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SEABIRDS TO STARBOARD.
NOTES ON NORSE NAVIGATIONAL TECHNIQUE

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IN JANUARY 2017, AS AMATEUR ORNITHOLOGISTS across Britain prepared for the thirty-eighth annual Big Garden Birdwatch—said to be the largest citizen-scientist bird census in the world—the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds issued a call for special vigilance: waxwings, a rarely sighted species that only frequents British shores every seven or eight years, would be plentiful over the coming winter. Cold conditions in their native Scandinavia had driven them in hundreds and thousands across the North Sea, to ‘dispers[e] as far west as Wales and Ireland, in search of berries’ (Knapton 2017).

A millennium or more earlier, it would have been other Scandinavian visitors for whom Britons kept a sharp—and rather more apprehensive—lookout: Viking raiders infamously launched ferocious attacks across the same North Sea, irrupting in Britain more frequently and less predictably than flocks of waxwings do nowadays. In his well-known letter of 793 AD, Alcuin of York remarked on the shock occasioned that summer by the raid that marked the onset of the Viking Age, the unprecedented savaging of the monastery at Lindisfarne: *numquam talis terror prius apparuit in Britannia . . . nec eiusmodi nauigium fieri posse putabatur* ‘never before has such terror appeared in Britain . . . nor was it thought that such an inroad from the sea could be made’ (1975, II.4 53–54 = 1955, 776).

Just how the Vikings were able to effect this wonder, to steer across a trackless ocean and make land directly at their destination without following a coastline, has remained a mystery ever since; we know that Norsemen in the Viking Age performed astonishing feats of navigation, but we do not know quite how they did it.¹ In this article, we suggest that waxwings (among other avians) may hold part of the answer. Norse sailors may have practised their own version of amateur ornithology, observing the birdlife

¹ Many more or less fanciful theories have been advanced. For a debunking of some such theories, see, e.g., Christensen (2000, 96–97); Keller and Christensen (2003).

around them closely for clues that allowed them to navigate open waters with unerring confidence.

The problem of Norse navigational technique really involves two distinct but related questions: first, how sailors on board ship actually found their bearings in the absence of magnetic compasses (which would not be introduced to Europe for several centuries yet; Aczel 2001, 61), and second, how they preserved and communicated their knowledge to others in the absence of a native cartographic tradition (McNaughton 2000, 258). Here, we focus first on the mechanics of finding one's way by birdwatching: we will discuss how ornithology can allow humans in general, and could have helped Norsemen in particular, to locate themselves in space (even on a featureless seascape) and to remotely sense desirable destinations. At the same time, we will highlight some of the narrative evidence for Norsemen's actually having done so. The same texts that reveal Norse navigational prowess to us may also serve to illuminate the second part of the problem, that of the transmission of navigational lore: by drawing verbal maps and drawing attention to tell-tale bird signage, such narratives, circulating across the Norse-speaking world, could guide future navigators following in the tracks of their predecessors.

Humans all over the globe have long practised a kind of parasitic symbiosis with birds, observing their behaviour for clues to assist in their own wayfinding. (A reverse parasitism also occurs, a reality which underwrites, for example, the rich Norse literary topos of ravens who shadow armed men to sites of anticipated or actual carnage.)² Throughout much of Africa, so-called 'honeyguides', birds of the family *Indicatoridae*, cooperate with hunter-gatherers, leading them to wild beehives; when the humans smash open the hives to extract their sweet content, the birds feast on the honeycombs, larvae and eggs (Friedman 1955; Wood et al. 2014).³

Such instances of mutually beneficial collaboration with non-domesticates, in which the non-human partners are compensated for their labour, are in fact quite rare. Icelanders' traditional relationship with eider ducks, which goes back to the eighteenth century at least, and possibly back to the

² See, e.g., Þorbjörn hornklofi, *Haraldskvæði (Hrafnsmál)* (2012, 97), st. 4: *Haraldi vér fylgðum syni Hálfðanar | ungunum ynglingi síðan ór eggjum kvómum* 'We have followed Haraldr son of Hálfðan, the young king, since we emerged from the egg'; *Íslendinga saga* ch. 187 [275] (in *Sturlunga saga*, I 512).

³ Most cases of human-honeyguide interaction are recorded in eastern and southern Africa, but species of *Indicatoridae* are distributed throughout the sub-Saharan continent, and some (e.g., the Malayan Honeyguide, *Indicator archipelagicus*) are native to Asia.

Middle Ages—providing them with shelter and protection from predators in return for a downy harvest—may constitute a rare analogue (Lúðvík Kristjánsson 1986, esp. 278, 288–93; Árni Snæbjörnsson 2001; Beck 2013, 43).⁴ More commonly, however, our species takes advantage of assistance provided unwittingly by the wildlife around us. Out in the North Atlantic, birds may have directed humans to food when they congregated over schools of fish; an enigmatic poetic allusion to *spábernir* ‘prophetic terns’ has been interpreted by some as recording the role of seabirds in providing fishermen with intelligence (*spá*) of the whereabouts of herring.⁵ Just as importantly, however, Atlantic fowl could perform the function of guiding seamen towards land lying below the horizon.

Birds’ innate sense of the Earth’s magnetic field enables them to set their course in the absence of visual cues (Wiltschko and Wiltschko 2003). Even before the onset of the Viking Age, it has been speculated, the likes of St Brendan may have followed a path marked by Brent Geese (US: Brants), migrating back in summer from their winter feeding grounds in the Shannon estuary to breed in Iceland and Greenland. Large, loud and flocking together in great numbers, the geese would have been hard to miss and easy to track (Taylor 1956, 76–77; Harrison et al. 2010).⁶

But even when not migrating over long distances, seabirds flying about their daily business may have alerted mariners to the proximity of land. During hatching season (which runs roughly from mid-May to mid-August, thus overlapping with the height of sailing season), navigators in the North Atlantic would have known that adult Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills, Tysties (US: Black Guillemots) and Common Guillemots (US: Common Murres) flying empty-beaked were likely to be heading away from land, while those carrying piscine loot were probably returning to their nests. Even allowing for some random variation in the airborne behaviour of individual specimens, it would have been fairly straightforward to steer by birdwatching.

In the absence of any medieval Scandinavian marine logs or pilots’ manuals, of the sort that survive from Exploration Era captains, it is hardly surprising, if disappointing, that we have no direct record of such ornithological observation from the Norsemen. Columbus in his diary made

⁴ We are indebted to Anna Dís Ólafsdóttir for alerting us to this topic and providing access to the documentary film *Feathered Friends* (2016).

⁵ See Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson (2012, 233, with Poole’s commentary). This interpretation was first suggested by Flornes (1939); see also Perkins (2015, 7).

⁶ The Norse may well have acquired some of their maritime knowledge from Irish sources; see, e.g., Marcus (1980, 31–32).

careful (and quite possibly idealised) notes of the various clues he detected in the sea and the skies on his 1492 westward voyage.⁷ Even more explicit was the Portuguese navigator Pedro Fernández de Quirós, who in 1606 (according to Martín de Munilla's journal of the voyage) penned instructions for use by the fleet exploring the South Pacific under his command. Among other signs indicating the proximity of land—changes in wind or current, in the colour of the water or the flotsam suspended in it—Quirós tells his pilots (de Munilla 1963, 30–31 = 1966, 148–49):

Si topare bandadas de muchos pajaros marinos como son grajaos blancos y negros y almas de maestros y rrabiaorcados ara mirar a la tarde para que p[ar]te van bolando si se recojen temprano y bienen al amanecer. Si se recojen temprano tienen la tierra lejos y si se recojen tarde y bienen temprano, tienen zerca la tierra y que cassi siempre auitan en estas ysilas que no son de hombres auitadas y que quando auitan en estas es falta destar zerca las tierras disiertas y si los paxaros que encontrare fueren piqueros bouos patos gabiotas tiñosas gabilanes flamencos y siloricos es señal de tierra mas zerca y si fueren alcatrazes señal de mas çerca y si solo fueren pardelas no daran tanto cuidado porque siempre se allan estos pajaros en los mayores golfos y lo mismo rrabos de junco que suelen estos alejarse q[uan]to quieren y si todas las castas de pajaros andubieren juntas señal de mas çerca de tierra.

If flights of sea-birds are sighted, such as black and white cormorants, petrels, and frigate-birds, have them observed in the evening to see in which direction they fly, and whether they retire early and come at daybreak. If they retire early, the land is distant. If they retire late and come early, the land is near. For they nearly always live on uninhabited islands, and when they live on inhabited ones it is because there are no deserted islands nearby.

If the birds found are *piqueros*, *bobos*, ducks, [skuas], terns, hawks, flamingoes, or *siloricos*, it is a sign of land being nearer. If they are pelicans it is still a sign of land being close by, but if they are only gulls, there is no need for so much care because these birds are always to be found well out to sea. The same applies to boatswain birds, for they are wont to fly where they will. And if all kinds of birds are found flying together it is also a sign of land being close by.⁸

⁷ Columbus changed course toward Guanahaní, his first landfall in the Caribbean (11 October 1492), after, on 7 October, *passavan gran multitud de aves de la parte del norte al sudeste, por lo qual era de creer que se yvan a dormir a tierra o huyan quiçá del invierno* 'a large flock of birds passed from the N to the SW, which led them to believe that they were going to roost on land or were perhaps fleeing the winter' (Columbus 1990, 24–25); cf. Fenton (1993, 52–53), who notes how hindsight may make Columbus's reading of the signs appear more unerring than it is likely to have been in real time.

⁸ For skuas, the translation prints 'gulls', but in a note Kelly identifies *gaviotas* as Chilean Skuas (de Munilla 1966, 149 n. 1), whereas he renders *pardelas* later

Unfortunately, even overtly prescriptive Norse texts, such as the *King's Mirror* from mid-thirteenth-century Norway, discourse more readily on the marvels of distant Atlantic colonies and on the wares best traded there than on how to steer one's way to them. *Næmðu oc þannðliga birting lopz*, the text's sage Father advises his pupil Son, *hímin tungla gang. dæggra far oc ætta skipan* 'Observe carefully how the sky is lighted, the course of the heavenly bodies, the grouping of the hours, and the points of the horizon'; he also tells him to learn arithmetic, perhaps hinting at navigation by astronomical observation and geometric calculation (though the immediate context seems to point more towards concerns about retail pricing). But when it comes to clues in the environment, his advice is never more specific than *kunn þæl marca hvæsso þpær eða fær ukyrleicr sioar. þpi at þat er froðleicr mikell. oc þo nauðsynlect at kunna þeim er far möenn pilia þæra* 'learn also how to mark the movements of the ocean and to discern how its turmoil ebbs and swells; for that is knowledge which all must possess who wish to trade abroad'. Birds only receive passing mention, and then only as witnesses to the changing of the seasons (*Konungs skuggsía* 1983, 5, cf. 9 = *King's Mirror* 1917, 83, cf. 90–91).

Still, even in the absence of direct evidence, it would seem perverse to deny that, just like Columbus and Quirós, Norse navigators must have appreciated the significance of seabirds' migration and food-gathering flight patterns. If they could discern individual species, mariners in the North Atlantic would even have been able to gauge their approximate distance from land, as Quirós would in the Pacific. Many alcids and divers (US: loons) prefer to hunt close to shore, whereas Tysties, Northern Gannets and Northern Fulmars typically forage farther out to sea. Atlantic Puffins, for instance, usually venture no farther than 7 km from their colonies (Ashcroft 1979), Razorbills may range to distances of almost 40 km (Lavers, Hipfner and Chapdelaine 2020), while Northern Gannets cover 60–120 km in their search for food (Kirkham, McLaren and Montevecchi 1985, 181, 186)⁹—a range that would have made them an almost ideal indicator, from a sailor's perspective, that land was near even though not yet

in the passage generically as 'gulls'. Identification of several of the species mentioned is evidently uncertain; Kelly suggests the Peruvian or variegated Booby for *piquero*, the Brown Booby for *bobo*, and web-footed birds for *siloricos* (*recte siloquelidos*; de Munilla 1966, 149 n. 1). Cf. de Munilla (1963, 29–30 = 1966, 147–48) for environmental cues other than birdlife.

⁹ The authors cite a previous study of Northern Gannet nesting in Scotland, which estimates a much greater foraging range of 320–480 km (Kirkham, McLaren and Montevecchi 1985, 181).

visible. The Gannet is also the ‘largest indigenous seabird in [the] North Atlantic’, making it easier to spot and follow than many other species (Mowbray 2020), especially since foraging individuals routinely dive from great heights, creating an obvious spectacle.¹⁰ While Old Norse sources are largely silent about Gannets, in the cousin literature of early England, themselves accomplished North Sea mariners, these birds feature more prominently: Old English poets famously speak of the ocean as the *ganotes bæð* ‘gannet’s bath’ (e.g., *Beowulf* l. 1861).¹¹ As for Northern Fulmars, a study in north-east Greenland found that they forage more than a whopping 1000 km from their colonies when unencumbered by eggs or young in the nest, and 40–200 km after the chicks have hatched (Falk and Møller 1995). Except during nesting season, then, Northern Fulmars would have been as useless an indicator of direction to land in the Norse Atlantic as gulls and boatswain birds in Quirós’s South Pacific.

Telling apart similar species would, naturally, have been difficult in conditions of reduced visibility and at a distance. Chance bird sightings on the open ocean could have added to the difficulties, providing sailors with data too sparse to allow for secure identification. Nowadays, fishing trawlers and whaling ships, as well as pelagic birding tours, often throw overboard any offal they produce during their routine operations—or, in the case of birdwatching trips, as a deliberate means of attracting winged visitors. The practice, known as ‘chumming’ (Haney, Frstrup and Lee 1992, 54), allows birds to be viewed up close and in denser concentrations than are likely to occur naturally, which can be especially useful for picking out species like Wilson’s Storm-Petrel (Quirós’s *almas de maestres*, above), nearly indistinguishable from European Storm-Petrels but for their differently coloured underwings (Flood and Thomas 2007, 416, 418, and figs. 166 [416], 170 [420]). Like other tubenoses (*Procellariiformes*)—an order of pelagic birds which also includes Northern Fulmars—Storm-Petrels would have been attracted by both the sight and the smell of charnel offerings; unlike most avians, tubenoses have enlarged olfactory bulbs and other enhanced nasal architectural features, enabling them to locate chumming food slicks even when visibility is poor. Tubenoses themselves are, in turn, notable for their stench (as suggested by the name ‘fulmar’, ultimately from Icelandic *fílmár*, literally ‘foul mew’); many species are known for ‘eject[ing]

¹⁰ We are grateful to Ævar Petersen and Arnþór Garðarsson (personal communications, 22 November 2017 and 27 November 2017, respectively), as well as to a reader for *Saga-Book*, for highlighting these points to us.

¹¹ Old Norse *síla* ‘gannet’ seems to occur solely in bird lists: *Pulur* IV.xx.3 (in *Skjd* B.1, 677). For the early English context, see Schichler (2002, esp. 72–79).

redolent stomach oils when disturbed . . . accounting for the well-known musky scent of many procellariiforms' (Hutchison and Wenzel 1980, 314).

