j gieggn
wtj gieggn
Eirninn ä lanndj Breýdu. |

69

Það skal nü vera sagt vmm sinn
af sorgar Efnj störu
med Christö lifir köngurinn
köngurinn
kiør jar<d>nesk vnndann föru.

70

Jllska þeirra wtheimntir döm
sem yfirvalld sitt þuijnnga
verølldinn slær med vesta Röm
med v: R:
þä vondu Einnglenndijnnga.

66

Yfir stokknum stöðugur lá,
stund síðar teiknið greiddi,
hinn því réði það högg ad slá
– það högg ad slá –
sem höfuð frá búknum leiddi.

67

Hátt í lofti því heldur strax,
hvör maður ad það sæi,
med þessu á ad leita lags
– ad leita lags –
landinu svo fullnægi.

68

Harmur og grätur heyrðist megn
hinna sem kónginn þreyðu,
um Lundún alla út í gegn,
– út í gegn –
einninn á landi breiðu.

69

Það skal nú vera sagt um sinn
af sorgarefni störu:
Með Kristö lifir köngurinn,
– köngurinn –
kjör jarðnesk undan föru.

70

Jllska þeirra útheimtir dóm
sem yfirvald sitt þvinga;
veröldin slær með versta róm
– með versta róm –
þá vondu Englendinga.

71

Köng vorn og allann kristinn lijd
 kíore eg j vernndan þijna
 heilage gud ä huørre tijd
 ä huørj tijd
 hier skal nü quædid duijna.

71

Kóng vorn og allan kristin lýð
 kjöri ég í verndan þína,
 heilagi Guð, á hvörri tíð;
 – á hvörri tíð –
 hér skal nú kvæðið dvína.

Lesbrigði úr Lbs 1055 4to, bl. 123v–126r á www.handrit.is (tölusetning í handriti bls. 240–245); Lbs 1529 4to, bl. 36r–37bivr á www.handrit.is (nýleg tölusetning í handriti bls. 71–74a).

1.3 huor] sem 1529. 3.2 ä] i 1055. 3.3 lygar] lyge 1055, 1529. 4.1 Helmijng] Tuo hluti 1529. 4.2 so] þuij 1529. 4.3 geinnngu] geingust 1529. 4.5 soddan] þuijlyk 1529. 6.5 so] þuij 1529. 7.3 jnnløgð] löginn lögð 1529. 9.5 ad] af 1529. 13. *erindi er á undan í 12. í 1529*. 11.1 Þanninn] sídann 1055. 12.2 so] ÷ 1529.12.3 tijma] so tijma 1529. 12.3 sat] ÷ 1529. 12.5 honum aungvir] aungvir hönnum 1055, 1529. 13.2 þar] þeir 1529. 13.5 þvi] sem 1529. 14.2 ä] i 1055. 15.5 og] ÷ 1529. Skilldu] þar med 1529. 17.3 til hanns kiemur] huor til kíörinn 1529. 18.1 søgdu] sagde 1055, 1529. 23.2 frammburd] äsök 1529. 25.2 ad] ÷ 1055. 25.3 þvi] þier 1529. 25.5 þeim hent] þuij best 1529. 26.3 allt mun] ad mun þess 1529. 27.2 ecki] sem ey 1529. 27.5 og] ÷ 1529. 29.2 könnng] konung 1055. 29.5 sem vid] vid sem 1055, 1529. 31.2 hiedann mä þig] ma þig hiedann 1529. 31.3 þuj skalltu] þu skall<t> 1529. 35.2 hafdist so] og hafdist ad 1529. 36.2 fluttur] færður 1529. 36.3 huort] hanns 1529. 37.3 sælummm] sælu 1529. 39.2 margar] allar 1529. 39.3 gladdj] + þaug 1529. 39.5 ö] og 1529. 40.1 Blessadj] Befol 1529. 40.3 af] ad 1529. 42.3 Eirnn og so] og eirinn 1529. 43.1 nü] þä 1529.43.3 hann] þä 1529. 45.1 Rädstofann] Radstefnan 1529. var] + af 1529. 45.5 ad] ÷ 1529. 46.1 Reýsta] reistu 1529. 48.3 Byrtj] og birtir 1529. 48.5 fyrir] i 1055, 1529. Hinn] þeim 1055. 49.1 og] þa 1529. 50.2 wtrekinn] utrýmdann 1055. 50.3 ad] ÷ 1529. viti] vissu 1055, vissi 1529. 51.3 seinast] síðast 1055. 51.5 hinn] hann 1529. 52.2 hraustlega] hraustleganna 1529. 3 Treyuna] eirinn 1529.53.2 hann] ÷1529. ei] eckj 1529. 5 höggvist] hoggva 1529. 54.3 sie] ei sie 1529. 55.1 vid] til 1055. 55.2 kvadst] kvad 1055. Þess] ÷ 1529. 3 og] ad 1055. 56.1 sakleýsid] sakleisi 1529. 58.3 ad fara munj hann] enn seig<i>st nu fara 1529. 59.1 og göða] j göðre 1529. 2 gledia tier sig ad skoda] med gledi bad sig ad stoda 1529. 61.3 eg] þig 1529. siä þar] þar siä 1529. 62.1 Ädur enn] Ad honum 1529. 3 allmørgummm] allmorg 1529. draup] flaut 1529. 63.3 laut] kraup 1529. 64.3 höfudid] höfud

1055. 65.3 eininn] *sijdan* 1529. huga] *hugar* 1529. 66.3 Riedj] Reiddi 1529. 5 sem] ÷ 1529. leiddj] sneiddi 1529. 67.1 j loptj] ä lopt 1529. 2 huor] so huor 1529. ad] ä 1529. 70.2 sem yfirvalld sitt] yfirvalld sitt sem 1529. 71. 2 kiøre] kýs 1055, 1529. 5 skal nü quædid] skulu liodinn 1529.

*

SORGARKVEÐJA KARLS KONUNGS

Sorgar Kuedia Karl Stwart konungs. Lag sem vid Magdeborgar vjjsur.⁵¹

Sorgarkveðja Karls Stúarts konungs. Lag sem við Magdeborgarvísur.

1

Wpp nü *könng* Karl og Bü þig Brätt
Biöd vinum þinum göða nátt
höggstadur og Blæia er Büinn
Cörönu þina kuedia mátt
kiør lifz eru burt flüinn.

2

Auvij minnar sälar säler
sälar: og æ vel fare þier
far vel mijn kiær köng ynna
mijnum gude nü fel: eg fer
forsorgun þin og þinna.

3

Eg Bid hann lätj ei ydar neid
ötijmannlegum stjira deyd
nær þier fäid ad frietta
ad mier sie gjörd so wtför leid
afstandid heldur þetta.

1

Upp nú, kóng Karl, og bú þig brátt,
bjöd vinum þínum göða nátt,
höggstaður og blæja er búin;
kórönu þína kveðja mátt,
kjör lífs eru burt flúin.

2

Auví, minnar sälar sálir,
sälar og æ vel fari þér;
far vel, mín kær kóngynna,
mínum Guði nú fel, ég fer,
forsorgun þín og þinna.

3

Ég bið hann láti ei yðar neyð
ótímanlegum stýra deyð,
nær þér fáid að fréttu
að mér sé gjörd svo útför leið,
afstandið heldur þetta.

51 JS 232 4to, bl. 94v–95r (tölusetning í handriti bls. 83–84).

4

Frwinn kær og mjin föguru Børnn
 farid vel: gud sie ydar vørnn
 og huggun j hørðum mödi
 sijst munud gleima süta giørn
 saklausu føður blödj.

5

Minn daudi ydar änngist er
 Eilijf gleði þö siälfum mier
 far nü vel kyn Mitt kiæra
 lijka mitt fölk j lanndi hier
 lif vel: prijdist þijn æra.

6

Æski eg þess af allre trü
 ad minn drejre þier verði nü
 ad fridar Einijng än efa
 ä mier þinn vilia vppfyll þü
 eg vil það fyrirgefä.

7

Þö þü minn dauða syrgir sijst
 samt munu nøckrir hallda vijst
 skiötann döm þinn ei skarta
 þijn öfund giore það henne lijst
 þier fyrirgefur mitt hiarta.

8

Med mig til grafar fljött þü fer
 fæst þö eckj ad Bevisjer
 eg huad til vnnid hefe
 Eirnn hier klagar og vmmðæmer
 eg þö ad kuitit það giefi.

4

Frúin kær og mín fögru börn,
 farið vel, Guð sé yðar vörn
 og huggun í hörðum móði;
 síst munuð gleyma, sútagjörn,
 saklausu föður blóði.

5

Minn dauði yðar angist er,
 eilíf gleði þó sjálfum mér,
 far nú vel, kyn mitt kæra,
 líka mitt fólk í landi hér,
 líf vel, þryðist þín æra.

6

Æski ég þess af allri trú
 að minn dreymi þér verði nú
 að friðareining án efa;
 á mér þinn vilja uppfyll þú,
 ég vil það fyrirgefä.

7

Þó þú minn dauða syrgir síst
 samt munu nokkrir halda víst
 skjótan dóm þinn ei skarta;
 þín öfund gjöri það henni líst,
 þér fyrirgefur mitt hjarta.