Norse mariners, who must have engaged in some fishing during their sea crossings, would have had a ready supply of unwanted meat parts, which they could have used to draw birds close enough to distinguish species, as well as to observe the directions in which they flew to and from land. Chumming would also have increased the sample size of species observed, and left less up to the luck of random sightings. The *þulur* (poetic synonym lists) compiled in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which contain some 200 distinct *heiti* 'poetic terms' for birds (*Þulur* IV.55–XX, in *Skjld* B.1, 676–77),¹² confirm that Norsemen could and did classify many different kinds of avians. It is true that the vast majority of occurrences in skaldic practice reduce this dazzling diversity to circumlocutions for the recurring carrion eaters of poetic battlefields, making it impossible to tell whether any individual poet knew more than that a given *heiti* was a word for a bird.¹³ Nonetheless, the currency of these many species names in the language suggests that, at some point, someone had made ornithological observations that mandated distinctions of vocabulary—and, indeed, skaldic usage occasionally hints that poets were doing more than parroting fossilised lexical conventions. That malodorous tubenoses, specifically, drew Norsemen's attention is suggested by some scurrilous verses in which the eleventh-century poet Hallfreðr Óttarsson contrasts the swan-like elegance of his beloved, Kolfinna, with her husband, Gríss, who reeks of *heitr ofremmdar sveiti* 'hot, overpowering sweat', and whom Hallfreðr unsobly compares to *silafullr . . . fílmjór* 'a foul mew full of herring' (*Hallfreðar saga* 1939, 181–82).¹⁴ Hallfreðr certainly seems familiar with avian realities, not just with a handy thesaurus of stock synonyms for 'bird'.

Even if they did not intentionally work to attract birds to their vessels, Norsemen may well have noted flocks of foraging Black-legged Kittiwakes, a type of gull (Hatch, Robertson and Baird 2020), which nest on

¹² These lists compile *c.* thirty *heiti* for hawk, twenty for raven, fifteen for hen, twelve for eagle and nearly 120 for other birds.

¹³ See Snorri Sturluson (1998, I 90 = 1987, 137): *er eigi þarf at kenna [hrafn ok orñ] annan veg en kalla blóð eða hræ drykk þeira eða verð . . . Alla aðra fugla karlkenda má kenna við blóð eða hræ ok er þat þá nafn orñ eða hrafn* 'there is no need to refer to [the raven and the eagle] in any other way than by calling blood or corpses their drink or food . . . All other masculine birds can be referred to in terms of blood or corpses, and then it means eagle or raven'.

¹⁴ See also: *dýnu Rön [er] sem olpt á sundi* 'the downy sea-goddess [is] like a swan a-swimming' (*Hallfreðar saga* 1939, 181; for a different translation, see *Saga of Hallfred* 1997, 245).

Iceland's southern coast but may cover half the distance to the British Isles in their search for food (Marcus 1980, 114).¹⁵ Moreover, as G. J. Marcus already pointed out some decades ago, Kittiwakes are among the chief victims of pilfering pelagic birds, particularly Bonxies (US: Great Skuas), which can weigh up to three times as much as the smaller gulls (Hatch, Robertson and Baird 2020; Hamer, Furness and Caldow 1991). In true Viking fashion, these robust birds travel long distances from their breeding grounds on Vatnajökull to bully other species and steal their food; the Bonxies' aggressive raids would have produced much commotion, which Norse sailors could hardly have failed to notice. A fourteenth-century recension of *Landnámabók*, an account of the early settlement of Iceland, confirms that Norsemen out in the open Atlantic did pay attention to seabirds known to nest in Iceland (1968, 33):

Svá segja vitrir menn, at . . . af Hernum af Nóregi skal sigla jafnan í vestr til Hvarfs á Grænlandi, ok er þá siglt fyrir norðan Hjalmland, svá at því at eins sé þat, at allgóð sé sjóvar sýn, en fyrir sunnan Færeyjar, svá at sjór er í miðjum hlíðum, en svá fyrir sunnan Ísland, at þeir hafa af fugl ok hval.

Wise men say that . . . from Hennøya in Norway it is straight sailing westward to Hvarf in Greenland, and then one sails north of Shetland so that one sees it only if visibility at sea is very good, but south of the Faeroes so that the sea is halfway up the hills, and so also south of Iceland that they encounter birds and whales thence.

What, precisely, were the feathered (and finned) proximity indicators for which these sailors kept a lookout?

Landnámabók names no species explicitly, leaving us in the dark about the specifics of Norse ornithology (and cetology). Black-legged Kittiwakes, which nowadays are the most abundant gull species breeding in Iceland, or their rarer but raucous adversaries, Bonxies, are both attractive candidates.¹⁶ We must recognise, however, that bird demographics may have shifted considerably since the Middle Ages, making any proposals about the most likely Icelandic marker species little better than guesswork.¹⁷

¹⁵ We are indebted to Heather O'Donoghue for checking Marcus (1954) to confirm that it contains no further pertinent information. A note in Marcus's own hand, attached to the frontispiece of the thesis, directs users to his 1980 book (O'Donoghue, personal communication, 11 September 2017).

¹⁶ Bakken et al. (2006, 44 [Table 3]) estimate breeding populations of 630,000 pairs of Black-legged Kittiwakes, 5400 pairs of Bonxies.

¹⁷ Fisher (1952, 80–83, 107, 435) documents the proliferation of Northern Fulmar populations all across the North Atlantic, spreading from a handful of colonies around Iceland in the seventeenth century (and, ultimately, from earlier unknown

From zooarchaeological evidence, we know that both species were present in medieval Iceland, but their proportional share in the overall bird population may have been smaller than it is nowadays.¹⁸ What matters more than identifying the precise breed(s) of birds Norsemen would have sighted, however, is recognising that the Norsemen, evidently, were able to do so. Similarly, other species could have clued Norse navigators in to the proximity of other landmasses; Little Auks (US: Dovekies), for instance, would probably have been particularly common near Greenland, where even nowadays it is estimated that upwards of thirty million pairs nest on the island's west-coast breeding grounds. These numbers may well have been even higher in the Middle Ages (Bakken et al. 2006, 39 [Table 2]; Montevecchi and Stenhouse 2020). We know that Norse seafarers paid close attention to such locales of dense avian congregation: they coined placenames like *Álptaver* 'Swan Shooting' (in southern Iceland; *Landnámabók* 1968, 330–31), *fugl bergit* 'Bird Rock' (in Iceland's West Fjords; *Skálholts-Annaler* s.a. 1327, 1888, 206), and *Dritvík* 'Guano Bay' (at the western end of Iceland's Snæfellsnes peninsula; *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* 1991, 111).¹⁹

Landnámabók's 'sailing directions' incidentally establish another point: they demonstrate that Norse ornithology was (not surprisingly) hardly conceptualised as a discrete branch of knowledge, to be studied and deployed in isolation from other forms of practical erudition. Rather, Norse navigators were, as P. C. Fenton argues of other pre-modern mariners, natural historians, seamlessly weaving observation of birdlife with other

breeding grounds in the Arctic). Fisher attributes these developments to the flourishing first of commercial whaling and later of industrial fishing, which altered the fulmars' feeding habits (1952, 433–53). Cf. Hjálmar R. Bárðarson (1986, 94). Likewise, Hacquebord (1999, 379–81) shows a boom in Little Auk populations following four centuries of intensive whaling, which removed competitors for plankton. Similar changes in other species' distribution, invisible to us now, may well have occurred over the centuries due to changes in food supply or climate, diseases, etc. We are indebted to Arnór Þórir Sigfússon for advice on this topic (personal communication, 11 April 2017).

¹⁸ Beck (2013, 33 [Table 2]) shows that Black-legged Kittiwakes are far less well represented in the archaeological assemblage than other gulls species (1 identified specimen, compared with 16 each for Greater Black-backed Gulls and Herring Gulls, for instance) and than other cliff nesters (e.g., Atlantic Puffins and Black Guillemots, represented by 742 and 477 specimens, respectively).

¹⁹ A *ver* is a place where wildlife, usually fish but sometimes also birds or eggs, can be taken. On the placename *Dritvík*, see Þórhallur Vilmundarson (1991, xcvi); for a different translation, see *Bard's Saga* (1997, 241).

environmental signals—such as land-forms peeking over the horizon and encounters with whales or other marine animals—to form a multivariable ‘sensory map where none exists on paper’ (1993, 48).²⁰ Such maps—and, more importantly, the habits of observation that allowed Norse navigators to draft them even when they drifted into unfamiliar waters—were doubtless passed around by word of mouth. *Grænlandinga saga* contains an anecdote that neatly encapsulates the process: the Icelander Bjarni Herjólfsson decides to follow his father, who has recently migrated to Greenland, even though *óvitrlig mun þykkja vár ferð, þar sem engi vár hefur komit í Grænlandshaf* ‘our journey will be thought an ill-considered one, since none of us has sailed the Greenland Sea’. Although this is never stated openly, we learn that Bjarni must have received precise verbal descriptions of his destination from others who did sail these waters before, for when he is blown off course and finds himself near an unknown coastline, he thrice judges heavily forested land *eigi heldr [vera] Grænland en it fyrra*,—‘því at þoklar eru mjök miklir sagðir á Grænlandi’ ‘no more likely to be Greenland than the previous land, “since there are said to be very large glaciers in Greenland”’. Finally, at the fourth landfall, Bjarni consents to put in, because *þetta er líkast því, er mér er sagt frá Grænlandi* ‘this land is most like what I have been told of Greenland’. Bjarni’s own narrative of the unrecognised shores he had sailed past—larded with details of wind direction and strength, times elapsed when travelling from point to point, and degrees of reefing the sail—in turn becomes the verbal map which Leifr Eiríksson reverse-engineers to navigate from Greenland to North America (*Grænlandinga saga* 1935, 246–47 = *Saga of Greenlanders* 1997, 20–21). In the New World, too, Norse explorers remained highly attentive to locales teeming with birdlife: *Svá var mörq æðr í eyinni, at varla mátti ganga fyrir eggjum* ‘There were so many eiderducks on the island [i.e., Straumsey] that one could hardly walk [without stepping on] eggs’ (*Eiríks saga rauða* 1935, 224).²¹ The naming of landmarks after the natural resources occurring on them, including bird colonies, confirms the frequent pairing in Norse minds of geography and various branches of natural history, not least ornithology.

²⁰ Fenton does not specifically discuss Norse navigation.

²¹ The Skálholtsbók version of the saga leaves the species unnamed (*Eiríks saga rauða* 1985, 424 = *Eirik the Red’s Saga* 1997, 13). William Taverner, a traveller to southern Newfoundland in 1713–14, describes the situation on Penguin Islands off Cape La Hune in eerily reminiscent terms: ‘those islands . . . were intirely covred with those fowles [i.e., Great Auks], soe close that a mann could not put his foot between them’ (quoted in Pope 2009, 64).



IMAGE 1: Northern Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*), a distinctive species exhibiting two colour morphs: dark (top), found in greater proportion at more northern latitudes, and light (bottom), found in greater proportion at more southern latitudes. Photo credit: Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, ML64844591, Christoph Moning.

Besides associating particular species with particular sites, Norsemen may have been able to estimate latitude by observing the frequency of certain distinctive bird species. The farther north one sailed, the more common Little Auks, Iceland Gulls, Common Eider Ducks, King Eider Ducks, Black-legged Kittiwakes, Red-throated Divers and White-winged Scoters would have become (Sullivan et al. 2012). Intriguingly, even plumage variations within the same species may have offered guidance. Northern Fulmars, especially, present darker colour morphs at higher latitudes than in more southerly ones (Fisher 1952, 283–84; Marcus 1980, 114–15, 196–97 n. 88).²² Though here too we have no direct narrative witness to attest that Norsemen gauged latitude by this means, a riddling verse in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* provides an important clue (*Saga Heiðreks Konungs ins Vitra* 1960, 39–40):

²² Fisher notes that ‘the polymorphism of the fulmar, as far as can be detected’ was first observed by Friedrich Martens, a seventeenth-century traveller to Spitzbergen (1952, 269–70).

Dá mælti Gestumblindi:

Hverjar eru þær leikur,
er líða lönd yfir
at forvitni fǫður;
hvítan skjöld
þær um vetr bera,
en svartan um sumar?
Heiðrekr konungr,
huggðu at gátu!

‘Þat eru rjúpur; þær eru hvítar um vetr, en svartar um sumar.’

Then said Gestumblindi:

Who are those playmates
that pass over the lands,
by their father unceasing sought;
in time of winter
white their shields are,
but black they bear in summer?
This riddle ponder,
O prince Heidrek!

‘Those are ptarmigans,’ said the king. ‘They are white in winter, but black in summer.’

The birds under discussion here would not have been observed at sea, and so are themselves irrelevant to gauging Norse navigational technique on open waters. But the riddle confirms that Norsemen were cognisant of seasonal morphs, a hue change similar in kind if not in cause to that which indexes latitude in other species. If King Heiðrekr and Gestumblindi took note of Ptarmigans’ varying colouration, we have every reason to suppose that intrepid navigators would have paid attention to variation in the shading of Northern Fulmars. These birds, as we saw earlier, may not have helped navigators in estimating their proximity to land, but they still may have been exceptionally useful for mariners seeking to orient themselves more globally on the ocean’s expanse.

Latitude is fairly easy to assess anyway by observing the sun or stars, of course. Still, birds may have helped in conditions of poor celestial visibility.²³ It is longitude that would have presented a real problem in

²³ For Norse knowledge of latitude by celestial observation, see, e.g., *Grænland-inga saga* (1935, 251) = *Saga of Greenlanders* (1997, 22), as well as *Landafraedi* (1908, 23, an astronomical note attributed in MS AM 194 8vo to Abbot Nikólas [of Þverá]).



IMAGE 2: Comparison of Wilson's Storm-Petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*, on left) with European Storm-Petrel (*Hydrobates pelagicus*, on right). Both are small seabirds and are black overall. The European Storm-Petrel is easily distinguishable, even at a distance, by its bright white underwing coverts, which contrast with the rest of the black underwing. Such markings are not present in any other similar species in the North Atlantic region, signalling proximity to the Eurasian continent.

Photo credits: Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, ML66034031, Derek Rogers (Wilson's Storm-Petrel); ML60726371, Jesús Mari Lekuona Sánchez (European Storm-Petrel).

pre-chronometric days (Sobel 2007), but in the North Atlantic, birds could have supplied a solution. Several species are common on one side of the ocean but not on the other. Thus, the above-mentioned Wilson's Storm-Petrels are very common off the coast of North America, but are far outnumbered by European Storm-Petrels in the eastern Atlantic, and vice versa (Flood and Thomas 2007, 413, 417). Although these species are quite hard to tell apart, an experienced mariner could learn to gauge his whereabouts in the ocean by observing them. Similarly, sightings of New World avians, such as Buffleheads, may have alerted Norse navigators that they were drawing close to the shores of North America; conversely, Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Little Gulls would have indicated proximity to European waters (Sullivan et al. 2012). These latter species merit special mention because, although gulls in general tend to present formidable identification challenges, the relatively dark



IMAGE 3: Little Gull (*Hydrocoloeus minutus*), showing the diagnostic dark (black) underwing unique to this species among all members of *Laridae* in the North Atlantic region, identification of which would suggest proximity to European waters.

Photo credit: Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, ML42409111, Ian Davies.

mantle and slim build of the Lesser Black-backed Gulls and the completely black underwings of the Little Gulls would have made them quite



IMAGE 4: Male Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*), showing the diagnostic large white patch on the back of its head. Sighting of this species of duck, which is native to North America, would suggest proximity to the American coastline.

Photo credit: Asher Warkentin.

distinctive.²⁴ Likewise, male Buffleheads stand out clearly thanks to their very round head and a large white patch, unlike any other species. No great expertise would thus have been necessary to identify any of these marker species, signalling to storm-tossed sailors that they were nearing European or American shores, respectively.