8

Með mig til grafar fljótt þú fer,
 fæst þó ekki að bevisjer
 ég hvað til unnið hefi;
 einn hér klagar og umdæmir,
 ég þó að kvitt það gefi.

9

Hvad þægur wrskurður þetta er
þar vmm *gud* og verölld dæmer
j 200 Är er einnginn
slijkur *Xristnum* kunnur sem hier
ä Karl Stewart er geinnginn.

10

Nü vel: mitt fólk: þú *far med mig*
fyrir gude ei klagar þig
hiarta mitt þö ad | *helldur*
hier *geinng* eg beint ä heliar stig
hertekinn saklaus felldur.

11

Sem Stephänus *med* styrkrj lunnd
strax vil eg nü ä Jesu funnd
so eg minn konünng siäi
daudinn er mier myskunar munnd
ad mætarj Rijkium Näi.

12

Eg þacka gödri *guddömz* näd
sem *gefur* mier styrk og hugar däd
daudan diarflega ad lijda
mijn pijslarvættiz Ben er Bräd
Ber eg þui aunguan kuijda.

13

Far nü Cröna *forgeinngilig*
fäniyt: ad sorgumm kiennj eg þig
Eilif er Beint *til* Boda
Eptir þuj längar mest nü mig
minn gud og hana ad skoda.

9

Hvad þægur úrskurður þetta er,
þar um Guð og veröld dæmir,
í tvö hundruð ár er enginn
slíkur kristnum kunnur sem hér,
á Karl Stúart er genginn.

10

Nú vel, mitt fólk, þú far með mig,
fyrir Guði ei klagar þig
hjarta mitt þó að heldur,
hér geng ég beint á heljarstig,
hertekinn, saklaus felldur.

95r

11

Sem Stephanus með styrkri lund
strax vil ég nú á Jesú fund
svo ég minn konung sjái;
dauðinn er mér miskunnar mund
að mætari ríkjum nái.

12

Ég þakka góðri guðdóms náð
sem gefur mér styrk og hugardáð
dauðann djarflega að líða;
mín píslarvættis ben er bráð,
ber ég því öngvan kvíða.

13

Far nú, króna forgengileg,
fánýt, að sorgum kenni ég þig,
eilíf er beint til boða;
eftir því langar mest nú mig
minn Guð og hana að skoða.

14

Það er sú kuedia Karulj
 konngz af Einnglanndj letrud þui
 vmm hannz huggun og hr<e>ijsti
 að siäist vid hel sie hugar frij
 huor sem að IESU treystir.

15

J þier verølld sem Ränngan Rög
 Reysir fyrir skamvinnann plög
 finnum vier tár og trega
 lijtst mier huor hafi lifað nög
 þá látinn er christilega.

14

Það er sú kveðja Karulí
 kóngs af Englandi, letrud því,
 um hans huggun og hreysti,
 að sjáist við hel sé hugar fri
 hvör sem að Jesú treystir.

15

Í þér, veröld, sem rangan róg
 reisir fyrir skammvinnan plóg
 finnum vér tár og trega;
 líst mér hvör hafi lifað nög
 þá látinn er kristilega.

Lesbrigði úr Lbs 1055 4to, bl. 126r–126v (tölusetning í handriti bls. 245–246).

12.2 styrk] krap 1055. 13.1 Cröna] kórna 1055.

*

GRAFSKRIFT KARLS KONUNGS

Grafarskrift þess sama loflega Herra Könngz, Karl Stwart Ä Einnglandi. Tön. Nú látum oss lík: gr.⁵²

Grafarskrift þess sama loflega herra kóngs, Karl Stúart á Englandi. Tón: Nú látum oss lík.gr.

1

Karl hefur sijna krönu mist
könngur loflegur fyrir vijst
nej: *eckj þanninn*: heldur hitt
höfudid mistj Einngland Sitt.

2

Gief wr hendi þinn stiörnar staf
standa hljitur þú Rijkium af
fra Einnglandi til Einngla Rannz
áttu að Reýsa nú til sannz.

3

Gäck fram diarflega könngur kiær
Cöröna jardnesk enda fær
himnesk er Betrj Büinn þier
Blijfur sü vmm allar allder.

1

Karl hefur sína krönu misst,
kóngur loflegur fyrir víst,
nei, ekki þanninn heldur hitt,
höfuðið missti England sitt.

2

Gef úr hendi þinn stjörnar staf,
standa hlýtur þú ríkjum af,
frá Englandi til engla ranns
áttu að reisa nú til sanns.

3

Gakk fram djarflega, kóngur kær,
kóróna jarðnesk enda fær;
himnesk er betri búin þér,
blífur sú um allar aldir.

52 JS 232 4to, bl. 95r (tölusetning í handriti bls. 84).

HEIMILDIR

HANDRIT

Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, Reykjavík

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ÁGRIP

Ræningjarímur séra Guðmundar Erlendssonar í Felli og erlendar fréttabálöður

Efnisorð: Ræningjarímur, rímur, fréttabálöður, Guðmundur Erlendsson í Felli, bókmenntagreinar, bókmenntaáhrif

Fréttabálöður eru kvæði um samtímaatburði og samtímamenn skáldanna sem prentuð voru á ódýran pappír og seld af götusölum eða flutt/sungin á torgum og strætum bæja og borga í Evrópu á árnýöld. Vítisburð um að íslensk skáld hafi þekkt þessa dægurmenningu er að finna í handritum en kvæðagreinin hefur þó ekki verið nefnd í íslenskri bókmenntasögu. Í kvæðabók séra Guðmundar Erlendssonar er að finna nokkur kvæði sem falla undir kvæðagreinina. Kvæðin fjalla um jarðskjálfta sem varð á Ítalíu árið 1627, fall Magdeborgar árið 1631 og aftöku Karls I. Englandskonungs 1649. Kvæði Guðmundar hafa yfirbragð texta sem ætlaður er til flutnings eða söngs til að stytta mönnum stundir. Í þeim er dramatísk sviðsetning, spennandi söguþráður og siðaboðskapur sem beint er til áheyrenda í lokin. Kvæðin byggja öll á raunverulegum atburðum sem gerðust í samtíma skáldsins, þ.e. náttúruhamförum, stríðshörmungum og pólitískri aftöku. Þau eru að öllum líkindum þýðingar á evrópskum ballöðum en skáldið setur atburðina í samhengi við veruleika áheyrenda sinna á Íslandi. Kvæðin eru vítisburður um að kvæðagreinin fréttabálöða hefur borist til Íslands ekki seinna en snemma á sautjándu öld og er ekki ólíklegt að áhrifa frá fréttabálöðum gæti víðar í íslenskum kveðskap frá síðari öldum. Það þarfnast þó frekari rannsókna.

Ræningjarímur séra Guðmundar Erlendssonar fjalla ekki um fornar hetjur eða uppdiptaðar persónur úr fjarlægri fortíð eins og algengast var í rímum á sautjándu öld heldur um hörmulega atburði úr samtíma skáldsins, hið svokallaða Tyrkjarán árið 1627. Í rímunum er slóð ræningjanna fylgt um landið, örnefni nefnd frásögninni til studnings og nöfn fólks sem ræningjarnir réðust á eða tóku höndum. Frásögnin er dramatísk og spennuþrungin og lýsingar á aðförum ræningjanna eru settar fram í gróteskum smáatriðum. Síðasta ríman inniheldur varnaðarorð sem beint er til áheyrenda og siðaboðskap. Hinir hræðilegu atburðir gerðust vegna óhlýðni og slæmrar hegðunar Íslendinga og brýnir skáldið samlanda sína til að hlýða drottinni og biðja fyrir friði í landinu, rétt eins og hann gerði í ballöðunum. Í greininni eru færð rök fyrir því að skáldið hafi notað efnistöð og sérkenni erlendra „fréttabálöða“ í rímum sínum um Tyrkjaránið.

SUMMARY

The Rovers' Rhymes by Reverend Guðmundur Erlendsson in Fell and European News Ballads

Keywords: Guðmundur Erlendsson, Rovers' rhymes, rhyme cycles, news ballads, genre, literary influence

News ballads are poems about recent events or the poets' contemporaries that were printed on cheap paper and sold by street vendors or performed/sung in the squares and streets of towns and cities in Europe in the early modern period. This genre has not been studied in Icelandic literary history hitherto, since poems belonging to news ballads (or disaster ballads) have not been printed but only preserved in little-known manuscripts. We can see, however, from the book of poems by pastor Guðmundur Erlendsson (primarily in the manuscripts JS 232 4to and Lbs 1055 4to, preserved in the National Library of Iceland, Reykjavík) that seventeenth-century Icelandic poets knew of news ballads. Here I examine four of his poems belonging to this genre. One deals with an earthquake in Italy in 1627; the second describes the fall of the German city Magdeburg in 1631; the third describes the execution of King Charles I of England in grotesque and horrendous detail; and the fourth portrays the king himself, bidding farewell to his wife and children and to the crown. One may infer from the texts of Guðmundur's poems that they were intended for performance and entertainment. They feature dramatic staging, an exciting plot, and a clear moral message addressed to the audience at the end. All the poems are based on real events that happened in the poet's time; that is, natural disasters, disasters of war, and political execution. They are presumably translations of European ballads, but the poet places the events in the context of the reality of his audience in Iceland. The poems demonstrate that the genre of news ballads reached Iceland no later than the early seventeenth century, thus expanding the repertoire of early modern Icelandic poetry.

Also of note is the fact that Guðmundur Erlendsson's *Rover rhymes* do not deal with ancient heroes or fictional characters from the distant past, as was the general rule for seventeenth-century rhyme cycles, but with tragic events from the poet's own time, the so-called "Turkish Raid" of 1627. In the rhymes, the trail of the raiders is traced around the country; place names are mentioned to support the veracity of the narrative, as are the names of people assaulted or captured by the raiders. The narrative is dramatic and suspenseful, and descriptions of the pirates' actions are presented in grotesque detail. The last rhyme contains a warning to the audience and a moral message. The terrible events happened because of the disobedience and immorality of Icelanders, and the poet urges his compatriots to obey the Lord and pray for peace in the country, just as he did in the ballads. Thus,

the poet not only translated European news ballads into Icelandic, introducing the genre to his audience/readers, but he also used the genre's characteristics and subject matter in an innovative way in a rhyme cycle on a contemporary event in Iceland. It is entirely possible that the influence of news ballads was more prevalent in Icelandic poetry of later centuries. That needs, however, further research.

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“SHOULD SHE TELL A STORY ...”

In Quest of Eiríkur Laxdal’s Poetics

I

IN 1987, A 200-YEAR-OLD work of fiction by Icelandic author Eiríkur Laxdal Eiríksson (1743–1816) was published for the first time. Titled *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar* (*The Story of Ólafur Þórhallason*, hereafter referred to as *Ólafssaga*) it had previously been available only in manuscripts. It is the story of a young man who grows up in the northern part of Iceland but travels far and wide around the country, encountering outlaws and elves, among others, along the way. Tales of varying length told by some of the individuals Ólafur meets, primarily women, interrupt the story of his own travels. The result is an intricately layered tale, with many of the stories-within-the-story woven into the overarching narrative and affecting the reader’s understanding of it. Another prose work by Eiríkur, *Ólandssaga* (*Utopia*) preserved in a single manuscript and first made available in print in 2006, has a similarly complex structure.¹

Scholars placing Eiríkur’s writing within the context of literary history have generally taken one of three viewpoints. Some who encountered *Ólafssaga* in the nineteenth century and even later seem to have regarded it as a (rather poor) collection of Icelandic folk tales.² This view can be rep-

1 Þorsteinn Antonsson and María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir prepared both stories for publication. Þorsteinn’s afterwords to *Ólafssaga* and María Anna’s MA thesis about the book are the most thorough discussions of Eiríkur’s life and work, but they have also written extensively on *Ólandssaga*. See Þorsteinn Antonsson, “Höfundurinn og sagan,” in Eiríkur Laxdal, *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar. Álfasagan mikla*, eds. Þorsteinn Antonsson and María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir (Reykjavík: Þjóðsaga, 1987), 373–427; María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir, *Tveggja heima sýn. Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar og Þjóðsögurnar*, *Studia Islandica* 53 (Reykjavík: Bókmenntafræðistofnun, Háskóli Íslands, 1996); Þorsteinn Antonsson and María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir. *Útsýni til Ólands. Um uppruna, hugmyndir, viðhorf og sambengi Ólandssögu eftir Eirík Laxdal* (Reykjavík: Sagnasmíðjan, 2018).

2 See Þorsteinn Antonsson, “Höfundurinn og sagan,” 418–25; Steingrímur J. Þorsteinsson, *Skáldsögur Jóns Thoroddsens*, vol. 1 (Reykjavík: Helgafellsútgáfan, 1942), 18.

resented by Guðbrandur Vigfússon's comments about Eiríkur's authorship in a foreword to Jón Árnason's 1861 folk tale collection:

He [Eiríkur] wrote down all the tales, both those he himself knew and those he was told, and gathered them into a large collection. But because the fellow was called a poet and said to be intelligent, even eccentric, he compiled all these stories together into one as he wished, inserting verses here and there, so that it is impossible to know what his own contribution is and what is folklore.³

Since the mid-twentieth century, however, Eiríkur's writing has generally been considered to mark the advent of the novel in Iceland.⁴ *Ólafssaga* has been viewed in this respect more positively than *Ólandssaga* and compared to various eighteenth-century European novels that describe intrepid travelers in unfamiliar lands. These include *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift, *Nicolai Klimii Iter Subterraneum* (*Niels Klim's Underground Travels*, 1741) by Ludvig Holberg, and *Jacques le fataliste et son maître* (*Jacques the Fatalist and His Master*, 1796) by Denis Diderot.⁵ The third approach views *Ólafssaga* as a product of an

- 3 Guðbrandur Vigfússon, "Formáli að 1. útgáfu," *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri. Safnað hefur Jón Árnason*, vol. 2, eds. Árni Böðvarsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson (Reykjavík: Bókaiútgáfan Þjóðsaga, 1954), xxxi. For an overview of the scholarly reception of Eiríkur Laxdal's life and works, in particular *Ólandssaga*, see Madita Knöpfle, "Conceptions of Authorship. The Case of Ármanns rímur and Their Reworkings in Early Modern Iceland," *In Search for the Culprit. Aspects of Medieval Authorship*, eds. Stefanie Gropper and Lukas Rösli (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2021), 252–60.
- 4 Steingrímur J. Þorsteinsson laid the foundation for this view and claimed *Ólafssaga* and *Ólandssaga* marked "the advent of the Icelandic novel." He believed the former to be superior both in terms of structure and style. See Steingrímur J. Þorsteinsson, *Skáldsögur Jóns Thoroddsens*, 186.
- 5 See María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir, *Tveggja heima sýn*, 63, 137 and 239 and Matthías Viðar Sæmundsson, "Sagnagerð frá upplýsingu til raunsæis," *Íslensk bókmenntasaga*, vol. 3, ed. Halldór Guðmundsson (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1996), 184–88. María Anna and Matthías also mention a few older novels such as Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605–1615). See also Örn Ólafsson, "Upplýsing í gegnum þjóðsögur. Um Ólafs sögu Þórhallasonar eftir Eirik Laxdal," *Tímarit Máls og menningar* 60/2 (1999): 95–104. These scholars also mention an older Icelandic "novel," *Sagan af Parmes Loðinbirni* (*The Story of Parmes Polar Bear*), thought to have been written by Jón Bjarnason between 1756 and 1775 and inspired by the literary tradition associated with *Robinson Crusoe*.

ancient narrative tradition that falls somewhere between traditional folk tales and novels. The earliest adherent of this view is Einar Ól. Sveinsson, who pointed out in 1940 that foreign folk tale collections like *’Alf Laylah wa-Laylah* (*The Thousand and One Nights*, also known as *One Thousand and One Nights* and *Arabian Nights*) had probably shaped Eiríkur’s writing.⁶ It is important to note that any one of these views does not necessarily exclude the others. But although many scholars have concurred with Einar Ólafur, there has been little direct comparison of *Ólafssaga* to such classic works of literature.

Einar Ólafur explains that the narrative of *Ólafssaga* can be divided “into two parts, the frame [Ice. *umgerðir*] and the insertions [Ice. *ifellur*]. The latter are narratives about men and women who cross Ólafur’s path.”⁷ The two Icelandic literary concepts in the quotation correspond to various English terms describing layered narrative structures. These include *embedding/embedded narrative* and *nesting/nested narrative*, but narratologists also commonly refer to Chinese boxes and Russian dolls to explain this sort of storytelling technique. Such pieces reveal that the two literary terms do not describe opposite phenomena but rather two sides of the same phenomenon; each nested object, tucked inside a larger one, can serve as a nest for another object, and so on. Nested narratives can be found in the ancient Greek epic *Odyseús* (*The Odyssey*) but are also considered a conventional feature of postmodern literature.⁸ Furthermore, they are characteristic

- 6 Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Um íslenzkar þjóðsögur* (Reykjavík: Sjóður Margrétar Lehmann-Fillhús, 1940), 103. See also Stefán Einarsson, *Íslensk bókmenntasaga 874–1960* (Reykjavík: Snæbjörn Jónsson, 1962), 269; Matthías Viðar Sæmundsson, “Sagnagerð frá upplýsingu til raunsæis,” 184; Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir, “Íslensk og ólensk ævintýri,” *Tímarit Máls og menningar* 69/1 (2008): 131–35; Romina Werth, “Inngangur,” *Andlit á glugga. Úrval íslenskra þjóðsagna og avintýra*, eds. Romina Werth and Jón Karl Helgason (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 2021), 30. Some of these scholars also mention the influence of the story collection *Les mille et un jours* (*The Thousand and One Days*, 1710–1712), compiled by François Pétis de la Croix in the style of *The Thousand and One Nights*. Several Icelandic translations from *The Thousand and One Days* are preserved in eighteenth-century manuscripts. Cf. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, “Þúsund og einn dagur: Íslenzkar þýðingar og varðveizla þeirra,” (cand. mag. thesis, University of Iceland, 1972).
- 7 Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Um íslenzkar þjóðsögur*, 108. The quotation is taken from the English translation of the study: Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *The Folk-Stories of Iceland*, trans. Benedikt S. Benediktz (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2003), 128.
- 8 Numerous scholarly works address this narrative technique, including Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980), 223–37; Lucien Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*, trans. Jeremy Whiteley and Emma

of various early Oriental narratives, including *Sindbād-nāmāh* (*The Seven Sages*), a story cycle which was originally written in Persian, Sanskrit, or Hebrew and reached Europe through Arabic, Greek, Latin, and finally French translations and rewritings. *The Seven Sages* became a widely popular text during the Middle Ages, influencing for example the legendary Icelandic saga *Egils saga einhenda og Ásmundar berserkjabana* (*The Story of Egil One-Hand and Asmund Berserker-Slayer*, 1300s).⁹