Incidental saga evidence suggests that this knowledge was more than hypothetical: during his abortive attempt to reach Vinland (North America), for instance, it is reported that Þorsteinn Eiríksson (brother of the more famous Leifr) and his crew *velkði lengi úti í haf* *ok kómu ekki á þær slóðir sem þeir vildu. Þeir kómu í sýn við Ísland, ok svá höfðu þeir fugl af Írlandi. Reiddi þá skip þeira um haf innan* ‘were tossed about at sea for a long time and failed to reach their intended destination. They came in sight of Iceland and encountered birds from Ireland. Their ship was driven to and fro across the sea’ (*Eiríks saga rauða* 1985, 416). As

²⁴ The underwing or inner part of the wing would naturally be readily visible to observers of birds in flight. A strophe by the eleventh-century poet Þjóðólfr Arnórsson compares the sight of a bellying sail on Haraldr harðráði’s ship to the underwing of a raptor in flight: *úts, sem líti innan arnarvæng* ‘[looking] outward [from on board ship], it looks like the inside of an eagle’s wing’ (2009, 154–55; translation modified).

with *Landnámabók*'s Icelandic fowl, we do not know specifically what these Irish birds were, but the saga takes it for granted that Þorsteinn and his men did; the wording strongly suggests that they understood them to be creatures typically sighted in Hibernian rather than Icelandic (or Greenlandic or perhaps even Vínlandic) skies. The recurrence of the idiom *hafa fugl af* 'to meet with birds from' in several other, otherwise unrelated, texts may suggest that this was a fixed, perhaps even a technical phrase in navigators' jargon, possibly indexing a particular component of pragmatic lore: the sighting of birds over water as a proxy indicator of nearby land.²⁵

The evidence cited here, patchy though it may be, hints that Norsemen could have, and in all likelihood did, command sufficient ornithological lore to enable them to observe wildfowl as aids in navigation. Some knowledge, such as recognition that birds bearing food in their beaks were likely to be headed towards land, is so basic as to be near universal. Other, such as identification of latitudinal colour morphs or longitudinal species boundaries, would have required years of familiarity with the avian fauna of the Atlantic, but—once acquired, either by first-hand experience or from seamen's lore, passed down through the generations—no extraordinary observational skill or instruments. Norsemen could also employ techniques like chumming to boost their ornithological discernment.

It must, however, be acknowledged that we have no direct evidence for any of these practices: only likelihood, inference, and maddeningly oblique indications in the textual record that hint and tantalise, but stop short of confirming. Absences are always tricky to account for: the silence of the records may mean that there was simply nothing to be recorded. It seems *a priori* unlikely, however, that Norsemen would have been oblivious to the information cached in their surroundings; and the faint traces in the texts, even if they are of little help in pinning down specifics, make such obtuseness still less

²⁵ Translation modified from *Eirik the Red's Saga* (1997, 9). See likewise *Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* (1987, 19): *Ok er skip var búit ok veðr gaf til, þá létu þeir í haf. Þeim byrjaði erfiðliga um sumarit ok vǫru lengi úti. Rak þá suðr í haf, svá at þeir höfðu fogl af Írlandi* 'and when the ship was ready and the weather convenient, they set out to sea [from Norway towards Iceland]. The wind blew poorly for them throughout summer and they were long at sea. Then it drove [them] south over the ocean, so that they encountered birds from Ireland'; *Færeyinga saga* (2006, 51): *ferr Sigmundur til skipa sinna, ok . . . létu nú í haf, ok gaf þeim vel byri þar til er þeir höfðu fugl af eyjum* 'Sigmundur goes to his ships and . . . they set out to sea [from Norway] and were granted a fair wind until they encountered birds from the [Faeroe] Islands'; and *Landnámabók* (1968, 33), quoted above. Cleasby and Vigfusson (1957, 177) and Fritzner (1886–96, I 499), both s.v. *fugl*, discuss the expression.

probable. Moreover, the scanty narrative footprint of all such navigational methods may mean that they were a closely guarded secret lore, shared only among members of inner family or guild circles (cf. Dugmore et al. 2010, 222). Alternatively, it may suggest that they were so commonplace as to be unremarkable; only in such unusual contexts as *Landnámabók*'s quasi-prescriptive 'sailing directions' did they merit specific mention.

Conversely, navigational commonplaces might be mythologised rather than suppressed or taken for granted, and it is with two such examples that we conclude. The first is probably the best-known instance of Norse navigation by birding: Hrafna-Flóki Vilgerðarson's pioneering journey to Iceland in the late ninth century, in which he allegedly set loose three successive ravens from aboard his ship. The first bird flew back in the direction from which they had come (indicating that the ship was still too close to its point of origin), the second rose up in the air before settling back down on deck (indicating that land was nowhere in sight), but the third flew ahead and pointed the way to Iceland (*Landnámabók* 1968, 36–39).²⁶ Taken at face value, this anecdote provides proof positive of Norse steering with the aid of birds.

As it stands, however, this story is rather improbable. It is true that corvids would want to avoid landing on large bodies of water and that they have excellent eyesight—from a height of thirty metres in the air, for instance, they would have been able to sight land nearly twenty km away—but, if captured as nestlings and acculturated to humans, they would have had little incentive to leave the ship; conversely, capturing adults in the wild would have been difficult, and the trauma would have made their conduct if released at sea quite unpredictable (Engel and Young 1989).²⁷ As we

²⁶ Flóki sets out from Shetland in Sturlubók, from the Faeroe Islands in Hauksbók. Hornell (1946, 142–43) surveys ancient and ethnographic parallels, albeit uncritically. Writing in the mid-eighteenth century, Mallet (1847, 188 n.) believed that 'Flóki was probably not the only sea-rover who, in those days, made ravens serve him for a compass'; he hypothesised the existence of 'a particular brood of these birds trained and consecrated by religious rites for the purpose, which would account for the custom falling into disuse on the introduction of Christianity'; he adduced no evidence for his hypothesis. Two centuries later, Hornell, while accepting Mallet's view (1946, 146), inadvertently notes an obvious objection to it: the fact that Flóki is said to have earned his distinguishing nickname from this technique argues that it must have been regarded as unusual.

²⁷ For approximate calculations of the horizon distance, see <<http://www.ringbell.co.uk/info/hdist.htm>> (accessed 20 July 2017). Such calculations do not take into account sighted objectives' elevation above sea-level; Snæfellsjökull, for instance, peaking at about 1400 m, is easily visible on a clear day from Reykjavík, a distance of c. 120 km (personal observation, 20 March 2017). On corvid behaviour

have seen, however, it would not have been necessary for Flóki to go to the trouble of packing along such screeching, cawing navigational aids: naturally occurring Atlantic fowl could have served him just as well. We may thus take the story as encoding practical knowledge of real bird behaviour in a form lifted from the biblical story of Noah's Ark (Genesis VIII 6–12, in *Biblia* 1983, I 13), transforming the Judaeo-Christian dove into Odinic ravens. The workaday know-how of calloused sailors has been converted into a parable about human agency, pagan devotion and divine grace.²⁸

Our second example is in a sense even more striking, precisely because avian navigation remains so very inconspicuous in it. Near the beginning of *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, Þorsteinn Egilsson famously has a foreboding dream, which a Norwegian interlocutor correctly interprets for him as foreshadowing his unborn daughter Helga's future misfortunes in love. As a foil to the Norwegian's interpretation, however, Þorsteinn first submits his own gloss on the dream (*Gunnlaugs saga* 1938, 54–55 = *Saga of Gunnlaug* 1997, 307):

‘Sá ek upp á húsin ok á mœninum álpst eina væna ok fagra, ok þóttumk ek eiga, ok þótti mér allgóð. Þá sá ek fljúga ofan frá fjöllumum örn mikinn . . . vaskligr sýndisk mér hann. Því næst sá ek fljúga annan fugl af suðrætt . . . þat var ok örn mikill. Brátt þótti mér sá örninn, er fyrir var, ýfask mjök, er hinn kom til, ok þeir þorðusk snarpliga ok lengi, ok þat sá ek . . . at sinn veg hné hvárr þeira af húsmœninum, ok váru þá báðir dauðir, en álpstinn sat eptir hnipin mjök ok daprlig.

‘Ok þá sá ek fljúga fugl ór vestri; þat var valr; hann settisk hjá álpstinni ok lét blítt við hana, ok síðan flugu þau í brott bæði samt í sömu ætt, ok þá vaknaða ek. Ok er draumr þessi ómerkilig,’ segir hann, ‘ok mun vera fyrir veðrum, at þau mœtask í lopti ór þeim ættum, er mér þóttu fuglarnir fljúga.’

Austmaðr segir: ‘Ekki er þat mín ætlan,’ segir hann, ‘at svá sé.’

over water, we gratefully acknowledge the advice of Kevin J. McGowan (Cornell Lab of Ornithology; personal communication, 8 May 2017).

²⁸ Cf. *Morkinskinna*'s tale of a Norwegian farmer who understands the speech of crows, giving him access to hidden knowledge (2011, II 12–14), faintly reminiscent of the Eddaic account of Sigurðr's understanding the speech of *igður* ‘nuthatches’? ‘titmice’?; see the notes on *Fáfnismál* st. 41, in *Heldenlieder* 2006, 480 (we are indebted to Rory McTurk and Judy Quinn for suggesting this comparison). Although the *þáttur* makes no overt connexion between the farmer's arcane powers and the craft of navigation, it locates this episode onboard a ship travelling through coastal waters, where local knowledge would have been especially important for safe piloting; cf. *Færeyinga saga* (2006, 52): *byrr kemr á fyrir þeim ok sigla nú at eyjunum, ok sjá þá at þeir eru komnir austan at eyjum, ok eru þeir menn á með Sigmundi at kenna landsleg* ‘a fair wind blows for them and they now sail to the [Faeroe] Islands, and they see that they have arrived at the Islands from the east, and there are men aboard with Sigmundur who know the lie of the land’.

‘I saw a fine, beautiful swan up on the roof-ridge. I thought that I owned her, and I was very pleased with her. Then I saw a huge eagle fly down from the mountains . . . He looked like a gallant fellow.

‘Next, I saw another bird fly from the south . . . This bird was also a huge eagle. Immediately, when the second bird arrived, the first eagle seemed to become rather ruffled, and they fought fiercely for a long time, and I saw . . . both of them falling off the roof-ridge, one on each side; they were both dead. The swan remained sitting there, grief-stricken and dejected.

‘And then I saw another bird fly from the west. It was a hawk. It perched next to the swan and was gentle with her, and later they flew off in the same direction. Then I woke up. Now this dream is nothing much,’ he concluded, ‘and must be to do with the winds, which will meet in the sky, blowing from the directions that the birds appeared to be flying from.’

‘I don’t think that’s what it’s about,’ said the Norwegian.

Proficient saga readers know, of course, that Þorsteinn’s meteorological gloss feebly attempts to stave off doom by throwing up a bulwark of wishful thinking. Lest we miss it, the point is reinforced for us by Þorsteinn’s refusal, when the Norwegian first asks what he had seen in his sleep, to assign any meaning at all to his dream; his words, *Ekki er mark at draumum* ‘Dreams don’t mean anything’, eerily echo those that a doomed Sturla Sighvatsson will speak more than two centuries later, on the eve of his fall at the Battle of Örlyggsstaðir (*Gunnlaugs saga* 1938, 53; *Íslendinga saga* 138 [143], in *Sturlunga saga* I 430).²⁹ But it is denials that don’t mean anything. The saga author clearly intends his audience to perceive Þorsteinn, just like Sturla, as self-deluding, his interpretation as ludicrous.

Still, despite the saga narrative’s unabashed effort to discredit Þorsteinn, he, unlike some more recent purveyors of alternative facts, does seem to have at least a nodding acquaintance with reality. His oneirology, overtly framed for the saga audience as false, nevertheless rings true in its reading of birds as spatial markers; in fact, Þorsteinn is perhaps the most explicit commentator we have on Norse ornithological navigation, for he reads the raptors in his dream as signifying *veð[r]*, at *þau mætast í lopti ór þeim ættum, er [honum] þóttu fuglarnir fljúga* ‘the winds, which will meet in the sky, blowing from the directions that the birds appeared to be flying from’. As Kirsten Hastrup has pointed out, the term Þorsteinn uses, *ættir* ‘[cardinal] directions’, carries high semantic voltage in Old Norse, linking together notions of space, time and kinship structure (Hastrup 1985,

²⁹ A similarly imperceptive dismissal of dream omens occurs in *Landnámabók* (1968, 63–65); see also Ásdís Egilsdóttir (2013, 24–25).

20–21, 51–57).³⁰ The eagles and hawk of his dream, then, embodiments of future (would-be) sons-in-law, also index what the Norse would have regarded as the compass points of their sky. The heartbreaking irony of Þorsteinn's predicament deepens when we realise that his incorrect interpretation is not just an arbitrary, desperate, *ad hoc* improvisation clawed out of thin air, but a sensible, well-grounded and well-pedigreed mode of narrativising ornithological experience. Is it really only coincidence that when Guðrún Gjúkadóttir dreams of a hawk, the maiden who offers to interpret her dream—whom *Völsunga saga* paints as no less wrongheaded than Þorsteinn in *Gunnlaugs saga*—reassures her that *jafnan dreymir fyrir veðrum* 'dreams are always about the winds' (1983, 97)?³¹ Þorsteinn was right in principle; his interpretation just happened to be wrong in practice.

Medieval Icelanders lived in a physical environment that was, in many respects, less disciplined, controlled and predictable than the one we occupy: they had no magnetic needles with which to steer through it, nor Mercator grids with which to parse, record and communicate it. On the other hand, this space was for them less abstract and more pregnant with lived experience than it is for many of us: their spatial imaginations latched onto the winds meeting in the sky, and the birds riding those winds, rather than onto Google Maps' two-dimensional icons (Devlin 2017). Riddles like Gestumblindi's, misadventure stories like Þorsteinn Eiríksson's, and tragic misunderstandings like Þorsteinn Egilsson's were the narrative signposts on their cognitive maps.

Note: This research originated in a seminar essay the first author, a first-year BA student at the time, wrote for HIS 1180 'Viking America', a class the second author taught at Cornell University (2015). Versions of this paper were presented at the 'Time, Space & Narrative in Medieval Icelandic Literature' conference (Reykjavík, 18 March 2017) and at the 52nd International Congress on Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo, MI, 12 May 2017); we are indebted to session organisers and participants for their feedback, and especially to Emily Lethbridge for the invitation to develop

³⁰ Hastrup distinguishes between *ættir* and *áttir*, 'reserving the [former] for the temporal/spatial category, and [the latter] for the kinship category', but notes that the two are etymologically related (1985, 252 n. 3); in fact, the different spellings seem to preserve dialectal variants of the same concept. See Cleasby and Vigfusson (1957, 760), s.v. *ætt* [revising the views expressed s.v. *átt*, 1957, 47]; Fritzner (1886–96, I 90, III 1072), s.vv. *átt* and *ætt*; *ONP* (1989–, I 732–33), s.vv. ¹⁻²*átt*.

³¹ The saga frames the maiden's comment as a blanket statement about dream interpretation; within the narrative sequence, she does not yet know the ornithological content of Guðrún's dream. Compare Høgni's meteorological misinterpretation of Guðrún's dream about a bear in *Atlamál in grænlenzku* stt. 17–18 (2014, 386). We owe these references to Christopher Crocker.