This article is devoted to the structure of *Ólafssaga*. The discussion is largely built around Tzvetan Todorov's writings on nested narratives in his collection of essays *Poétique de la prose* (*The Poetics of Prose*, 1971). In one of its early chapters, Todorov explains his approach by considering the difference between literary criticism and poetics, with regards to modern linguistics. The linguist's task, he explains, is not to interpret the meaning of individual sentences but rather to discover the rules and customs underlying the language system. Similarly, poetics as an academic discipline should not seek to judge or interpret individual works but rather to understand and explain literature as a form of expression and shed light on the structures and customs of literary creation. Todorov, who was influenced by Russian Formalists, admits that the danger with poetics is that its conclusions will be too general. On the other hand, he places little stock in literary criticism that merely aims to rearrange the text or restate the meaning of a particular literary work. Such an interpretation can dissolve "into the work-as-object to such a degree that it risks vanishing into it altogether."¹⁰ He believes it is best to find a happy medium between these two extremes so that the specific illuminates the general and vice versa. In most of the chapters in *The Poetics of Prose*, Todorov focuses on

Hughes (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989); Douglas Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach. An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London, New York: Routledge, 1987), 112–30.

9 See Gottskálf Þór Jensson, "Hvat liðr nú grautum, genta? Greek Storytelling in Jötunheimar," *Fornaldarsagornas Struktur och Ideologi. Handlingar från ett symposium i Uppsala 31.8–2.9 2001*, eds. Ármann Jakobsson, Annette Lassen, and Agneta Ney (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2003), 193. Lena Rohrbach points out that the embedded narratives in *Ólafssaga* are called "þættir" and compares them to "þættir" in medieval Icelandic manuscripts, such as *Flateyjarbók*. See Lena Rohrbach, "Subversive Inscriptions. The Narrative Power of the Paratext in Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar," forthcoming in *Scandinavian Studies*.

10 Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 35.

one or two literary works. Among these are *The Odyssey*, *The Thousand and One Nights*, and the medieval French story cycle *La Queste del Saint Graal* (*The Quest of the Holy Grail*), each of which shares common features with *Ólafssaga* and can shed light on Eiríkur Laxdal’s poetics.

II

In a chapter titled “Primitive Narrative,” Todorov critiques the widely held belief that traditional narrative literature is characterized by a simple style and structure that was tainted by later writers who succumbed to modernist trends and a growing demand for originality. Such a view assumes that a “natural” narrative is cohesive, serious, psychologically realistic, and free from contradiction, repetition, and digressions. Todorov struggles to see which older literary works this view is built upon and cites examples of contradictions, repetition, and digressions in Homer’s *The Odyssey*. This classical narrative is thought to have been composed in Greece in the eighth century BCE and was translated into Latin in 1510, into French a few decades later, and into English in the early seventeenth century. According to Todorov, *The Odyssey* has a dual narrative structure, with the hero having adventures and then telling people he encounters along his journey about those adventures. This aspect is so prominent that Todorov is uncertain “which of the two is the main character,” the hero Odysseus or the narrator Odysseus.¹¹

To give an idea of the structure of *The Odyssey* we can consider three of its early chapters. In Book VII, Odysseus arrives at the palace of Alcinoüs on the island of Scheria and begins to recount the treacherous voyage he undertook to get there from Ogygia. In Book VIII, an unnamed bard in the king’s court entertains Odysseus by singing “the famous deeds of fighting heroes – the song whose fame had reached the skies those days: The Strife Between Odysseus and Achilles, Peleus’ Son.”¹² The song affects Odysseus so deeply that he sheds tears. He regains the role of narrator in Book IX, when he begins telling the king about his travels from Troy to Ogygia:

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹² Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Roger Fagles (New York, London, Victoria, Toronto, Auckland: Viking, 1996), 193–94.

Alcinous, majesty, shining among your island people,
 what a fine thing it is to listen to such a bard
 as we have here [...]. But now
 you're set on probing the bitter pains I've borne,
 so I'm to weep and grieve, it seems, still more.
 Well then, what shall I go through first,
 what shall I save for last?
 What pains – the gods have given me my share.
 Now let me begin by telling you my name ...
 so you may know it well [...]¹³

Odysseus poses here a fundamental question of all narration: “[W]hat shall I go through first, what shall I save for last?” If we list the events in question, using letters to represent chronological order and numbers to represent the order in which the events are presented, we can see that the two are not aligned: A2: Odysseus’ conflict with Achilles; B4: Odysseus travels from Troy to Ogygia; C3: Odysseus travels from Ogygia to Scheria; D1: Odysseus tells Alcinous about his travels and listens to the bard. Todorov’s conclusion is that *The Odyssey* is “a narrative of narratives; it consists of the relation of the narratives the characters address to each other.”¹⁴ By repeatedly recounting past events, the text demands that the reader converts plot into story, turns *syuzhet* into *fabula*, to borrow the terminology of the Formalists.¹⁵

Like *The Odyssey*, *Ólafssaga* is a third-person narrative describing the travails of a hero journeying from one place to another but also featuring nested stories in which individual characters recall past events. At the outset, we are told that Ólafur is a teenager and his father Þórhalli rather advanced in age. The latter is planning to send Ólafur out to round up a herd of sheep that have not returned to their farm, but he starts by telling his son about his own past, emphasizing his dealings with German merchants. After listening to his father’s story, Ólafur sets out on his search and soon comes upon a large cave. Deep inside it he discovers a great dwelling, where he is greeted by the beautiful elf woman Þórhildur. She

¹³ *Ibid.*, 211–12.

¹⁴ Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, 61.

¹⁵ Todorov discusses these concepts further in a chapter titled “The Typology of Detective Fiction,” *ibid.*, 45.

starts telling Ólafur where her people come from and later of her parents' courtship, her own birth, the loss of her mother, and her father's madness, which is the result of a curse. After listening to the tale, Ólafur helps Þórhildur break that curse. She thanks him and offers him her assistance should he ever find himself in trouble. After that, Ólafur heads home with the sheep. Numerous other nested stories interrupt the primary storyline in subsequent chapters.

Unlike Odysseus, Ólafur seldom takes on the role of narrator, but it is sometimes noted that he tells others what has happened to him in previous chapters. A good example is from Ólafur's first encounter with the elf woman Álfhildur who asks him “að segja sér allt af högum hans síðan hann tók að leita fjár föður síns. Tók hann til frá upphafi og sagði söguna þar sem hér var komið, snjallt og áheyrilega, og undraði flesta.” (“to tell her all that has befallen him since he began searching for his father's sheep. He started at the beginning and recounted the story up to the present moment, with great skill, to the wonder of many.”)¹⁶ Furthermore, the third-person narrator of *Ólafssaga* occasionally implies that the work is based on Ólafur's own account. Describing his departure, the narrator explains, for instance: “Litast þá Ólafur um og sá að sól skein í heiði, og hefir hann svo síðan sagt að hann hafi þá tvo hluti fegursta séð: plássíð, í hverju hann var staddur, og Álfhildi, er stóð fyrir framan hann.” (“Ólafur looked around and saw that the sun shone in a cloudless sky, and he has since said that he saw then two of the most beautiful things: the place where he stood, and Álfhildur, who stood before him”, 48) Considering these examples, *Ólafssaga*, just like *The Odyssey*, can be described as a narrative of narratives, a work of fiction that “speaks its own creation.”¹⁷

III

Todorov continues discussing nested narratives in the chapter “Narrative-Men.” At the outset, he explains how characterization in classic works of literature is *a-psychological*. In *The Odyssey* and *The Thousand and One*

16 Eiríkur Laxdal, *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar. Álfasagan mikla*, eds. Þorsteinn Antonsson and María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir (Reykjavík: Þjóðsaga, 1987), 41. All quotations from *Ólafssaga* are translated by Julie Summers. For the rest of the article, I will refer to this source in the main text with page numbers within brackets.

17 *Ibid.*, 61.

Nights, he explains, there is a simple and logical connection between an individual's character and actions. There is rarely any attempt made to explain why one person is brave and another a coward. The characterization is primarily built on one person telling his or her personal story to another person. This clarifies why the works in question are structured the way they are:

The appearance of a new character invariably involves the interruption of the preceding story, so that a new story, the one which explains the “now I am here” of the new character, may be told to us. A second story is enclosed within the first; this device is called *embedding*.¹⁸

Todorov explains that this sort of interruption to the narrative is analogous to subordinate clauses, using this complex German sentence to illustrate his point: “Derjenige, der den Mann, der den Pfahl, der auf der Brücke, der auf dem Weg, der nach Worms führt, liegt, steht, umgeworfen hat, anzeigt, bekommt eine Belohnun.”¹⁹ The first few chapters of *Ólafssaga* can be illustrated in a similar manner: “Ólafur, who listened to his father describe his interactions with German merchants, met Þórhildur, who claimed her parents were under a spell, when he was looking for his father's sheep.”

In the chapter in question, Todorov primarily focuses on the structure of *The Thousand and One Nights*, a large story collection thought to have been compiled in eighth-century Persia or India, though parts of it date much further back.²⁰ A French reworking of the Arabic version was published in France at the start of the eighteenth century, and its influence quickly spread throughout Europe. An English translation was published in 1714; a Danish translation followed in 1745; and pieces from these were translated into Icelandic in Eiríkur Laxdal's day.²¹ Like *Ólafssaga*, *The Thousand and One Nights* is a third-person narrative, but most of the stories presented are embedded within the frame story of Shahrazād's conver-

18 *Ibid.*, 70.

19 *Ibid.*, 71.

20 On the complex history of *The Thousand and One Nights* and its reception in the West see Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights. A Companion* (London and Dublin: Bloomsbury, 2005).

21 Cf. Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir, “Middle Eastern Tales in Icelandic Tradition,” *Narrative Culture* 10/1 (2023): 151–73.

sation with her husband, the jealous King Shahryār. Each time he marries, he has his new young bride killed at the end of the wedding night to ensure that she will not betray him. Every morning, to save herself from this fate, Shahrazād tells Shahryār a tale so exciting that he stays the execution until the following night. In this way, she prolongs her life one day at a time. She is careful not to end any story without promising another, but she also employs the technique of having a character in one story tell another story, giving her husband even more reason to let her live.

Among the embedded stories Todorov examines is “The Tale of the Hunchback.” Here, Shahrazād tells her husband of a group of four men – a broker, a steward, a doctor, and a tailor – suspected of having killed the titular character, who in fact choked on a fish bone. The sultān, after having listened with great skepticism to the four men describing their dealings with the deceased man, decides to have them all executed unless they can tell him a more spectacular story than the tale he has already heard of the hunchback’s fate. The strongest effort comes from the tailor, who claims that two days earlier, he was at a feast where he met a lame man who told the gathered guests about his unpleasant interactions with a barber, who was also present at the feast. When the lame man finishes his account, the barber describes events from his perspective, reporting that he had gone to the court of the khalīfah and told him a series of stories about his six brothers. In each of the barber’s stories, the brother in question has his own things to say. For instance, the fifth brother, al-Ashār, is accused of theft and multiple murders but saves his life by telling the walī (district governor) “all his adventures from beginning to end.”²² At this stage, we have encountered five narrative layers in *The Thousand and One Nights*:

The third-person narrator tells us that ...

Shahrazād tells Shahryār that ...

a tailor tells a sultān that ...

a *barber* tells party guests that ...

he (the barber) has told a khalīfah that ...

al-Ashār has told the walī “all his adventures.”

22. *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*, trans. Powys Mathers, vol. 1 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), 352.

From this point on, the stories are completed one at a time, just like the subordinate clauses in the German sentence Todorov cited. But there is also a sort of short circuit between the surrounding nest and the nested story within. When the tailor finishes his tale, the sultān summons the barber to his court. The barber manages to remove the fish bone from the throat of the hunchback, who turns out to be alive. By telling his story, the tailor saves his own life as well as the lives of his three companions, and Shahrazād once again succeeds in extending her life by at least a few more nights. It's no wonder that the characters in *The Thousand and One Nights* are constantly telling one another stories, says Todorov, since "narrating equals living."²³ Additionally, he underlines that "embedding is an articulation of the most essential property of all narrative. For the embedding narrative is the *narrative of narrative*. By telling the story of another narrative, the first narrative achieves its fundamental theme and at the same time is reflected in this image of itself."²⁴

Ólafssaga contains one intricately woven narrative akin to that of *The Thousand and One Nights*. The third-person narrator describes Ólafur's journey traveling south over the vast expanse of Arnarvatnsheiði, where he passes by a farm in an unfamiliar valley. A middle-aged housewife, Ingibjörg, welcomes Ólafur and invites him inside, where he meets her husband Dvalinn and their teenage daughter, Sólrún. Dvalinn scowls when he sees the guest, predicting that he will bring harm to the family, but Sólrún entertains her father to show Ólafur kindness. For her part, she undresses and lies down beside Ólafur. But when he begins to caress her, she implores him:

[...] ekki spilla meydómi sínum því að hún hefði ekki gjört þetta af nokkrum holds- eður lostatilfinningum – „heldur gjörði ég það til að firra bæði föður minn og þig vandræðum því að ég veit að faðir minn gjörir þér ekkert mein svo lengi sem ég er hjá þér.“

Ólafur spyr hverslags fólk þetta sé en hún lést mundi birta honum sannleikann ef hann gjörði hennar vilja. „Vil ég því segja þér Þáttinn af Ólafi Hrólfsyni og Dvalin, syni hans (184).²⁵

23 Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, 73.

24 *Ibid.*, 72.

25 Lena Rohrbach highlights how, in the manuscript of *Ólafssaga* (as in the 1987 edition), some

(...) not to spoil her of her maidenhead, for she had not done it out of any desire of the flesh – “I did it to keep you and my father from trouble, for I know my father will not do you any harm as long as I am by your side.”

Ólafur asks what sort of folk they are, and she says she will tell him the truth if he honors her wish. “I will tell you

The tale of Ólafur Hrólfsson and Dvalinn, his son.)

Here, narration takes the place of intimate relations and possibly also saves Ólafur’s life.

Sólrun begins by telling the story of Ásdís, who was forced to marry the widowed farmer Grímur. One day, Grímur’s mother Herdís sees her daughter-in-law crying and asks what is troubling her. Ásdís answers: “Með því ég hefi reynt þig að tryggri konu vil ég segja þér fylgjandi sögu, jafnvel þó hún sé mér ekki viðkomandi, og máttu þar af marka að margir hafa sorg að bera þó ekki sé sem mín sorg.” (“Because I have proven myself loyal to you, I will tell you the following story, although it does not concern me, and you will see that many people have sorrow to bear, though not like mine.” 186) The story is about a girl whose father sends her out to his farm’s shieling. One day, while she’s alone, a boy approaches her and asks her to give him some milk for his dying mother. The farmer’s daughter follows the boy to a small cave where his mother is lying ill. After she has been revived by the milk, the farmer’s daughter asks her “hvornin hún væri komin í slíkar ánauðir” (“how she came to be in such a situation”, 186). The mother answers by telling the story of the farmer Steinn and his daughter Steinunn, who is in her thirties and still living with her parents, though many suitors have asked for her hand in marriage. Steinn comes close to forcing Steinunn to marry but ends up reconsidering as his daughter is a headstrong creature. Interrupting her own narrative, the sick mother acknowledges that she is telling her own story.

of the nested narratives are framed by paratextual designations: “The vast majority of the in total 243 chapters in the saga are introduced with chapter headings stating only the number of the chapter [...]. Ten chapters have however a second heading that notifies the following as þáttur [...]. These chapters are introduced with initials in Fraktur that are considerably larger and more decorated than the other chapter initials, and most of the time the headings are also written in a larger Fraktur script.” See Lena Rohrbach, “Subversive Inscriptions.”

[...] þegar hún var átján vetra var það nokkurt kvöld *að ég var ein úti stödd – því að ég er síu sama sem ég nú frá segi –*, kom maður nokkur til mín ókenndur og bað mig veita sér brautargengi, sér lægi þar mikið við, og gjörði ég sem hann bað og kom í jarðgryfju nokkra eður hól sem var holur innan. Lá þar kona á gólfi og skyldi ég sitja yfir henni; stóð ekki lengi þar á því strax eftir að ég kom fæddi hún fagurt sveinbarn sem þó strax deyði eftir fæðinguna.

Var ég þar nokkurn tíma í allgóðu eftirlæti.

Maður nokkur var þar sem var unglegur að aldri, hér um bil tvítugur. Hann var sonur hjónanna og hét hann Hrólfur. Hann var fríður maður að ásýnd og leit hýru auga til mín strax þegar og ég engu síður til hans; og kviknaði með okkur ástarþokki og óx hann þó síðar meir. (emphasis added, 187)

([...] one evening when she was 18 winters old, *I was alone outside – for it is I whose story I now tell –*, a strange man came to me and asked for my assistance with something of utmost importance to him, and I did as he asked and came to an underground hollow. A woman lay there on the ground, and I was meant to care for her; I was not there long before she delivered a beautiful baby boy, but he died immediately after the birth.

I was there for quite some time taking care of her.

The man was youthful, perhaps twenty. He was the couple's son and was called Hrólfur. He was an attractive man to behold and was immediately fond of me, and I no less of him; there was a spark of love between us that was to grow even greater.)

At this point, we can have encountered four narrative layers in *Ólafssaga* but also observed that there is a short circuit between at least two of them. When Ásdís concludes the story of Steinunn, we discover yet another short circuit: Ásdís admits to Herdís that she is in fact the farmer's daughter who visited Steinunn at her sick bed.