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MANUSCRIPT CULTURE AND INTELLECTUAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ICELAND AND LINCOLN IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

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Introduction

ENGLISH INFLUENCE ON ICELANDIC ecclesiastical affairs was a feature of Christianity in Iceland almost from the moment of its conversion (Grønlie 2017, 135–37) and intermittently up to the Reformation, although in markedly different political climates (Baldur Þórhallsson and Þorsteinn Kristinnsson 2013, 130–31). There was also a strong influence from England on the intellectual climate in medieval Iceland, most noticeably during the second half of the twelfth and the early thirteenth centuries. This is manifest in some surviving manuscripts, mostly fragmented, and texts translated into Old Norse from exemplars stemming from England. Although it has been apparent to scholars for a long time that these manuscripts and texts have an English connection, it has proved difficult to find out exactly by what route they arrived in Iceland. Icelandic ecclesiastics began to study abroad from the beginning of the Christian period in Iceland in the eleventh century, and the German Empire was favoured as a place of study, especially owing to the influence of the archdiocese of Hamburg/Bremen of which Iceland was a part (Niblaeus 2010, 145). Yet by the early twelfth century the first manuscript fragment connected to England can be found in Iceland. This is an Easter table (Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar AM 732 a VII 4to) that has been dated c.1121–39 and was either brought to Iceland from England, written by an English scribe in Iceland or written by an Icelandic scribe trained in England (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2013, 205). It becomes evident in the second half of the twelfth and the early thirteenth centuries that English influence had become more important in Iceland. Recent excellent research on English influences on Icelandic material from the twelfth and thirteenth century has been done on the Icelandic *Physiologi* by Vittoria Dolcetti Corazza (2007) and on *Merlínússpá* by Russell Poole (2014 and 2018). A likely source of some of these manuscripts and treatises is the diocese of Lincoln, and this paper explores contacts between Lincoln and Iceland so as to shed light on their intellectual relationship.

There are five main manuscripts or texts that are likely to stem from Lincoln. These are *Thómas saga erkibyskups*; *Merlínússpá*; the Icelandic *Physiologi*; parts of the manuscript Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar

GKS 1812 4to and the fragmented remains of a psalter. All can be traced to the late twelfth/early thirteenth centuries. The best documented Icelandic travellers to England during this time are the Skálholt bishops Þorlákr Þórhallsson and Páll Jónsson. I believe that their travels are fundamental to understanding the movement of these manuscripts and texts. Þorlákr Þórhallsson travelled to Lincoln in the middle of the twelfth century, and Páll Jónsson is widely believed to have followed him there a few decades later. Their sagas record that both men accumulated learning while there, and that they returned with their newfound knowledge to Iceland. These sojourns bring up several questions, none of which has been answered satisfactorily. The first and most straightforward question is, why choose Lincoln as a place of study? As already noted, Icelandic scholars had a connection with schools in the German Empire during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Cultural and trade links between Iceland and England were of course strong and had been for centuries. However, there is little evidence of Icelanders coming to study in England. The strong Scandinavian context in the North of England would of course favour study at a cathedral in one of the northern dioceses, but why Lincoln in particular when Durham and York were just as, if not more, substantial places of learning during the twelfth century? Two further questions to be asked are what evidence, if any, do we have of what Þorlákr Þórhallsson and Páll Jónsson learnt while they were at Lincoln, and whether this learning had any impact on Icelandic literary and manuscript culture? These questions form the starting point of this paper, which will examine the evidence and, I hope, reach a conclusion that will shed some light on the intellectual activities shared by Iceland and England in the second half of the twelfth century.

The Journey of Þorlákr Þórhallsson to Lincoln

We begin the investigation with the travels of Þorlákr Þórhallsson to Lincoln in the middle of the twelfth century (*Þorláks saga A, Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 52):

En er því hafði nokkura stund fram farit ok honum var þá ok gott til fjár orðit, þá fýstisk hann útanferðar ok vildi þá kanna síðu annarra góðra manna. Ok fór hann af Íslandi, ok er ekki sagt af hans ferðum unz hann kom í París ok var þar í skóla svá lengi sem hann þóttisk þurfa til þess náms sem hann vildi þar nema. Þaðan fór hann til Englands ok var í Lincolni ok nam þar enn mikit nám ok þarfsælligt, bæði sér ok öðrum, ok hafði þá enn mikit gott þat af sér at miðla í kenningum sínum er hann var áðr trautt jafn vel við búinn sem nú.

En er hann hafði sex ár af Íslandi verit þá vitjaði hann aprt til frænda sína ok fóstrjarðar.

And when things had proceeded in this way for some time and he had become well off, he became eager to journey abroad, for he wanted to explore the way of life of other good men. So he travelled from Iceland, but nothing is told of his travels until he came to Paris and he remained at school there as long as he deemed necessary for the study of what he wanted to learn there. From there he went to England and was at Lincoln and undertook much further study there, profitable both to himself and to others, and he then had a lot of good things to share in his teachings since he was scarcely so well instructed before as he was now.

And when he had been away from Iceland for six years, he went back to visit his kinsmen and native land. (Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013, 3–4)

The text of Þorlákr's *vita*, *Þorláks saga byskups*, explains that the saint travelled abroad for six years, with most scholars leaning towards the dates 1153 to 1159, although Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Frederick York Powell (1905, 463) believed it to have taken place from 1155 to 1161. As can be seen from the passage above, Þorlákr first studied in Paris, and then travelled to Lincoln to continue his studies. Þorlákr may have studied at St Victor, an important house of Augustinian canons in the south of Paris, and one of the great centres of learning in the twelfth century (*Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 52 n. 4). Some scholars have argued for the ancient abbey of St Geneviève, a Victorine affiliate, also in the south of the city. It is also possible that Þorlákr may have attended the cathedral school at Notre Dame or studied with one of the many itinerant masters in the city (for overviews on the intellectual environment of the Parisian schools in the twelfth century see Baldwin 2010, 175–213; Wei 2012, 8–88; Jaeger 1994, 239–84). The majority scholarly opinion tends to favour St Victor (*Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 52. n. 4; Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013, xiii; 36 n. 29; Bekker-Nielsen 1968, 33; Gunnar Harðarson 2016, 136; Bullita 2017, 87–88). In Lincoln it is generally believed that he studied at the Cathedral rather than a monastic foundation in, or connected to, the city (*Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 52. n. 4; Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013, 36 n. 29; Fahn and Gottskálf Jenson 2010, p. 19). The dates of this sojourn are also unknown, although some scholarship, following Henry Goddard Leach (1921, 138–39), favours the year 1160 (van Liere 2003, 8 and Poole 2018, 265).

A few years after Þorlákr returned to Iceland, he was ordained by the Bishop of Skálholt, Klængur Þorsteinsson (r.1152–76), as prior, then abbot, of the first house of Augustinian canons in Iceland at Þykkvabær. His saga says wise men were amazed at the speed with which Þorlákr established the regular life of the Augustinian canons in a country that had never witnessed this religious order before (*Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 57–59; Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013, 6–7), leading Hans Bekker-Nielsen (1968, 33) to postulate

that Þorlákr could have been the leader of the Augustinian movement in Iceland. This idea was expanded on by Gunnar Harðarson (2016, 137) who saw Þorlákr's emphasis on *stabilitas loci*, silence and fasting at Þykkvabær Abbey as being in the spirit of the reform movement based at St Victor in Paris. Susanne Miriam Fahn and Gottskálk Jensson (2010, 19) further emphasised Þorlákr's Continental network of Paris-educated Augustinians who promoted the Gregorian policy of ecclesiastical autonomy (*libertas ecclesiae*). Þorlákr's leading role in founding the Augustinian movement in Iceland was a factor in his election as bishop of Skálholt, and he travelled to the archbishopric of Nidaros for his consecration in 1178. Present were Archbishop Øystein Erlendsson and Bishop Eiríkr of Stavanger, both part of Þorlákr's Victorine network (*Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 64–66; Fahn and Gottskálk Jensson 2010, 19; Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013, 11). On his return to Iceland, Þorlákr continued his reform of the Icelandic church (*Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 73–75; Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013, 15–17). According to his saga Þorlákr often read holy books and scriptures, while he was always writing, especially holy books. A further elaboration in the saga is that Þorlákr also taught clerics to read Latin texts as well as teaching other types of knowledge that would be useful for them (*Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 70; Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013, 14). From his saga a picture emerges of a learned and literate man, which reflects the educated networks he moved in in Paris and Lincoln.

Páll Jónsson

Þorlákr died in 1193 and was succeeded in the bishopric by his nephew Páll Jónsson, the second of the visitors to Lincoln dealt with here (*Páls saga*, *Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 297–98).

En er þau höfðu fá vetr saman verit þá fór Páll útan ok var á hendi Haraldi jarli í Orkneyjum, ok lagði hann mikla virðing á hann. En síðan fór hann suðr til Englands ok var þar í skóla ok nam þar svá mikit nám at trauit váru dæmi til at neinn maðr hafði jafn mikit nám numit né þvílíkt á jafn langri stundu. Ok þá er hann kom út til Íslands þá var hann fyrir ǫllum mǫnnum ǫðrum í kurteisi lærdóms síns, versagørð ok bókalestri. Hann var ok svá mikill raddarmaðr ok sǫngmaðr at af þar sǫngr hans ok rǫdd af ǫðrum mǫnnum, þeim er þá váru honum samtíða.

But when they [he and his wife] had been a few years together Páll went abroad, and was at the side of Haraldr, earl of Orkney, who held him in great esteem. And afterwards he went south to England, and was there at school, and got such great learning there that there was scarcely any example of a man having got so much or similar knowledge in an equally long time. And so, when he came back to Iceland, he surpassed all other men in the courtliness of his learning, and in the making of [Latin] verse, and in the reading of books. He

was also so great a singer and musician that his song and voice excelled those of all other men that were living in his day.

Páll Jónsson, besides being the nephew of Bishop Þorlákr, was the son of the most powerful man in Iceland in the late twelfth century, Jón Loftsson (†1197). Páll was also, through his father, the great-grandson of the renowned scholar Sæmundr Sigfússon, who had himself studied on the Continent during the eleventh century (Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell 1905, 502). Páll married young and after living a few years with his wife, went abroad to study. Eiríkr Magnússon (1875–83, xi) has calculated that this must have been when Páll was around twenty-three years old. As Páll was born in 1155 his trip to Orkney and England would have fallen around 1178–79. Before arriving in England, he stayed with Haraldr Maddaðarson (c.1134–1206), Earl of Orkney and Mormaer of Caithness (Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell 1905, 503). We do not know anything about this visit, or whether or not Páll studied at St Magnus Cathedral. The previous bishop, Vilhjálmr the Old (r.1112–68) was a *magister* ‘master’ who had been educated in Paris, which indicates a possible learned network in Kirkwall (de Geer 1985, 73–83). It is unknown where in England Páll travelled during the 1180s, or how long he studied there, but it seems most likely that it was at Lincoln Cathedral, following in the wake of his uncle Þorlákr (Lassen 2017, 76).

Some years after his return to Iceland, Páll was nominated to the Skálholt episcopacy after the death of Þorlákr in 1193. Páll travelled to the archbishopric of Nidaros where he stayed over winter in 1194/95. He then travelled to Hamar where Bishop Þórir, a former canon of St Victor, ordained Páll on 26th February. Afterwards Páll travelled to the archbishopric of Lund, spending Easter as the guest of Archbishop Absalon, member of the powerful Hvide family, who was also connected to St Victor through his studies in Paris. The former bishop of Stavanger, Eiríkr, who had been at Þorlákr’s consecration, was now Archbishop of Nidaros. His presence in Lund at this time was due to his ongoing dispute with King Sverre Sigurdsson of Norway (r.1177–1202). Páll stayed with the archbishops throughout Easter week and, according to his saga, they found him to be a paragon of learning and wisdom. Absalon ordained Páll on the 23rd April by the counsel of Eiríkr who, being advanced in years, had lost his sight and was unable to carry out that function. Peder Sunesen, the Bishop of Roskilde, also attended the consecration. Like Absalon Peder was a member of the Hvide family, and he too was affiliated with St Victor in Paris. Páll then returned via Bergen to Iceland (*Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 301–03; Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell 1905, 506–08). Páll’s visit to Norway and Denmark seems to have initiated him into the learned Victorine network to which Þorlákr had also belonged. Páll later sent

Archbishop Þórir Guðmundsson of Nidaros, another Victorine, a gift of a bishop's crozier wrought out of walrus tusk (*Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 325; Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell 1905, 528).

On his return to Iceland Páll probably began to build up the library of Skálholt Cathedral. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell (1905, 511) interpret the mention in *Páls saga* of the *skriptum* with which the church was adorned as a reference to books, a direct translation from the Latin *scriptum*, although Ásdís Egilsdóttir points out that the Old Norse word *skriptum* refers to painted images, which fits better the context of a passage describing the adornment of the cathedral (*Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 306 n. 8). However, as Dario Bullitta (2017, 92) has pointed out, the Skálholt scriptorium during Páll's episcopacy was an important producer of hagiographical and historical texts. Furthermore, during this time young clerics from the Skálholt diocese were able to study abroad, in either Paris or England, and may have brought back books with them to Iceland (Bullitta 2017, 94–95). Unfortunately, in 1309 the belltower of Skálholt Cathedral was hit by lightning and caught fire. The resulting conflagration destroyed the wooden church along with most of the inventory, including almost all the books, presumably including those originally belonging to Þorlákr and Páll. Only the shrine of St Þorlákr miraculously escaped the inferno (*Íslandske annaler*, 391 and 487). However, not all the books in Iceland at that time were lost, as we shall see below.

Lincoln Cathedral as a Centre of Learning

A cathedral was founded in the ancient city of Lincoln in 1072 in an area of dense Scandinavian settlement, and from its dominant hilltop eyrie it overlooked the largest diocese in England (Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013, 36 n. 29). The cathedral was rebuilt and expanded in the Romanesque style during the episcopacy of Bishop Alexander (r.1123–48). This cathedral only lasted a few decades before it was severely damaged by an earthquake in 1185 and rebuilt in the Gothic style under the episcopacy of Bishop (later Saint) Hugh of Lincoln (r.1186–1200). It was the Romanesque cathedral of Bishop Alexander, however, that would have greeted Þorlákr and Páll when they arrived in Lincoln. The west front of Alexander's cathedral survives to this day and the powerful theological themes depicted there, such as the Harrowing of Hell and Dives and Lazarus, must have left a lasting impression on the two Icelandic travellers (Broughton 1996, 32–39). Another resonance, this time from their homeland, would have been an elaborate pair of candlesticks (now London, Victoria and Albert Museum A. 79-1936 and Liverpool, World

Museum, 1995.42), reminiscent of the carved Romanesque pillars in Lincoln Cathedral and exquisitely carved out of Icelandic or Greenlandic narwhal tusk probably in Lincoln *c.*1125–50 (Grollemond 2019, 196).

By the second half of the twelfth century Lincoln Cathedral had developed one of the most important schools in England, although it never became a university. Instead, the first university was founded in Oxford (van Liere 2003, 1–13). However, it was one of the most important centres in England for the study of canon law, with valuable connections to the learned schools of Northern France, Paris in particular (van Liere 2003, 7; Fahn and Gottskálk Jensson 2010, 19; Ármann Jakobsson and Clark 2013, 36 n. 29). This connection is emphasised by John W. Baldwin (1982, 148–50) and Frans van Liere (2003, 4) who stress the importance of Paris, and to a lesser degree Bologna, as the most important centres of intellectual life for twelfth-century England, while English cathedral schools such as Lincoln played a lesser, but still important role. The intellectual interplay between scholars in Paris and England before Oxford and Cambridge became dominant during the thirteenth century was considerable; around the year 1200 at least a third of all regent masters in Paris were from England (Baldwin 2010, 178). The resulting interchange of scholarship between France and England is reflected in the careers of some of the masters at Lincoln Cathedral throughout the twelfth century. Three masters in particular stand out from around the middle of the century, the time that Þorlákr visited Lincoln.