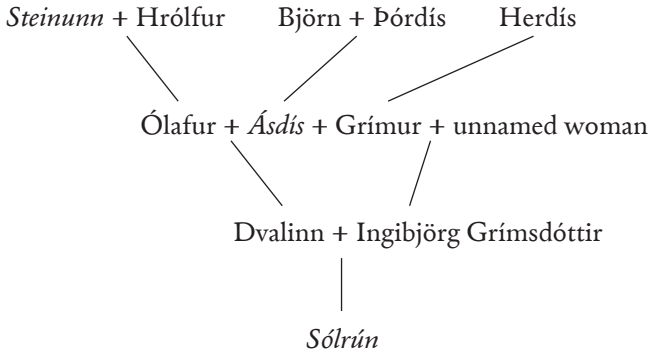
The third-person narrator tells us that...

Sólrún tells Ólafur that...

Ásdís tells Herdís that...

Steinunn has told *her* (a farmer’s daughter/Ásdís) that...
she (Steinunn) and Hrólfur fell in love.

When Sólrún finishes her story, it furthermore becomes clear that she, Ásdís, and Steinunn all belong to different generations of the same family and that Dvalinn and Ingibjörg are stepsiblings. This revelation requires the reader to radically rearrange and reevaluate the information that’s been presented, not only to turn *syuzhet* into *fabula* but also to construct the narrators’ family tree.



The difference between plot and story in “The Tale of Ólafur Hrólfsson and Dvalinn, his son” can be illustrated, as before, by using letters to represent chronological order and numbers to represent the order in which the events are represented: A6-B5-C7-D2-E8-F4-G9-H3-I10-J1-K11 (see appendix for more). The narration is spurred by Ólafur Þórhallason’s curiosity as to “what sort of folk” are hosting him in their home. To borrow from Todorov’s terminology, the plot can be described as Sólrún, Ásdís, and Steinunn’s interwoven “now I am here” accounts.

Furthermore, it is frequently implied in *Ólafssaga* that storytelling is a means to salvation. This can be clearly seen when Herdís encourages Ásdís to tell of her woes: “því gjörðir þú svo mundi kannske nokkur léttir á henni verða og þú fáir einhverja bót þá sem þér er hulin meðan þú talar ekkert

þar um, því að alltið verður (mönnum léttara eftir) það sem er opinberan og hafa menn þó nokkra huggun af því að um hana sé talað” (“for if you would do so, the burden might feel lighter and you might feel some sense of relief, as you are hidden as long as you do not talk about it, for a man always feels relief when what was in darkness is brought out into the light and finds comfort in knowing it is being discussed” 186). The same point is highlighted again when Ásdís finishes her narration: “Vegvísaði hún þessari sinni sögusögn með svo margföldum tárur að Herdís sýndist þau nær óstillandi, grét hún þá með og það því meira sem Herdís þurfti huggunar með af Ásdísi. Og gladdist Ásdís þá svo mjög að hún missti helming harms síns.” (“Her tale was punctuated by so many tears that they seemed to Herdís nearly uncontrollable. She joined Ásdís in weeping and wept so much that she needed Ásdís to comfort her as well. And Ásdís was so greatly cheered that her sorrow diminished by half.” 190–91)

IV

The third classic work of literature Todorov discusses in his book is *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, which was compiled by an unknown author in thirteenth-century France but remained unpublished until the mid-nineteenth century. The relevant chapter, titled “The Quest of Narrative,” is to some extent inspired by the writing of medieval historian Albert Pauphilet. Here, Todorov points out that in the medieval French text, stories of the knights’ travels and dreams are often interpreted by hermits or monks, adding that they are comparable to theologians who provide typological interpretations of the Bible. “One half of the text deals with adventures, the other with the text which describes them,” writes Todorov.²⁶

Todorov gives the example of Sir Gawain’s vision of a herd of bulls grazing. Three of them were “coupled together at the neck by strong, unyielding yokes. The bulls exclaimed in a body: ‘Let us go farther afield to seek out better pasture!’”²⁷ Sir Gawain asks a holy man to interpret the dream for him, and the man says the herd represents the knights of the round table and the bull’s words refer to the knights’ decision to set out in

²⁶ Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, 123.

²⁷ *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, trans. P. M. Matarasso (Middlesex, Baltimore, Victoria: Penguin, 1969), 164.

search of the Holy Grail. Although these wise figures clearly have knowledge that the knights lack, their interpretations are somewhat ambiguous and even contradictory. In one of the tales about Lancelot, the color black is interpreted as symbolizing sin, but in one of Bors' dreams, black represents the church and, therefore, virtue. Things are further complicated when the devil appears in the guise of a priest and presents an interpretation of the color black that is explicitly intended to confuse Bors. To some extent, Todorov explains, "the quest of the Grail is the quest of a code. To find the Grail is to learn how to decipher the divine language."²⁸

Another narrative feature Todorov discusses in this context are prophecies, which are a familiar feature of folk tales and also appear in other types of texts. "Thus Circe, or Calypso, or Athena predicts to Odysseus what will happen to him," observes Todorov in his discussion of *The Odyssey*, adding that at times Odysseus even predicts his own future.²⁹ Prophecies are also a common feature in *The Quest of the Holy Grail* and often appear in the form of spells that are contingent on positive or negative conditions: "If X does this or that thing, then this or that will happen (to him)."³⁰ Such spells essentially provide a formula for the plot, indicating to the readers ahead of time what the hero will do, even if he has some limited choices (breaking a spell, for instance). But with each page of *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, even these options dwindle. Todorov specifically focuses on the adventures of Galahad. While the other knights are more like traditional folk tale characters, whose ultimate triumph is not assured, it is clear early on that Galahad is the good knight who will overcome every obstacle in his path and see the quest of the Holy Grail through to the end. Stories about him become so predictable that they revolve less around the question of "What will happen next?" than the question of "What is the meaning of the Grail?". Todorov sees a persistent tug-of-war between these two questions in *The Quest of the Holy Grail* and clarifies that they are at play in most literary works and can even shed light on different literary genres:

The two fundamental types of detective story, the mystery and the adventure, illustrate these same two points. In the first case, the

²⁸ Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, 129.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

story is given in the very first pages, but it is incomprehensible. A crime is committed almost before our eyes, but we do not know its true agents nor the real motives. The investigation consists in returning to the same events over and over, checking and correcting the slightest details, until at the end the truth breaks out with regard to this same initial history. In the second case there is no mystery, no backward turn. Each event provokes another, and the interest we take in the story does not come from our expectations of a revelation as to the initial *données*; it is the expectation of their consequences which sustains the suspense.³¹

Ólafssaga contains quite a few instances of the same events being described more than once and from different points of view. Lena Rohrbach has specifically addressed this feature in an article about paratextual elements of *Ólafssaga*, but she finds few examples of it in early Icelandic literature.³² However, various classic works present multiple points of view. We need only recall “The Little Hunchback” from *The Thousand and One Nights*, where the lame man and the barber describe their conflict in different ways. But if we stay with *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, we can see that Ólafur, just like the knights of the round table, takes part in a series of events of which he himself has only a limited understanding. The elf women in the story must repeatedly explain to him what has *really* taken place.³³ They also predict what will happen to him in the future, and it sometimes becomes clear later that at the root of what has happened is an enchantment or curse of which Ólafur himself was unaware. Consequently, there are many places in the narrative where one can identify the tug-of-war between the two questions Todorov discusses; the story variably focuses on the road ahead and on the road already traveled. This is clearly illustrated by a trial scene of *Ólafssaga* in which Ólafur finds himself facing a possible death sentence. The court case evokes some of

31 *Ibid.*, 136.

32 Rohrbach mentions *Sálus saga ok Níkanórs* as one of few exceptions. Lena Rohrbach. “Subversive Inscriptions.”

33 Cf. Lena Rohrbach, “Weibliche Stimmen – männliche Sicht. Rekalibrierungen von Gender und Genre in der Ólafs saga Þórhallasonar,” *Þáttasýrpa. Studien zu Literatur, Kultur und Sprache in Nordeuropa. Festschrift for Stefanie Gropper*, eds. Anna Katharina Heiniger, Rebecca Merkelbach, and Alexander Wilson, *Beiträge zur Nordischen Philologie* 72 (Tübingen: Francke 2022), 257–65.

his earlier dealings with the elves, and it is hence useful to trace them in some detail.

After bringing his father’s sheep back home, early in the story, Ólafur sails to the island of Drangey, where he has an affair with the elf woman Álfgerður. He ends up killing her foster father in self-defense and is completely beside himself as a result. Þórhalli, concerned about his son, decides to send him once again to Þórhildur, who is in Ólafur’s debt. She declares that Álfgerður is responsible for his turmoil and decides to send him to seek help from Álfhildur, along with a message and a ring. Álfhildur reads the message and seems ready to turn Ólafur away but changes her mind when he gives her the ring and decides to take him as her husband. Furthermore, she confirms that Álfgerður had cast a love spell on Ólafur: “verður þér með engu bjargað nema þú hafir samræði með þeirri konu sem yfirgangi í dyggðum Álfgerðar vonsku. En svo bjó hún í hag fyrir þig að Þórhildur í Þórhildardal kynni þér ekki að hjálpa, [...] og því hefi ég það til ráðs tekið, sem mönnum er kunnugt.” (“nothing will save you unless you make love to a woman whose virtue exceeds Álfgerður’s wickedness. And the spell was cast such that Þórhildur of Þórhildardalur Valley would be unable to help you [...] and that is the reason that I have done what I have done.” 41) Moreover, Álfhildur tells Ólafur a nested story of Álfgerður’s past, painting a deeply unpleasant picture of her. Reportedly, Álfgerður was falsely accused of licentiousness in her early years, which resulted in her turning from virtue to vice. Álfhildur explains: “Hingað til hafði hún elskað hreinlyndi og hreinlífi en nú tók hún fyrir sig fláttskap og undirferli; gjörðist þar hjá en versta og líðilegasta skækja og æfði sig þannin í öllum ódyggðum að hennar líki hefir síðan trautt fundist.” (“Before, she had loved honesty and chastity, but she now grew cunning and deceitful, became the worst, foulest harlot and practiced the ugliest vices that it has hardly been possible to find her equal.” 46)

Within a year, Álfhildur gives birth to Ólafur’s daughter. Still, she decides to send him on a journey to the south of Iceland, out of Álfgerður’s immediate reach. Álfhildur claims that he must stay away for three years, “og mun þú í nógar þrautir komast og það af ráðum Álfgerðar og mun þú þær þó allar vel yfirvinna” (“and you will encounter many troubles sent by Álfgerður but will overcome them all” 54). This prediction comes true, and then some, because Ólafur ends up engaged to a mortal woman. When

Álfhildur and Ólafur next cross paths, she is so shocked by this news that she dies. As a result, her father-in-law takes Ólafur to the elf court, accusing him of having manipulated Álfhildur with the ring he gave her, “sem með sinni náttúru orkaði því að hún gat ekki annað en gjört hans vilja þegar hún hafði hann meðtekið” (“which by its very nature made it impossible, once she had accepted it, for her to do anything but acquiesce to his will” 165). At this point, Álfhildur’s half-sister, Góðhjálp, shows up and promises to help Ólafur. Her name (literally meaning “good help”) underlines that she, just like the hermits in *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, has knowledge that the hero of the story lacks. Góðhjálp informs Ólafur that Álfhildur’s stepmother had declared that the latter “skyldi fá sinn dauða vegna unnusta síns sem nú er orðin vegna þín” (“should meet her death because of her betrothed, as has now happened because of you” 136). Once again, Ólafur discovers that things are not as they seem.

Góðhjálp enlists a solicitor to defend Ólafur in court. During the trial, he underlines that Ólafur did not know why Þórhildur sent him to Álfhildur and was aware of neither the nature of the ring nor the contents of the message. The solicitor then reads the message aloud. That text can be considered yet another nested narrative in *Ólafssaga*, as it supplements the description of Ólafur and Álfhildur’s initial meeting. In the message, Þórhildur asks Álfhildur to save Ólafur, who is lusting after Álfgerður of Drangey. Þórhildur appeals specifically to Álfhildur’s own good nature and feminine desire: “Hann er dauðans maður. Hví skal honum ekki bjargast? Hans líf og heilsa stendur á yðar valdi. Oft falaðan girndargrip sendi ég yður nú. Þér vitið að brúka hann og þegja og vænti ég nú náðar af yðar náð.” (“He is a dead man. Why should he not be saved? His life and health are in your hands. I am sending you a greatly desirable object. You know how to use it and keep quiet, and I expect you to show mercy.” 167) The message proves that Álfhildur was fully aware of the consequences of accepting the ring. Regarding Ólafur’s responsibility for Álfhildur’s death, the solicitor points out that he had been under her stepmother’s spell and that polygamy is allowed among the elves. In the end, Ólafur is acquitted.

But the quest for the truth about Ólafur’s interaction with the elf women does not end there. As in classic detective mysteries, Eiríkur Laxdal’s poetics entails “returning to the same events over and over, checking and correcting the slightest details, until at the end the truth breaks out with

regard to this same initial history.”³⁴ The most powerful twist comes when Álfgerður of Drangey finds an opportunity to tell Ólafur the whole story from her point of view. By her own account, she has fallen victim to slander, to the evil spells cast by her own stepmother, and to Ólafur’s unreliability, as he has placed his faith in Þórhildur and Álfhildur’s rumors about her. Álfgerður criticizes him especially harshly for this last point, “því að þegar þú fannst og reyndir að ég elskaði þig byrjaði þér að gjöra sama við mig og gegna ekki annarra mælgí. Því að hverjum skyldir þú betur trúa en sjálfum þér?” (“for when you came to see that I loved you, you began to do the same, ignoring the words of others. For whom should you be better able to believe than yourself?” 329). Furthermore, Álfgerður reveals that she herself wrote the message that Þórhildur asked Ólafur to take to Álfhildur in the first place and is, consequently, largely responsible for everything that has happened so far. At this point in the story, Ólafur has married Þórhildur, who is pregnant with his child. Shortly thereafter, it is revealed that she has gone into labor too early and delivered a stillborn child, probably due to her own carelessness. Now Þórhildur is taken to court, facing a death sentence.

A fair share of the characters in *Ólafssaga* turn out to be under magic spells and therefore hardly acting of their own accord or fully responsible for their own actions. Both Álfhildur and Álfgerður are trying to break the spells cast by their stepmothers, and that struggle shapes their interaction with Ólafur.³⁵ For most of the story, he believes that he is under Álfgerður’s spell, but this turns out to be only partially true. In the end, Álfgerður is acquitted of willful wrongdoing. In her place, Þórhildur ends up being the primary culprit of the story, with Ólafur coming in at a close

34 Todorov. *The Poetics of Prose*, 136.

35 The “stepmother-and-casting-of-spells-motif” is, as Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir has underlined, exceptionally common in Icelandic fairy tales (mainly collected in the nineteenth century) and can at least partially be traced back to medieval Icelandic literature. The connection between Icelandic stepmother-tales and *Ólafssaga* is briefly addressed by María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir, primarily in view of Eiríkur Laxdal’s biography, but this is a topic worthy of further attention. Cf. Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, “Stjúpur í vondu skapi,” *Tímarit Máls og menningar* 55/3 (1995): 25–36; Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, “Enchantment and Anger in Medieval Icelandic Literature and Later Folklore,” *Fictional Practice: Magic, Narration, and the Power of Imagination*, eds. Bernd-Christian Otto and Dirk Johannsen (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021), 68–90; María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir, *Tveggja heima sýn*, 249–52.

second for foolishly taking her at her word and believing Álfhildur's slander. Just as in the medieval French legends, or a typical detective mystery, additional information is revealed throughout the narrative, forcing readers to continually reevaluate how they perceive individual characters and events.

V

In her fundamental 2006 study, *Tveggja heima sýn* (*View of Two Worlds*), María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir examines how Eiríkur Laxdal recycles various Icelandic folk tales in *Ólafssaga*.³⁶ She highlights, however, that while the work is “firmly rooted in the oral storytelling tradition, it concurrently bears clear marks of the author distancing himself from that tradition.”³⁷ That same year, Matthías Viðar Sæmundsson writes in a history of Icelandic literature that while *Ólafssaga* is “on the border between oral and written narrative techniques,” the author manages to “weave a cohesive story out of the contradictions of his own day and age.”³⁸ Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson makes a similar claim in a recent history of Icelandic literature, as does Lena Rohrbach in her article about paratextual elements of *Ólafssaga*.³⁹ Margrét Eggertsdóttir makes even a stronger claim in *A History of Icelandic Literature*, also from 2006, when she argues that Eiríkur Laxdal was not only an original writer but in fact “far ahead of his contemporaries [...]. The character of Ólafur is like characters in modern or postmodern literature [...] fractured and self-contradictory.”⁴⁰

In this article, *Ólafssaga* has been analyzed from a different point of view. When the content, structure, and characterization of the work

36 María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir *Tveggja heima sýn*, 143–234.

37 *Ibid.*, 242.

38 Matthías Viðar Sæmundsson, “Sagnagerð frá upplýsingu til raunsæis,” 184.

39 Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson, “Leiðin til nútímans,” *Íslenskar bókmenntir. Saga og sambengi*, vol. 2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 2022), 452; Lena Rohrbach, “Subversive Inscriptions.”

40 Margrét Eggertsdóttir, “From Reformation to Enlightenment,” *A History of Icelandic Literature*, ed. Daisy Neijmann, *Histories of Scandinavian Literature*, vol. 5. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 249–50. María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir similarly compares Eiríkur's work to twentieth-century modern and post-modern novels by Thor Vilhjálmsson and Lawrence Durrell. See María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir, *Tveggja heima sýn*, 42 and 53.

are considered, it can be seen as part of a centuries-long literary tradition of layered narratives that focus on storytelling. The three classic works that have been presented here are all “on the border between oral and written narrative techniques.” Plenty of other classical works featuring nested narratives could have been examined in that context, such as Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decamerone* (*The Decameron*, 1348–1353), Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* (c. 1387–1400), and Snorri Sturluson’s “Gylfaginning” in *Snorra Edda* (*The Prose Edda*, c. 1220–1230).⁴¹ European writers continued producing extended narratives in this tradition throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Such works have been labeled *novel cycles* or *novel streams* (Fr. *roman-fleuve*) in France, one of the earliest examples being *L’Astrée* (*Astree*, 1607–1627) by Honoré d’Urfé.⁴² Published in five volumes, it contains a multitude of digressions held together by the main story of the love between shepherdess Astrée and shepherd Céladon. Interesting novel cycles from Eiríkur Laxdal’s day include Jan Potocki’s *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* (*The Manuscript Found in Saragossa*, 1805) and Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820).⁴³

Before we part with *Ólafssaga*, it is tempting to take one final look at *The Poetics of Prose*. Todorov points out that although *The Quest of the Holy Grail* largely revolves around interpreting the meaning of the Grail in light of Christian theology, no definitive answer is ever given. He rejects the theory, espoused by Pauphilet and other scholars, that the Grail represents God himself. Todorov claims that according to medieval thinkers, God would never reveal himself to mankind through secular literature. Hence, he suggests that the quest of the Holy Grail is not only a quest for a code or meaning but also a quest for a story that can communicate that which

41 Cf. Jón Karl Helgason, “Omkring Snorres poetikk. Skaldskapens rolle i Vafþrúðnismál og Snorra Edda,” *Snorres Edda i Europeisk og Islandsk kultur*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen (Reykholt: Snorrastofa, 2009), 107–30.