The first was Philip de Harcourt (†1163), a learned canon law scholar and for a short period chancellor of England. He was educated at the famous school at Chartres Cathedral before becoming the dean of Lincoln Cathedral in 1133. He held this role until elected as Bishop of Bayeux in 1142, a position he held until his death (van Liere 2003, 8). The second was Robert de Chesney (†1166), Bishop of Lincoln from 1148 until his death. He was a master of theology at Paris during the 1140s and later, during his episcopacy, donated a glossed book of psalms to the cathedral library (Gross-Diaz 1996, 32). Geoffrey of Monmouth (†1155) praised Robert de Chesney both as a teacher and a learned scholar (Poole 2014, 22–23). The third master was Magister Hamo, chancellor of Lincoln Cathedral from possibly as early as 1150, but at least from 1163 to 1182. Hamo donated many books to the cathedral library (Dimock 1887, 165). Thus, when Þorlákr was at Lincoln, Robert de Chesney was bishop and Hamo may have been the chancellor, while the intellectual legacy of Philip de Harcourt must still have been strong. All were masters who had studied at Paris just as Þorlákr had. By the time of Páll's visit two decades later, Lincoln's stature as a place of learning had grown.

Magister Hamo was probably still chancellor when Páll was at Lincoln, at least at the beginning of his stay; the position of bishop had proved far more unstable though. From the death of Robert de Chesney in 1168 until the election of Hugh of Lincoln in 1186 the diocese had an elected bishop for only one year; this was Walter de Coutances (1183–84). Otherwise, the bishop-elect Geoffrey Plantagenet was unable to carry out his episcopal duties; for the remaining time the seat was vacant. During this vacancy, from c.1st March to 15th August 1182, Archbishop Øystein of Nidaros was in Lincoln and occupied the vacant Bishop's Palace during part of his exile in England (Duggan 2012, 28). The occupancy of Øystein would fit chronologically within the time that Páll is believed to have been there and if it did, would have reinforced earlier connections made between Þorlákr and Øystein. Another Scandinavian who may well have been in Lincoln at this time is Anders Sunesen, the future Archbishop of Lund. Like his brother Peder, Anders Sunesen had studied in Paris at the school of St Geneviève, a St Victor affiliate. He had also studied at Bologna and was in England sometime in the 1180s. Where Anders Sunesen studied is never stated by Saxo Grammaticus in his *Gesta Danorum*, but it was most likely either Oxford or Lincoln; Birger Munk Olsen (1985, 76–77) favours Lincoln Cathedral. Among other learned masters in Lincoln during Páll's time were John of Cornwall, who had taught in Paris and was the author of the poem the *Prophetia Merlini* 'Prophecy of Merlin', and Simon of Sywell (†1210), canon of Lincoln Cathedral from 1184 to 1193, who had studied canon law in Bologna and Paris (van Liere 2003, 8).

Frans van Liere (2003, 8) locates the zenith of the Lincoln Cathedral school as a centre of learning in the decades around the year 1200, largely under the chancellorship of William de Montibus. It is possible that Páll may have been in Lincoln long enough to have met or been taught by William, as he became master of the cathedral school in the late 1180s before becoming the chancellor of the cathedral in 1194 (Morgan 2019, 110). William de Montibus had studied in Paris 1160–70 and subsequently lectured in the school of St Geneviève before moving to Lincoln (van Liere 2003, 3–4). It could have been William de Montibus who encouraged Anders Sunesen to come to Lincoln, either to study or to teach, as they both attended St Geneviève and the former may have taught the latter. Learned masters such as Walter Map (1140–1209), canon of Lincoln by the 1180s, and Ralph Niger (1140–1200), canon of Lincoln from 1189, came to Lincoln during the time of William de Montibus. Both studied in Paris, and Ralph, a prolific scholar and biblical commentator, possibly taught there. After this peak Lincoln lost most of

its attraction for scholars with the rise of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge during the thirteenth century (van Liere 2003, 9–10).

The Library at Lincoln Cathedral

Lincoln in the twelfth century had rather a small medieval book collection compared to other contemporary secular cathedrals in England. The libraries of monastic houses and regular cathedrals in England were also larger. Durham Cathedral's library, for example, was over five times the size of that of Lincoln by c.1200. For Lincoln there survives an inventory that was copied into the front flyleaf of the Chapter Bible c.1160. This catalogue lists 136 books of which thirty-nine survive. Books were also made in the scriptorium; Rodney M. Thomson (1989, xiv) estimates that twenty to thirty books were produced there before 1150. Books originating in Lincoln that ended up in Iceland could have been copied in the Lincoln scriptorium before making their journey northwards. Donors, especially bishops and canons, were important for the development of the library throughout the twelfth century; two examples of this are given below. As noted above, Bishop Alexander was considered a patron of learning by contemporaries such as Geoffrey of Monmouth; he donated seven books to the library as well as commissioning legal works and the *Historia Anglorum* by Henry of Huntingdon (Poole 2014, 16–17). Bishop Robert de Chesney donated ten books, of which seven survive; these could have come from the scriptorium at Lincoln (Thomson 1989, xv).

Most Lincoln books were standard volumes that could be found in any twelfth-century cathedral library, including basic patristic texts, sermons, works on canon law, papal decretals and canon law commentaries (van Liere 2003, 8). The library at Lincoln also owned theological works such as the *Historia scholastica* of Peter Comestor, Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, the *Gemma animae* of Honorius as well as a glossed work of Gilbert of Poitiers (van Liere 2003, 5). There were also medical works such as the *Liber Prognostica* of Hippocrates, and three treatises that contained encyclopaedic material: the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville, a *Mappa mundi* and the *Collectanea rerum memorabilium* of Julius Solinus (Dimock 1887, 165–70). The Lincoln Cathedral library was therefore especially strong in works of canon law and theology.

The Augustinian Order

Books from the Lincoln Cathedral library were lent to the secular canons but also to members of nearby religious houses such as the Augustinian abbey of Thornton (Thomson 1989, xvi). As well as the Lincoln library

texts, three surviving book lists from Augustinian houses dating from the second half of the twelfth century can point to the collections that the Icelandic travellers may have had access to owing to the connection of Þorlákr with the Augustinian order. These libraries were primarily for the use of the canons themselves, but the borrowing and lending of books was allowed (Colvin 1951, 319). First, a booklist from Welbeck Abbey in Nottinghamshire surviving from the end of the twelfth century shows that the library contained 113 volumes, the vast majority biblical and theological in nature, with some encyclopaedic literature (Bell 1992, 255–66). Second, a booklist from Bridlington Priory in Yorkshire, one of the largest and wealthiest Augustinian houses in England, has survived from the late twelfth/early thirteenth century. The list seems to be only partial but still includes 118 volumes, mostly patristic and theological works, with some encyclopaedic texts (Webber and Watson 1998, 8–24). Finally, Waltham Abbey in Essex was founded by Harold Godwinson in 1060 and became an abbey of Augustinian canons in 1177. Its surviving booklist, like that from Bridlington Priory, is only partial and dates from the same period. It includes 132 volumes containing biblical, theological and encyclopaedic texts (Webber and Watson 1998, 427–44).

Þorlákr's Augustinian connection is also particularly important in establishing volumes that might have travelled from England to Iceland in the twelfth century. We know little of subsequent Icelandic travellers to England, but the collection of miracles in *Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups önnur* mentions that in 'Kynn' in England a man by the name of Auðunn had an effigy made of Bishop Þorlákr which was placed in the church. Ásdís Egilsdóttir (*Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 227–28) argues that 'Kynn' refers to the town of Kings Lynn, or Bishops Lynn as it was known at the time. Eiríkr Magnússon has suggested that Kynn might instead be Kyme priory in Lincolnshire, most likely built early in the reign of Henry II or even King Stephen I (1135–54), and that Auðunn may have been an Icelandic canon there (Page 1906, 172–74; Eiríkr Magnússon 1875–83, vii–xi). This would suggest an Icelandic connection with both Lincolnshire and the Augustinian Order beyond the journeys of Þorlákr and Páll.

Icelandic Translations of two English Twelfth-Century Texts

An Icelandic hagiographical compilation prominently connected with England is *Thómas saga erkibyskups*, the saga of St Thomas Becket. The original Latin version of the text must have reached Iceland from England by the end of the twelfth century and provided much of the material for the Old Norse translation that was compiled in the early thirteenth century (Duggan 2012, 31).

The earliest element in the saga was taken from the *Vita et miracula* by an author whom the Icelandic writer names as Robert of Cretel. This was the Augustinian canon Robert of Cricklade (c.1100–74), prior of St Frideswide's priory in Oxford. Robert was a learned and wide-ranging scholar who had travelled to Paris in the 1150s, who wrote several important theological works but was also interested in natural history (Dunning 2019). As well as the narrative of the life and miracles of St Thomas, to which the Old Norse version is the only surviving witness, Robert is also the most likely author of at least part of the Latin original of *Magnús saga lengri* (Longer Saga of St Magnus) composed for the secular canons of St Magnus Cathedral either during his visit to Scotland in the winter of 1164–65 or on a subsequent visit (Haki Antonsson 2007, 42–67). It is tempting to speculate that Robert, an Englishman with Scandinavian connections via Orkney, may have known Þorlákr, having possibly been in Paris at the same time, and /or that this work came to Iceland with Þorlákr.

A second Icelandic version of a Latin work written in England is the poetical translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetiæ Merlini* entitled *Merlinússpá*, written at the turn of the thirteenth century, or possibly earlier, by Gunnlaugr Leifsson (†1218/19), a monk at the Benedictine abbey of Þingeyrar. The *Prophetiæ Merlini* was dedicated by Geoffrey of Monmouth to Bishop Alexander of Lincoln who commissioned it 1130–38. The *Prophetiæ Merlini* were mostly incorporated into Geoffrey's larger *Historia Regum Britannicæ*, but the prophecies also had an independent life of their own and circulated widely (Poole 2014, 16–17). The later poetical *Vita Merlini* by Geoffrey, written c.1149, was dedicated to Bishop Robert de Chesney of Lincoln, who had been his fellow canon at the chapel of St George in Oxford Castle (Poole 2014, 22–23). Russell Poole (2018, 265) following Leach (1921, 138–39), notes that the *Prophetiæ Merlini* came into the hands of Gunnlaugr towards the end of the twelfth century. The connection between Lincoln and Geoffrey of Monmouth certainly raises the possibility that Þorlákr or Páll came across this text at Lincoln and that the book may have come to Iceland through this route.

The Bestiary Tradition in Lincoln and the Icelandic *Physiologi*

The *Physiologus*, also known as the Bestiary, is a treatise stemming from late antiquity, representing animals and fantastic beasts. Although demonstrating some knowledge of natural history, the bestiaries mainly attributed moral values to the various creatures portrayed in them, which were used for Christian instruction. The bestiary texts are often accompanied by images of the respective creatures. These illustrations generally stem from Late Antique

exemplars (Muratova 2019, 40). The two surviving Icelandic *Physiologus* manuscript fragments, stemming from Latin originals from England, were written around 1200 in Old Norse and are both illustrated. The first fragment, AM 673 a I 4to, contains the first five paragraphs of the *Physiologus* text as well as referring to some of the fabulous nations derived from Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* Bk. XI, 3. The second fragment, AM 673 a II 4to, contains nineteen exempla derived from the *Physiologus* (Corazza 2007, 226). Vittoria Dolcetti Corazza (2007, 240) notes that the Icelandic *Physiologi* would have been used, like their Latin cousins, in individual meditation, for teaching and for preparing sermons. The impact of these texts in medieval Iceland has been shown by Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir (2007, 337), who observes that some of the creatures from the *Physiologus* appear in Old Norse sermons as well as in interpretations of natural phenomena.

In his seminal work on the Icelandic *Physiologi*, Halldór Hermannsson (1938, 10–15) recognised that the manuscripts were influenced by English illumination. He noted that in both manuscripts there were iconographical features, such as the twining of the tail of the crocodile, also found in English bestiary manuscripts. Furthermore, Halldór Hermannsson (1938, 10–15) identified Old English loan words in the Old Norse text. Finally, he saw that the description of the fabulous nations can also be found in related English bestiary manuscripts. Corazza (2007, 229), in her own analysis of the Icelandic *Physiologi*, stated that the Icelandic compiler was using a Latin manuscript from England that had an Old English glossary. She drew further parallels between the style of illumination in images of centaurs in English manuscripts and those in the Icelandic *Physiologus* manuscripts (Corazza 2007, 230–40).

Comparisons between the Icelandic *Physiologus* Manuscripts and English Bestiaries

Of these manuscripts, Westminster Abbey Library, MS 22 (England: York c.1275–1300) and Bodleian Library, MS Douce 88 (England: Lincoln? 1280–1300) were recognised by Halldór Hermannsson and Corazza as having a similar layout of illuminations and text to that of the Icelandic *Physiologi*. A further English manuscript observed by Halldór Hermannsson (1938, 12 n. 38) and Corazza (2007, 229 n. 13) also has a similar layout of drawings and text; this is Cambridge University Library, MS Kk 4.25 (England: Lincoln? 1280–1300). This manuscript has also been noted by Ilya Dines (2019b, 127) as containing stylistic similarities. Dines also sees these similarities in Emmanuel College, MS 252 (England: thirteenth century).

A final manuscript noted by both Halldór Hermannsson and Corazza is the *Fitzwilliam Bestiary*, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 254 (England: Lincoln? 1220–1230). Like MS Kk 4.25 this also has stylistic similarities to the Icelandic *Physiologi*. This can be illustrated by a comparison of the whale image in the *Fitzwilliam Bestiary* image on folio 33r with the corresponding image in AM 673 a II 4to 3r (see Image 1). The *Fitzwilliam Bestiary* has



Image 1 a) AM 673 a II 4to 3r. Photograph by permission of the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Reykjavík.

b) Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 254 33r. Reproduction by permission of the Syndics of The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

been recognised by Dines as including a representation of the monstrous races, as has British Library, Cotton Vitellius MS D1 (England: thirteenth century), the final manuscript recognised by Halldór Hermannsson.

Of the six thirteenth-century bestiaries that have been recognised as having parallels to the Icelandic *Physiologi*, three come from the north of England and two probably from the diocese of Lincoln. Dines (2019a, 95) has noted the possibility of a workshop specialising in bestiary production around Lincoln. Philip, canon of Lincoln, bequeathed his bestiary, with other manuscripts, to the Augustinian Priory of Worksop within the diocese of York in 1187. This is now known as the Worksop Bestiary (The Morgan Library and Museum MS M. 81) and was written c.1185 in England, possibly in Lincoln. Philip defined the main purpose of bestiaries as the education of monks or canons (Muratova 2019, 39). This can be seen in the theological treatises of the great teacher William of Montibus at the cathedral school of Lincoln, that relied on bestiaries to instruct the cathedral clergy and students at the school (Dines 2019a, 68–71; Morgan 2019, 110). Specific examples of bestiaries that contained these treatises are MS Kk 4. 25 and MS Douce 88 (Dines 2019a 70–71). Dines argues that these manuscripts were used as didactic tools in the schools of the diocese of Lincoln (Dines 2019a, 70–71).