42 María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir mentions *Astree* in a footnote in her discussion about the structure of *Ólafssaga* without discussing in detail the possible connection between the works. See María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir, *Tveggja heima sýn*, 242. See also Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir, “Íslensk og ólensk ævintýri,” 133. Additional interesting Italian titles from this period are *Le piacevoli notti* (*The Facetious Nights*, 1550) by Giovanni Francesco Straparola and the seventeenth-century *Il Pentamerone* (*The Pentamerone*, 1634–1636) by Giambattista Basile. See Romina Werth, “Inngangur,” 15–16.

43 In the chapter “Narrative Men,” Todorov briefly compares *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa* to *The Thousand and One Nights*. Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, 70–71.

cannot be communicated: “Thereby narrative appears as the fundamental theme of *The Quest of the Holy Grail* (as it is of all narrative, but always in a different way).”⁴⁴

Can we apply this view to *Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar*? Much of what has been presented in this article would seem to suggest so. According to *Ólafssaga*, we are destined to tell and listen to stories, and this can be both a blessing and a curse, as can be seen when Þórhildur and Ólafur run into each other near the very end of the story. The elf woman accuses her ex-husband of having scorned her, and she intends to take revenge by casting a final spell on him.

[...] sjálfur skaltu verða fátækur, félaus og fyrirlitinn af öllum. Við það skaltu búa allan þinn aldur nema þú fáir óspillta mæð sem ekki er yngri en seytján vetra, vel efnaða, fríða og góðsama, hverri þú skalt fram lesa allt hvað þú hefir séð og heyrt. Vilji hún þá og geti sagt þér aðra eins sögu af yfirjarðarfólki og þú hefir sagt henni af álfafólki og gangi þar til að eiga þig skal þér hólpíð verða, annars ekki. (365)

([...] you yourself shall be poor, destitute, and scorned by all. Thus shall you live out the rest of your days, unless you find an unspoiled maiden no younger than seventeen winters, well-to-do, attractive, and good, to whom you shall recount all that you have seen and heard. Should she tell a story of mortals like the one you have told of the elves, and should she agree to be your bride, only then shall you be safe.)

“Should she tell a story ... only then shall you be safe.” It seems particularly fitting that Eiríkur Laxdal’s inspired work of fiction concludes with a prophecy of yet another cycle of stories and storytelling.⁴⁵

Translated from Icelandic by Julie Summers

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁴⁵ I would like to thank Julie Summers for translating the article from Icelandic into English. I also would also like to thank Lena Rohrbach, Romina Werth, anonymous peer reviewers and the editors of *Gripla* for their valuable suggestions.

APPENDIX

ORDER OF EVENTS IN “THE TALE OF ÓLAFUR
HRÓLFSSON AND DVALINN, HIS SON”

Below, events of this nested narrative of *Ólafssaga* are labeled with letters corresponding to chronological order and numbers indicating the order in which they are described.

- A6. Steinunn, the daughter of Elín and Steinn, is 18 years old when she is visited by an elf man. She goes with him to an underground hollow and helps his wife deliver a son, who dies. The elf couple’s older son, Hrólfur, escorts her back.
- B5. When Steinunn is 34 years old, she does not want to marry any suitor.
- C7. Hrólfur makes off with Steinunn. Her parents search but do not find her. She and Hrólfur have nine children. Steinunn is 58 when she gives birth to Ólafur.
- D2. Ásdís is born and grows up with her parents, Björn and Þórdís.
- E8. Steinunn is 68 when Hrólfur dies.
- F4. Steinunn is 72 when she falls ill. Ólafur Hrólfsson visits Ásdís, who is in the shieling, and asks her to give his mother some milk. Steinunn tells Ásdís her story.

NESTED STORY # 3

- G9. Steinunn concludes her story. Ólafur Hrólfsson escorts Ásdís back. Mother and son frequently visit Ásdís at the shieling. Steinunn dies. Ólafur and Ásdís’ love grows. She becomes pregnant and gives birth to Dvalinn. Ólafur leaves with him.
- H3. In the autumn, Ásdís’ father marries her off to Grímur, a widower who has a daughter, Ingibjörg. Ásdís tells her mother-in-law Herdís the story of the farmer’s daughter and Ólafur Hrólfsson.

NESTED STORY # 2

- I10. Ásdís concludes her story and admits to Herdís that she is the farmer’s daughter from the story. One autumn, a vagabond (Ólafur

Hrólfsón) visits with his seven-year-old son. Grímur forces Ásdís to look after these guests. Both she and Ólafur die upon their reunion. Grímur takes in Dvalinn as a foster son, Dvalinn and Ingibjörg marry, and Dvalinn kills Grímur's manservant. Grímur helps Dvalinn and Ingibjörg flee into the mountains. Their daughter Sólrún is born.

- J1. Ólafur Þórhallason visits Dvalinn's farm. Dvalinn's daughter Sólrún tells him the entire story from start to finish.

NESTED STORY # 1

- K11. Sólrún concludes her story, and Ólafur Þórhallason promises to help her family.

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ÁGRIP

„Vilji hún þá og geti sagt þér aðra eins sögu ...“: Í leit að skáldskaparfræði Eiríks Laxdals

Efnisorð: frásagnarfræði, rammafrásagnir, skáldsagnagerð, Eiríkur Laxdal, Hómer, *Þúsund og ein nótt*, *Leitin að hinum helga gral*

Í greininni er fjallað um frásagnarfræðileg einkenni *Sögu Ólafs Þórhallasonar* eftir Eirík Laxdal. Segja má að fræðimenn hafi skoðað og metið sagnagerð Eiríks frá þremur sjónarhornum. Ýmsir sem komust í tæri við *Ólafssögu* á nítjándu öld og jafnvel síðar virðast hafa litið á hana sem misheppnað safn þjóðsagna. Frá því um miðja tuttugustu öld hafa skrif Eiríks hins vegar almennt verið talin marka upphaf skáldsagnagerðar hér á landi. Samkvæmt þriðja sjónarhorninu tilheyrir *Ólafssaga* hins vegar sígildri sagnahefð sem unnt er að staðsetja mitt á milli þjóðsögunnar og skáldsögunnar. Án þess að fyrri sjónarhornunum tveimur sé alfarið hafnað er lögð áhersla á að sagan eigi ýmislegt sameiginlegt með frásagnarbókmenntum fyrri alda og í því sambandi gerður samanburður á henni og hinni forngrísku *Ódysseifskviðu*, arabíska sagnasafninu *Þúsund og einni nótt* og franska miðaldatextanum *Leitin að hinum helga gral*. Í öllum tilvikum er stuðst við greiningu búlgarsk-franska fræðimannsins Tzvetans Todorov í verkinu *The Poetics of Prose*. Þegar tekið er tillit til efniviðar, uppbyggingar og jafnvel persónusköpunar *Ólafssögu* má líta á hana sem skilgetið afkvæmi aldalangrar bókmenntahefðar lagskiptra frásagna þar sem ekki er aðeins unnið úr munnlegri sagnahefð heldur er sú hefð beinlínis sett á svið.

SUMMARY

“Should she tell a story ...”: In Quest of Eiríkur Laxdal’s Poetics

Key words: Narratology, embedded narratives, fiction writing, folktales, Eiríkur Laxdal, Homer, *The Thousand and One Nights*, *The Quest of the Holy Grail*

This paper analyses the narration in Eiríkur Laxdal’s *Saga Ólafs Þórbhallasonar*. Scholars placing Eiríkur’s writing within the context of literary history have generally taken one of three viewpoints. Some who encountered *Ólafssaga* in the nineteenth century and even later seem to have regarded it as a rather poor collection of Icelandic folk tales. Since the mid-twentieth century, however, the text has generally been considered to mark the advent of the novel in Iceland. The third approach views *Ólafssaga* as a product of an ancient narrative tradition that falls somewhere between traditional folk tales and novels. While not fully rejecting the first two views, the article compares Eiríkur’s work to three elaborate classical works of narrative fiction: Homer’s *Odyssey*, the Arabic story-cycle *The Thousand and One Nights*, and the French medieval narrative *The Quest of the Holy Grail*. The analysis, inspired by Tzvetan Todorov’s *The Poetics of Prose*, reveals that *Ólafssaga* can be seen as part of a centuries-long literary tradition of layered narratives that focus on storytelling.

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