The Lincoln bestiaries have a final connection to Iceland, and that is in the use of the treatises of Honorius that accompany the manuscripts, especially the encyclopaedic *Imago mundi*. Valerie Flint (1982, 7–13) suggested that the *Imago mundi* was made in England. The *Fitzwilliam Bestiary* is the earliest survivor of a group of manuscripts with a rare textual recension, one of which is possibly from Lincoln. These manuscripts include passages by many other authors not found in other recensions of the bestiary, including the *Imago mundi* (Dines 2019b, 125). The *Fitzwilliam Bestiary* furthermore contains a *mappa mundi*, a unique feature in the Bestiary tradition; it seems that this was used to illustrate some now lost folios of the *Imago mundi* (Dines 2019b, 127). The Worksop Bestiary also contains passages from the *Imago mundi* (Muratova 2019, 40), as do MS Kk 4. 25 and MS Douce 88 (Dines 2019a, 70–71). According to Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir (2000, 81–83), it is quite possible that the connection of Þorlákr and Páll with Lincoln could partly explain the readiness with which the *Imago mundi* was received in Iceland. It has been established that English bestiaries connected to the diocese of Lincoln have strong stylistic, textual and iconographic similarities to the Icelandic *Physiologi*. These bestiaries were also accompanied by recensions of the *Imago mundi* of Honorius. Copies of manuscripts from the diocese of Lincoln seem likely therefore to have made their way to Iceland.

GKS 1812 4to

The manuscript GKS 1812 4to consists of four parts. The oldest part, GKS 1812 IV 4to, contains astronomical and computistical texts as well as those deriving from encyclopaedias. The section GKS 1812 I 4to dates from the fourteenth century but is a copy of older texts deriving from sources similar to those of GKS 1812 IV 4to. A detailed survey of these texts is outside the scope of this article (see Etheridge forthcoming) and I will instead focus here on the section of the manuscript on folios 3r–4r and also on folio 7v, which contains the illustrations of fourteen of the constellations that form an *Aratea* treatise. This is a genre of popular illustrated medieval text based on Latin translations of the astronomical poem *Phaenomena* ‘Appearances’, written by the Greek poet Aratus of Soli (315–240 BCE). The poem describes and names the constellations as well as telling some of the mythological stories that accompany the images. Eric M. Ramírez-Weaver (2017, 71–83) explains that the poem’s popularity lay in its use as a mnemonic device for interpreting the night sky. In 809 the Aachen Conference gathered learned scholars from around the Carolingian Empire who created a compilation of astronomical and computistical texts known as the Aachen compilation of 809 or the *Seven Book Computus*. Included in Book V on astronomy was chapter one which was entitled *Excerptum de astrologia Arati* ‘Excerpts from the Astronomy of Aratus’ and was a Latin abbreviation of the *Phaenomena*. Chapter two was entitled *De ordine ac positione stellarum in signis* ‘On the order and position of the stars in the signs’ and was a series of forty-two illuminations of the constellations with a text that provided the number and locations of stars within each of these constellations (Eastwood 2007, 99–103). The Icelandic *Aratea* contains the *De ordine ac positione stellarum in signis* text of Book V: 2, written in Latin with fourteen constellations illuminated. There are also four sides of text in Old Norse deriving from the *Excerptum de astrologia Arati* text in Book V: 1. The Icelandic *Aratea* is the only type of this treatise known from medieval Scandinavia.

The Old Norse translation of the *Excerptum de astrologia Arati* has been edited by Konráð Gíslason (1860) and by Beckman and Kålund (1916), and translated into Italian by Carlo Santini (1987). Santini was the first scholar to recognise the debt of the Old Norse text to the Latin *Excerptum de astrologia Arati*. My own work has connected this to the Latin text *De ordine ac positione stellarum in signis* and accompanying images. In his *magnum opus* on Icelandic medieval astronomy and computus Natanael Beckman (1916, cxi–ccxii) mentioned these images only in passing. Both Rudolf Simek (1990, 384) and Margaret Clunies

Ross (1993, 164–66) also noted these images but did not reach any firm conclusions as to their origins. My own research on comparisons between the Icelandic constellation images and other *Aratea* manuscripts led me to believe that the images stem from English exemplars (Etheridge 2013, 69–78). Further investigations have allowed me to broaden the range of possible models that the Icelandic scribe was working with.

The two manuscripts that I previously looked at that have close stylistic and iconographical connections with the Old Norse translation, notably in the constellation of Scorpio, are Bodleian Library, Bodley MS 614, fol. 20r and Bodleian Library, Digby MS 83, fol. 56r, although both follow a different textual tradition from that of the Old Norse. Bodley MS 614 is an English astronomical compilation from 1120–40, possibly from Southern England. Digby MS 83 is an English astronomical compilation from the middle of the twelfth century. The twisted humanoid Scorpio figure found on folio 3v in GKS 1812 I 4to with its outstretched hands is unusual and seems to be related only to the Scorpio images found in the two Oxford Bodleian Library manuscripts. In these manuscripts the outstretched hands of the Scorpio figures hold the scales of the constellation Libra while the accompanying text describes both constellations. In contrast, the Icelandic scribe, or artist, has split the text in two and assigned each half to its respective constellation. The GKS 1812 I 4to Scorpio has been illustrated in the same way as its exemplar images but its empty hands now grasp towards its roundel where the constellation of Libra once was. Another strong artistic parallel can be found on folio 151v of manuscript John Paul Getty Museum, Ludwig XII 5, which is an English early thirteenth-century astronomical compilation. There are stylistic and iconographical similarities between the constellation image of Orion here and the figure in GKS 1812 I 4to on folio 7v (see Image 2). Other contemporary *Aratea* manuscripts from England differ stylistically and in their choice of texts from the images in GKS 1812 I 4to have similarities, if not stylistically then in their layout and choices of accompanying texts.

A Latin Psalter from Iceland with English Connections

One of the most important connections between Iceland and England is seen in the Latin psalter obtained from Skálholt Cathedral by Árni Magnússon. Following his antiquarian interests, he separated the calendar (now AM 249 b fol.), which contained Icelandic saints, and took it back with him to Copenhagen where it eventually got its shelfmark and stayed until it returned to Iceland in 1993. Meanwhile the rest of the psalter, being a Latin work and so of little interest to Árni Magnússon, remained in Iceland



Image 2 a) Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar GKS 1812 I 4^o, 7v. Photograph by permission of the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Reykjavík.

b) Los Angeles, John Paul Getty Museum, Ludwig XII 5, 151v. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program.

and was dismembered (Selma Jónsdóttir 1976, 459). As was often the case with vellum manuscripts in the eighteenth century, parts of the psalter had a second life as bindings for other books. These fragments have been recovered over the past century during conservation work on the books they were bound into. The remaining sections of the psalter now bear the shelf marks AM Acc.7d., Þjms 1799, Lbs. fragm.54 and Lbs. fragm.56 (Selma Jónsdóttir 1976, 460). The remains of this psalter show that it once was very impressive and richly illuminated. Therefore the psalter has been the subject of scholarly interest over the last century or so, with various theories put forward on both its date and origin, mostly based on palaeographical evidence. Kristian Kålund (1888, 226) dated AM 249 b fol. to the thirteenth century, Jón Þorkelsson (1893, 72) favoured a date around the mid-thirteenth century, while Magnús Már Lárusson (1963, 108) decided on an earlier date of around 1200 which was followed by Lilli Gjerløw (1980, 191) in her detailed analysis of the liturgical contents of the calendar. Departing from the palaeographical analysis of AM 249 b fol., Selma Jónsdóttir (1976, 458) used art-historical methodology to observe that the surviving images are executed in the Romanesque style and date from the second half of the twelfth century. More recent scholarship favours the earlier dating of Selma Jónsdóttir with both Merete Geert Andersen (2008, 97–98) and Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson (2017, 169) settling on the second half of the twelfth century as the date of AM 249 b fol. Andersen further notes that the absence of Thomas Becket from the saints listed places it sometime before 1173 when he was canonised.

Based on the large number of English saints in the calendar, Andersen (2008, 97–98) has suggested an English origin for the psalter, although Magnús Már Lárusson argued that this indicated influences rather than origin (1963, 108). Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson (2017, 180 n. 14) noted that Norwegian saints were entered into the calendar and that it uses a script that deviates from that of English scribes, so was unlikely to have been written in England. Lilli Gjerløw (1980, 191–208) has done the fullest analysis of the saints in the calendar and notes that, besides the English saints, many of them are German, and that as well as the more universal English and German saints a large number of more local ones such as St John of Beverley and St Pusinna are included. This analysis leads to the conclusion that the psalter was written in Iceland, but that the scribe had access to English and German calendars. Other old Icelandic calendars also show saints from the British Isles and Germany (Magnús Már Lárusson 1963, 109). This is to be expected, as the major influences on Icelandic Christianity came from the British Isles and the German Empire.

In contrast to the intensive work done on the paleographical and liturgical features of the psalter, there has been relatively little on the art-historical aspects of the manuscripts. The only full-scale scholarly analysis of the illuminations in the psalter so far has been Selma Jónsdóttir's groundbreaking research. In this she was able to connect the various parts of the psalter and show that the images contained in them were executed in the Romanesque style (1976, 458). Selma Jónsdóttir drew stylistic parallels between the image of *The Women at the Sepulchre* and the *Angel at the Tomb* on *Bjms 1799 verso* with the illuminations of the zodiac signs from the calendar that is now *AM 249 b fol.*, especially details of the signs of *Leo*, *Libra* and *Scorpio* (1976, 456–57). It is the iconography of these images that I believe can help in pinpointing the possible origins of the English progenitor of part of the psalter.

Beginning mainly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, illustrated calendars included the signs of the zodiac for each month or the labours of the month, or sometimes both (Wieck 2017, 13–14). Zodiac images are found in Christian, Jewish and Islamic art from throughout the Middle Ages (Hourihane 2007, lix). The images in the *AM 249 b fol.* calendar consist only of the zodiac sign for each month and do not include the labours of the month. The figures of *Aquarius* and *Pisces* are assigned to the wrong months, *Aquarius* being placed in February instead of January and *Pisces* in January instead of February. The zodiac roundels in the calendar have many standard iconographical features such as a bull for *Taurus* and a lion for *Leo*. Of great interest, owing to their unusual iconography, are the figures of *Gemini* and *Scorpio*. *Gemini* (3r) has the two twins facing each other wearing cloaks and carrying spears. The one on the left carries a kite shield which is seemingly shared by both as it is placed between them, while the twin on the right carries a buckler shield. *Scorpio* (5v) is depicted not as a scorpion but instead as a winged dragon sitting on a rock facing to the right. It is sticking its tongue out and has a dragon's head on the end of its tail.

The zodiac sign of *Gemini* in medieval art was always represented as twins, which have as their source the mythological Greek twins *Castor* and *Pollux*. Following their mythological source, they are mostly represented as two males although they can sometimes be male and female and occasionally the twins are represented as a hermaphrodite. They may be naked or clothed, often jointly holding a shield (Hourihane 2007, lxi). Medieval images of *Scorpio* in contrast show a much greater variety of forms, as few European artists had ever seen a scorpion or had an accurate example from a model book to work from. If not a scorpion, *Scorpio* was sometimes depicted as a dragon (Hourihane 2007, lxii). In the medieval Christian world, from the

ninth century the scorpion was associated with the devil, while the dragon was also used as a symbol of Satan in medieval bestiaries. This conflation of the images of Satan as a scorpion with those of him as a dragon in medieval art became prominent in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. That the realistic scorpion took prominence in representing Scorpio in medieval art from the fourteenth century onwards is due to the availability of better images in model books (Shalev-Eyni 2014, 17–20). Close comparisons of the iconography of the images of both Gemini and Scorpio in manuscripts can help show where the artist of the Icelandic psalter was taking their sources from.

Analysis of a large number of zodiac images from manuscripts of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries held in repositories in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, the UK, Norway and Denmark has come up with four that have close parallels with those of the Icelandic psalter. A further fragment that is of interest because of an English connection to Scandinavia is the psalter fragment UBB MS 1550 4. This partial calendar only has one zodiac roundel remaining, and this depicts Gemini as a cloaked pair of twins but with no shield or spears. The calendar is from England and has been localised to the London area by the appearance of St Erkenwald. It dates from the second half of the twelfth century and seems to have been in Norway during the Middle Ages.

Of the other four manuscripts, the Winchester Psalter (British Library, Cotton MS Nero C IV) is an English psalter from *c.*1150; its patron was Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester and brother of King Stephen I. The image for Gemini (f. 42r) has two cloaked figures facing each other. They are holding a kite shield between them but have no spears. The figure for Scorpio (f. 44v) is a quadruped figure that might be a dragon but resembles a mastiff dog. It has no wings and no mouth at the end of its tail. The collection of sermons and a calendar now with the shelfmark St John's College MS B. 20 is English, possibly from the diocese of Worcester, and dates from *c.*1140. Folio 2v unusually has all twelve zodiac roundels facing all twelve labours of the months on one page. Gemini is represented by two naked figures holding a kite shield facing each other without spears, while Scorpio is depicted as a winged dragon with a tail that has three dragon heads. The psalter St John's College, K. 30 is from the North Midlands (possibly Lincoln) and dates from *c.*1190–1200. The sign for Gemini (f.3r) has twins facing each other with cloaks, holding a kite shield between them and carrying no spears. Scorpio (5v) has an image of a winged dragon perched on a rock with no head on its tail. Finally, comparison with the zodiac roundels of the Hunterian Psalter, Glasgow University Library MS Hunter 229 (U.3.2) show the closest iconographic similarities to AM 249 b fol. The Hunterian Psalter, also known as the York Psalter, was made

c.1150–70 in the north of England in either the diocese of Lincoln or that of York by someone connected to the Augustinian Order (Boase, 1962, 5 and Hourihane, 2012, 366). The image of Gemini (3r) has cloaked twins facing each other; they share a kite shield and have spears (see Image 3).



Image 3 a) Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar 3r. Photograph by permission of the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Reykjavík.

b) Glasgow University Library MS Hunter 229 (U.3.2) 3r. Photograph by permission of University of Glasgow Library, Archives & Special Collections.

The figure of Scorpio (5v) is a winged dragon twisting around in a circle with a dragon's head at the end of the tail (see Image 4). The Hunterian



Image 4 a) Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar 5v. Photograph by permission of the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Reykjavík.

b) Glasgow University Library MS Hunter 229 (U.3.2) 5v. Photograph by permission of University of Glasgow Library, Archives & Special Collections.

Psalter is related to the Copenhagen Psalter (Royal Library MS Thott 143 2°) and shares an artist (Boase, 1962 5–7). That psalter was also made in Northern England, most likely Lincoln, before 1173 and possibly for the Danish royal family (Stirnemann 1999, 67–77).

The image in Þjms 1799 is the only other image we have from the Icelandic psalter. This scene is *The Three Women at the Sepulchre*. These female disciples of Christ come to his tomb with spices to help embalm the dead body. They find the sepulchre empty and an angel sitting on the tomb. The details of the scene are to be found in Matthew 28:1–7, Mark 16:1–7 and Luke 24:1–10. The accounts of the Evangelists vary, and this led to iconographic differences in the scene in medieval art. In summary, Matthew's account of the story has two women, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the Less. Mark adds Mary Salome, while Luke adds Joanna as the third woman. Matthew and Mark both say that the angel of the Lord is sitting on the tomb, Mark saying he is on the right side, while Luke refers to two angels. Matthew describes the soldiers who were guarding the tomb becoming as dead men, while the other two evangelists do not mention them at all. Finally, Mark and Luke describe the women bringing spices that they have prepared. Þjms 1799 depicts only two women, and they stand to the left of the image. They are holding censers on large chains while the angel is sitting on the Sepulchre to the right. There are no soldiers in the image (Selma Jónsdóttir 1976, 444–47).

Of the comparative manuscripts mentioned above, the Winchester Psalter (23r) has three women bearing censers standing to the right. An angel is sitting on the sepulchre to the left. The guards are sleeping underneath. Two other contemporary English manuscripts have similar iconography to the image of Þjms 1799, although there is no similarity with the zodiac images. The Copenhagen Psalter (15r) has three women bearing jars standing to the right. An angel is sitting on the sepulchre to the left with the soldiers underneath. There are no zodiac depictions in the Copenhagen Psalter. The St Albans Psalter was created at the Benedictine Abbey of St Albans c.1120–c.1145. It has an image (24v) of three women bearing censers standing to the left. An angel is sitting on the sepulchre to the right with the soldiers underneath. The Gemini (4r) roundel has naked twins with no shield or spears and the Scorpio (6v) image is that of a scorpion, not a dragon.

The image in Þjms 1799 is unusual in that it shows only two women, but this is consistent with the description in Matthew and can be found in the famous *Mironosice na Hristovom grobu* 'Myrrh-bearers on Christ's

Grave' fresco from Mileševa monastery in Serbia dated *c.*1235. The Icelandic image deviates from others also in that it does not depict the sleeping guards. The image of the censers can be found in the Winchester Psalter and the St Albans Psalter. The Icelandic image follows Mark in having the angel appearing on the right-hand side. There is no clear favourite side for the angel among the other images. The iconography of the Icelandic zodiac images points to influence from English manuscripts of the second half of the twelfth century with a strong indication towards the diocese of Lincoln.

English Manuscript Fragments with an Icelandic Provenance

Finally, in the Accessoria 7 collection of the Arnamagnæan Manuscript Collection there are numerous liturgical manuscript fragments with an Icelandic provenance that possibly originally stem from England. From the twelfth century, a sacramentary/lectionary (HS 72), a missal (HS 78) and a psalter (HS 113) have been tentatively linked to England (Andersen 2008, 71, 74–75 and 105–06). Dating from *c.*1200, a graduale (HS 27) and a breviarium (HS 70) are possibly from England (Andersen 2008, 37–38 and 69–70). Also dating from the thirteenth century, two graduals (HS 11 and 19), a missal (HS 30) and an antiphony (HS 136) possibly stem from England (Andersen 2008, 25–26, 32, 39–40 and 129–30). Finally, the *Homilies* of Paul the Deacon (HS 94) and a psalter (HS 111), both dating from the thirteenth century, have more securely been connected to England (Andersen 2008, 85–86 and 102–03). It is hoped that further study of these fragments, following the pioneering work done in Norway (Ommundsen 2007, 135–62), will establish whether these manuscripts had an origin in England or are the work of Icelandic scriptoria under English influence. This work could also help to establish the place of the Lincoln scriptorium in this picture.

Conclusion

The journeys of Þorlákr Þórhallsson and Páll Jónsson to Lincoln Cathedral in the twelfth century seem likely to have been influential in the transfer of ideas between England and Iceland. The learned school at Lincoln Cathedral was one of the most significant in England during this time and was part of a wider Continental network that included the Parisian schools, especially that of St Victor. Þorlákr Þórhallsson travelled to both Paris and Lincoln and was a part of that wider network. Although Páll Jónsson never travelled to Paris, he himself had ties to this network

through Norwegian and Danish ecclesiastics who had themselves studied in France, notably at St Victor.

Lincoln Cathedral during the time of the Icelandic travellers was the home of many learned masters and bishops such as Robert de Cheney who sponsored Geoffrey of Monmouth and William de Montibus whose theological work supplemented and deepened the Christian morality found in bestiaries. It is important here to say that although the linking of some of the important figures at Lincoln with the visits of Þorlákr Þórhallsson and Páll Jónsson is speculative, I think that important connections can be drawn that might lead to the establishing of firmer parallels in the future. The recent scholarship detailed here has shown that Lincoln in the second half of the twelfth century produced bestiaries, theological texts and copies of the works of Honorius amongst others. Although no Aratea manuscript has been directly connected with Lincoln, they were certainly an important product of England at this time. There is no autograph manuscript, but it is possible to see indications of English work in Icelandic texts, choices of saints and in art. Manuscripts and texts from England form only one part of a series of influences on the Icelandic intellectual tradition during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries which also includes the German Empire, Norway and Paris, especially St Victor. Scholars in Iceland were able to combine its native traditions both old and new with those encountered abroad to create a vibrant body of texts in theology, liturgy, astronomy and bestiaries in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

The English material is an important part of this and the influences on works of theology and science from Lincoln are present in both text and art, as I have endeavoured to show. The evidence that I have presented thus far has by its nature been circumstantial and I can produce no smoking gun in the form of autograph texts. However, the circumstantial evidence is, I believe, strong in pointing to a Lincoln source for parts of GKS 1812 4to, the *Physiologi*, *Thómas saga erkibyskups*, *Merlínusspá* and part of the Icelandic psalter. Further work may further strengthen this evidence. One important area to be further explored is the manuscript fragments which are believed to have an English source. The work of Áslaug Omundsen (2017) and Michael Gullick (2017) has helped to identify texts more closely and to establish scribal schools. The same could be done with the Icelandic fragments to investigate any connections with surviving Lincoln manuscripts. Furthermore, the influence of texts, such as those of William de Montibus in theology, could be sought in the Icelandic material. Further information on intellectual networks in a Scandinavian context in

the twelfth and thirteenth centuries will emerge from the multidisciplinary *Order of St Victor in Medieval Scandinavia* project based at the University of Oslo.¹ More research on this material, I believe, will reveal more on the vital intellectual connections between Iceland and England during the mid-twelfth to early thirteenth centuries.

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Manuscripts

Bergen, Universitetsbiblioteket i Bergen, UBB MS 1550 4
 Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 254, Fitzwilliam Bestiary
 Cambridge, Emmanuel College, MS 252
 Cambridge, St John's College, MS B. 20, MS K. 30
 Cambridge, University Library, MS Kk 4.25
 Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, Acc. 7, HS 11, 19, 27, 30, 70, 72, 78, 94, 108, 111, 113, 136
 Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Thott 143 2°, Copenhagen Psalter
 Glasgow, University Library, Sp Coll MS Hunter U.3.2 (229) Hunterian Psalter
 Hildesheim, Dombibliothek, St Godehard 1, St Albans Psalter
 London, British Library, Cotton MS Nero C IV, Winchester Psalter, Cotton Vitellius MS D1
 London, Westminster Abbey Library, MS 22
 Los Angeles, John Paul Getty Museum, JPGM MS Ludwig XII 5
 New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M. 81, Worksop Bestiary
 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodl. 614, MS Digby 83, MS Douce 88, MS Junius 1, Ormulum
 Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, AM 249 b fol., AM 673 a I 4°, AM 673 a II 4°, AM 732 a VII 4°, GKS 1812 4°
 Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn, Lbs. fragm.54, 56
 Reykjavík, Þjóðminjasafn, Þjms 1799

¹ This project, funded by the Committee for Nordic research councils in the Humanities and Social Sciences, will run for at least three years, involving Karl G. Johansson, University of Oslo, Christian Etheridge, National Museum of Denmark, Siân Grønlie, University of Oxford, Hilde Bliksrud, University of Oslo, Roger Andersson, University of Stockholm and Samu Niskanen, University of Helsinki.

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AFTERLIFE OF A LOST SAGA.
A HITHERTO UNKNOWN ADAPTATION
OF THE LOST SAGA OF HRÓMUNDUR GRIPSSON

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THE OLDEST OLD NORSE LEGENDARY SAGA known by name is the lost saga of Hrómundur Gripsson (or Greipsson), a legendary forefather of the first settlers of Iceland (Stefán Einarsson 1961, 195–96; Finnur Jónsson 1907, 334; Foote 1982–89; Jesch 1993). According to *Borgils saga og Hafliða*, a saga of Hrómundur was recited at the famous wedding feast at Reykhólar in 1119, but this early version has not survived in its original form. Because of this account, however, this saga is one of the best-known lost Icelandic sagas, attested in the medieval period but without any extant medieval witnesses (Mitchell 1991, 105–06, 185). The saga's original contents are a matter of speculation, but previous scholars believe them to have been quite different from the saga as we know it today, as additional materials were gradually incorporated into the story (Brown 1946–53; Jesch 1984). The only extant medieval version of the story of Hrómundur survives in a metrical *rímur* version, known as *Hrómundarrímur* or *Griplur*, possibly based on the lost saga.¹ In the seventeenth century, *Griplur* served as the basis for a prose adaptation known as *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* (henceforth *17HsG*), which is the version of the story that we know from modern editions and translations.²

Despite its relatively late origin, the seventeenth-century prose version of the story is traditionally classified as part of the corpus of legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*), as it fulfils the criteria of taking place in the distant Scandinavian past before the settlement of Iceland and including several

¹ *Griplur* have been edited twice by Finnur Jónsson (1896; 1905–1922). The most recent study of *Griplur* is by Kapitan (2020).

² The idea that *17HsG* is based on *rímur* was first introduced by Albert LeRoy Andrews (1911; 1912; 1913) and has been generally accepted in later scholarship, e.g. Brown (1946–53), Foote (1982–89), Jesch (1984; 1993) and Kapitan (2018). A competing interpretation has been presented by Kölbing (1876) and Hooper (1930; 1934).

fantastic motifs.³ Helga Reuschel (1933) classified *Hrómundar saga* as a member of the Viking cycle (*Wikingkreis*) of legendary sagas; an accurate categorisation, as the saga provides almost everything one could wish for in a tale of an adventurous Viking. Hrómundur is a Norwegian hero who undertakes raiding journeys with King Ólafur, fights berserks in sea battles, breaks into the burial mound of the barrow-dweller Þráinn, killing him and stealing his treasures, including his sword Mistilteinn.

While a significant amount of scholarly attention has been devoted to the lost medieval saga and related materials, the seventeenth-century saga of Hrómundur has attracted somewhat less interest. Of almost forty manuscripts preserving *Hrómundar saga* only the few oldest have been studied. An in-depth analysis of the entire corpus of the *Hrómundar saga* tradition reveals that among the hitherto ignored extant manuscripts there is another version of the story of Hrómundur, which has remained unknown to scholarship until now.

This unknown saga of Hrómundur is four times longer than the seventeenth-century saga. At approximately 12,000 words, it is *c.*3000 words longer than *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, one of the shorter sagas of Icelanders, and one fifth of the length of, for example, *Egils saga*, one of the longer ones. Moreover, it includes a number of additional motifs and episodes, some of which lie outside the *Hrómundar saga* tradition. The present study serves as a first introduction of this text to scholarship and aims to cast light on different aspects of the saga's style and transmission, allowing us to place it in the broader context of Icelandic literary production and consumption. The first part of the study focuses on the saga's production by describing the manuscripts that preserve it, as well as analysing the literary context in which the saga appears. The second part discusses selected motifs and innovations found in the saga and identifies some parallels within the Old Norse literary corpus. Finally, a plot summary of the saga is provided in an appendix.

³ The corpus of legendary sagas, defined by Rafn in *Fornaldar sögur Norðrlanda eptir gömlum handritum* (1829–30), includes stories that deal with the legendary past of Scandinavia before the settlement of Iceland. As recently demonstrated by Lavender (2015), the definition of the corpus has its roots in earlier Scandinavian scholarship including Björner's *Nordiska kämpa dater* (1737), which contains an edition of the Old Norse text and Swedish and Latin translations of *Hrómundar saga*. For an introduction to legendary sagas, see, e.g., Tulinius (2005) and Driscoll (2003; 2009).

1. Manuscripts

Four nineteenth-century manuscripts preserve the newly discovered *Hrómundar saga* (henceforth *19HsG*). Three of them are held at the National and University Library of Iceland in Reykjavík and one at the British Library in London (Table 1). With the exception of the British Library manuscript, the saga was copied by known scribes and therefore its copying can be fairly well dated to the first half of the nineteenth century. This section provides an overview of these nineteenth-century manuscripts, and focuses on the scribal milieu that produced them and the texts that appear together with *19HsG*. The literary contexts of the extant manuscripts provide valuable insight into the possible reception of the story of *Hrómundur* at the time of its production and dissemination.

Table 1. Manuscripts of *19HsG*

Siglum	Shelfmark	Date	Scribe
B11109	Add. 11109	1800–1837	unknown
L2404	Lbs 2404 8vo	1810–1832	Gísli Konráðsson
L1572	Lbs 1572 4to	1819	Þorsteinn Gíslason
L679	Lbs 679 4to	1834	Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson

1.1 British Library MS Add. 11109

The most broadly dated, and possibly the oldest manuscript preserving *19HsG* is London, British Library MS Add. 11109 (B11109). It is a paper manuscript in quarto, which consists of ii+140+i leaves. B11109 contains twelve texts, mainly classified as *fornaldarsögur*, but also including *konungáættrir*, *Íslendingáættrir* and later *Íslendingasögur*, as well as one folktale. The codex starts with a table of contents, which lists all the sagas preserved in this manuscript: *Starkaðar saga gamla*, *Hauks þáttur hábrókar*, *Þóris þáttur hasts og Bárðar birtu*, *Styrbjarnar þáttur Svíakappa*, *Hálfðanar þáttur svarta*, *Þorsteins saga Geirnefjufóstra*, *Þorsteins þáttur tjaldstæðings*, *Gríms saga Skeljungsbana*, *Huldar saga hinnar miklu*, *19HsG* (ff. 106v–132r), *Hákonar þáttur Hárekssonar* and *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra*.

The dating of this manuscript is uncertain. According to the online catalogue of the ‘Stories for all time’ project, B11109 was written by unknown scribes between 1800 and 1850, in contradiction to the statement of the British Library’s online catalogue that the manuscript can be dated

to the eighteenth century.⁴ Based on the examination of this manuscript's provenance history, physical features and contents, we are able to refine the proposed dating.

First, some of the contents of this manuscript cannot predate *c.* 1802, so the writing of this manuscript could not have been completed in the eighteenth century. *Þorsteins saga Geirneffufóstra*, which appears on folios 63r–88v, is attributed to the prolific Icelandic scribe Gísli Konráðsson, born in 1787 at Vellir in Skagafjörður in the northern part of Iceland (Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–52, II 66–67). If we assume that Gísli Konráðsson did not start composing sagas until he was around the age of fifteen, the usual age at which young Icelandic boys started copying (but not necessarily composing) sagas, then the earliest *terminus post quem* for the composition of *Þorsteins saga Geirneffufóstra*—and hence also for the writing of B11109—would be *c.* 1802.⁵

Second, at least one part of the manuscript must date to after 1824, as the text is written on sheets of easily datable watermarked paper. Folios 49–54 are made of paper that contains a beehive watermark and the countermark 'KLIPPAN'. Klippan is the name of a Swedish paper mill located in Skåne in the southernmost part of Sweden.⁶ The beehive motif was very popular in watermarked paper of various origins—it was originally Dutch, but later also became widely used in Scandinavia. On the plinth of the beehive in B11109 there is the date 1824, indicating the earliest possible date of paper production and hence the earliest possible date of writing for at least this part of this manuscript (Kapitan 2021, 17–18).

Finally, the manuscript was one of many Icelandic manuscripts that the British Museum bought in 1837 from Finnur Magnússon (1781–1847), professor of literature at the University of Copenhagen (Bricka 1887–1905, XI 57–63). These manuscripts, catalogued with shelf marks Add. 11061–11251, were purchased by Frederic Madden (1801–73), Keeper of

⁴ The date in the 'Stories for all time' catalogue online at fasnl.ku.dk (last accessed 19/08/2018) is based on Jón Helgason's unpublished *Catalogue of the Icelandic Manuscripts in the British Library* (n.d.) held at the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen. The date in the British Library online catalogue (last accessed 09/08/2018) is based on Madan's *List of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum in the Years 1836–1840* (1843). An alternative dating for this manuscript has been proposed by Lavender (2014, 102).

⁵ Driscoll (2012, 264) observed that Magnús Jónsson from Tjaldanes started transcribing texts around the age of confirmation, i.e. around fourteen.

⁶ On the history of the Klippan paper mill see Fiskaa and Nordstrand (1978, 311–312), Lindberg (1998, 2:77–78), and Clemensson (1932, 14–20).

Manuscripts at the British Museum (Porter 2006, 176). The acquisition date of 1837 establishes the *terminus ante quem* for the production of this codex.

Based on these observations, even though the scribal hands remain unidentified, we can narrow down the dating of this manuscript with fair certainty to c.1800–32, and at least one part of it to 1824–32.

1.2 National and University Library of Iceland, Lbs 2404 8vo

Chronologically, the next manuscript is Reykjavík, National and University Library of Iceland, Lbs 2404 8vo (L2404). It is a small paper manuscript in octavo, which consists of 182 leaves (Páll Eggert Ólason 1918–37, III 339). L2404 preserves eight texts, mostly short tales (*konunga-* and *Íslendingaþættir*), but also sagas (*Íslendingasögur*, *fornaldarsögur* and *konungasögur*): *Hálfðanar saga gamla*, 19HsG (ff. 61r–100v), *Sigurðar þáttur slefu*, *Grænlandinga þáttur*, *Hauks þáttur hábrókar*, *Þorsteins saga Geirnefjufostra*, *Skálda saga* and *Styrbjarnar þáttur Sviakappa*.

In the online catalogue of the collection *Handrit.is*, the manuscript is dated to c.1805, but the material evidence suggests a slightly later dating. The fourth quire is made of watermarked paper with the mark ‘Det Ørholmske Interessentskab’. This mark was used on paper manufactured at the Ørholm paper mill in Denmark between 1805 and 1832 (Fiskaa and Nordstrand 1978, 329, 405). This timespan generally confirms the dating proposed for L2404 in Páll Eggert’s catalogue. However, in other places in the manuscript, the paper is actually dated with the watermark ‘1810’, which establishes a *terminus post quem* for the manuscript’s writing (Kapitan 2021, 18–19).

The manuscript is written in one hand throughout, which has been recognised as that of the aforementioned Gísli Konráðsson (1787–1877), one of the most active scribes of the early nineteenth century. He was the son of farmer and craftsman Konráð Gíslason (d. 1798) and his third wife Jófríður Björnsdóttir. Gísli changed his residence a couple of times in his lifetime within the Skagafjarðarsýsla area in Northern Iceland, and in 1852 he settled in Flatey in East Barðastrandarsýsla in the Westfjords (Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–52, II 66). Gísli was the father of Konráð Gíslason (1808–91), professor of Nordic languages at the University of Copenhagen (Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–52, III 369; Bricka 1887–1905, VI 24–27).

Gísli Konráðsson was not only an extremely active scribe, but also a poet and author of many texts of a historicising nature. Although he never received any formal education and taught himself to write, he earned the nickname the Historian (*sagnfræðingur*) due to his burning interest in history and genealogy, which was expressed for example in his work

Húnavtinga saga, devoted to the history of Húnaþing from around 1700 to 1850 (Sighvatur Grímsson 1897).

There are various marginal notes in the manuscript, most of which seem to refer to the scribe's family members. On the paste-down there is a note that reads 'Saugubók þessa á Eigill Gottskálsson (*sic*) á Völlnumm'; in the outer margin of folio 100v, by the final words of *19HsG*, the name 'Gisli' is written vertically; and on folio 182v there are a number of scribbles: 'Jónas', 'S[o]gur [á] Bókinni á E.Gottskálsson', 'Guli á' and 'Egilsson'. Gísli Konráðsson's mother Jófríður Björnsdóttir, after Konráð Gíslason's death in 1798, married Konráð's nephew Gottskálf Egilsson (1783–1834) from Vellir; it must be his son Egill who is mentioned in the first note. All the manuscripts with shelf marks Lbs 2404–2013 8vo were bought by the National Library of Iceland in 1935 from Jónas Egilsson (1864–1942), and as Páll Eggert Ólason suggested, most of them probably belonged to his father Egill Gottskálksson (1819–87) and grandfather Gottskálf Egilsson. This indicates that the manuscript remained in Northern Iceland from its production until its acquisition by the library.

1.3 National and University Library of Iceland, Lbs 1572 4to

The third manuscript of *19HsG* is Reykjavík, National and University Library of Iceland, Lbs 1572 4to (L1572). It is a paper manuscript in quarto, which consists of 145 leaves (Páll Eggert Ólason 1918–37, I 552–53). L1572 was written in 1815–27, and the dating is based on colophons. L1572 preserves thirty texts, most of them short tales dealing with legendary Scandinavian heroes and kings, traditionally classified as *fornaldarsögur*, *konungasögur*, *þættir* and historiographic texts. The manuscript starts with a table of contents (f. 1r–v) added at a later date, followed by the following texts: *Gautreks saga og Gjafa-Refs*, *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, *Skálda saga*, *Áns saga bogsveigis*, *Friðþjófs saga frækna*, *Illuga saga Griðarfóstra*, *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar*, *Vermundar þáttur konungs*, *Af Upplendinga konungum*, *Ragnarssona þáttur*, 'Brot af sögu Danakónganna Haraldar blátannar og Sveins tjúguskegg', *Ormars þáttur Framarssonar*, *19HsG* (ff. 78v–92r), *Færeyinga saga*, *Hróa þáttur heimiska*, *Sigurðar þáttur Ákasonar*, *Tóka þáttur Tókasonar*, *Eymundar saga Hringssonar*, *Hemings þáttur Áslákssonar*, *Hákonar þáttur Hárekssonar*, *Rauðúlfs þáttur*, *Eiríks saga víðförla*, *Hálfs saga konungs og Hálfsrekka*, *Gríms saga jarlssonar*, *Játvarðar saga helga*, *Egils saga einhenda og Ásmundar berserkjabana*, *Hálfðanar saga Barkarsonar*, *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns*, *Sörla þáttur* and *Hana þáttur*. *Hrómundar saga* is followed by a colophon with the date 1819.

The main part of the manuscript was written by Þorsteinn Gíslason (1776–1838) from Stokkahláðir south of Akureyri in Northern Iceland. Þorsteinn was a *hreppstjóri* and a poet, but also a very active scribe (Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–52, V 203). His hand can be found in at least fifty-five manuscripts in the National and University Library of Iceland. Even though there is no full signature in the manuscript to confirm the scribal hand's attribution, the initials Þ.G. appear on ff. 46v, 122v and 70v, and these resemble Þorsteinn's signature in Lbs 1573 4to. The striking similarities in the layout and script type found in L1572 with Þorsteinn's other manuscripts do not leave any doubt that he wrote L1572.

As attested in the signed colophons, Þorsteinn worked on L1572 between 1815 and 1827, but the copying process does not seem to have been a continuous activity since the dates are irregularly distributed. If we assume that the date given in each colophon refers exclusively to the preceding text, then the majority of the leaves were written in 1819 (forty-four leaves), and only two in 1827. Some texts, however, do not end with a dated colophon, so we cannot be sure when they were written.

1.4 National and University Library of Iceland, Lbs 679 4to

The youngest extant manuscript of *19HsG* is Reykjavík, National and University Library of Iceland, Lbs 679 4to (L679). It is a paper manuscript in quarto which consists of iii+111+iii leaves.⁷ It is dated to around 1834, following the date given in the colophon on p. 221. L679 preserves eight texts, all of which are entertaining narratives of a legendary and chivalric nature: *Huldar saga*, *Perus saga meistara*, *Galafreys saga*, *Sagan af Theodilo riddara og hans kvinnu*, *Drauma-Jóns saga*, *Konráðs saga keisarasonar*, *19HsG* (ff. 50r–70r) and *Haralds saga Hveðrubana*.

L679 was written by Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson (1792–1863), a farmer from Skagafjörður in Northern Iceland (Eiríkur Kristinsson 1964, 295–96; Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–52, V 205). Even though Þorsteinn had no formal education, his remarkable interest in books manifested itself in a substantial collection of manuscripts, a considerable number of which he copied himself.⁸ Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson's library must have been of considerable size as it awoke some interest among his contemporaries. A letter that the *hreppstjóri* Jóhannes Guðmundsson (1823–79) wrote

⁷ According to Páll Eggert Ólason (1918–37, I 308), the manuscript consists of 122 leaves. The manuscript is paginated, starting on folio 1r.

⁸ For recent work on Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson's scribal network see Tereza Lansing (2014, 19).

on 14 February 1862 to Jón Árnason (1817–88), a librarian, author and collector of Icelandic folklore, serves as evidence of this (Finnur Sigmundsson 1950, 1 360):

og ekki hafði hann annað pláss fyrir bókasafn sitt en svo lélegan kofa, að eg gat enga bók skoðað til að geta lagt neitt frá mér annars staðar en ofan í forargólf, og svo er safn hans svo mikið, að ekki hefði veitt af nokkrum dögum til að fá greinilegt registur yfir það allt, og lakast var, að karlinn treysti sér ekki til að gjöra það sjálfur, nema með einhvers tilstyrk.

and he did not have any other place for his library than a poor shack, where I couldn't examine any book without putting anything away elsewhere than on a dirt floor, and his library is so big that one would need a couple of days to prepare a sensible register of all of it, and what is worse is that the old man did not feel confident to do it himself, except with someone else's help.

Probably owing to his lack of formal education, Þorsteinn's contemporaries questioned his scribal abilities and emphasised that his copies contained errors and omissions (Driscoll 2013, 55). Although Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson cannot be called a careful and accurate copyist, he seemed to care greatly about the provenance of the texts he copied. He frequently signed his manuscripts with his name and date of copying, as well as information regarding his exemplar. This is the case with L679, where on f. 110r, there is a note:

og hafi þeir allir þöck sem hljða og lesa enn sä aungva sem skrifad hefur liji þessa | skrifud ä Heidi og endud þann 17 Januari 1834 | eptir öðru exemplari sem skrifad hafdi verid 1750 d 25 Arilis (sic) Testerar Þorst[einn] Þorst[eins] son (L679, 110r).

All who listen or read shall have gratitude, but not the one who wrote these lies. Written at Heidi and completed on 17 January 1834, following another exemplar, which was written on 25 April 1750. Testifies Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson.

This colophon follows *Haralds saga Hveðrubana*, the text immediately following *19HsG* in this manuscript. It must refer to some manuscript of the saga which is today lost or unknown, as I have not been able to identify any copy of *Haralds saga* dated to 1750, nor any other manuscript where both of these texts occur.

L679 is a part of a bigger collection of manuscripts which previously belonged to Eggert Briem (1840–93), a vicar from Höskuldsstaðir in Suður-Múlasýsla and the husband of Dómhildur Þorsteinsdóttir, daughter of Þorsteinn Gíslason, the scribe of L1572 (Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–52, I 316).

1.5 Discussion of the manuscript context

The four manuscripts preserving *19HsG* provide interesting insight into the production and possible reception of the story of Hrómundur in the nineteenth

century. Three of these manuscripts can be associated with the northern part of Iceland by the places of residence of their scribes. Gísli Konráðsson (1787–1877) spent most of his lifetime within Skagafjarðarsýsla, Þorsteinn Gíslason (1776–1838) came from Stokkahláðir south of Akureyri in Eyjafjarðarsýsla, and Þorsteinn Þorsteinnsson (1792–1863) came from Skagafjörður. Based on the evidence at hand, it seems that this new version of *Hrómundar saga* was a locally transmitted adaptation of the story, which never really spread beyond Northern Iceland. This explains why this version has escaped the attention of previous researchers of material related to *Hrómundur*.

While not much can be said about the context in which the saga was composed, as its authorship is unknown, analysis of the saga's manuscript context provides insight into its transmission and reception in Northern Iceland at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Assuming that similar texts travel together in manuscripts, it is worth asking what other texts were considered similar enough to *19HsG* for them to appear together in a single manuscript. This can inform our understanding of the genre to which *Hrómundar saga* belonged in the eyes of the audiences who were contemporary with its production.

Texts of forty-seven different works appear alongside *19HsG*, but only seven of them appear more than once:

Hauks þáttur hábrókar, Styrbjarnar þáttur Sviakappa and *Þorsteins saga Geirnefjufóstra* (in B11109 and L2404)

Hákonar þáttur Hárekssonar and *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra* (in B11109 and L1572)

Skálda saga (in L1572 and L2404)

Huldar saga hinnar miklu (in B11109 and L679)

Since almost no stemmatological examinations of these texts exist, it is difficult to establish a rationale for why they appear together in more than one of the manuscripts.⁹ However, at least two clear criteria can be used to group some of these texts: the geography of the events described in the saga and the time of the saga's creation.

First of all, most of the texts that appear more than once alongside *19HsG* deal with events that take place in mainland Scandinavia before the settlement of Iceland. Even though they are not traditionally classified as *fornaldarsögur*, they are adventure tales giving accounts of the entertaining escapades of young Scandinavians, their travels abroad and return to their home countries. Second, two of the texts co-occurring with *19HsG* are post-medieval adaptations of older material: *Huldar saga hinnar miklu*,

⁹ An exception is Lavender's work on *Illuga saga* (2014; 2020).

written in the eighteenth century, and *Þorsteins saga Geirnefjufóstra*, written around 1802–16. Additionally, there are other younger sagas that appear with *19HsG*. For example, *Gríms saga jarlssonar* (in L1572) can be dated to the eighteenth or nineteenth century (Simek and Pálsson 2007, 129), and *Haralds saga Hveðrubana* (in L679), a text not listed in Simek and Pálsson's reference work, is preserved only in manuscripts dated to the nineteenth century.

It is worth noting that three of the texts that appear together with *19HsG* (*Huldar saga hinnar miklu*, *Þorsteins saga Geirnefjufóstra* and *Gríms saga jarlssonar*) are related to materials derived or inspired by presumably lost sagas, just as the new *Hrómundar saga* is indirectly derived from the lost saga of Hrómundur recited at the wedding feast in Reykhólar. *Gríms saga og Hjálmars* and *Huldar saga* are considered lost *fornaldarsögur* (Mitchell 1991, 185; Driscoll 2009). *Huldar saga* is mentioned in *Sturlu þáttur* as the saga recited by Sturla Þórðarson at the court of King Magnús of Norway. While no medieval version of this story survives, it has been previously suggested that the saga may have featured the *seiðkona* Hulð of *Ynglinga saga* (Meulengracht Sørensen 1977, 163; Úlfar Bragason 1990). *Gríms saga og Hjálmars* (whose younger relative is *Gríms saga jarlssonar*) is considered a lost saga due to the existence of the *rímur* of Grímur and Hjálmar, which give an account of a story fitting the bill for legendary sagas, but here again, no medieval prose version of the story survives. *Þorsteins saga Geirnefjufóstra* is a modern *Íslendingasaga* which, on the basis of references to Þorsteinn in early modern Icelandic *kvæði*, might be seen as another potentially lost saga (Guðni Jónsson 1953).

The appearance of these modern adaptations of presumably lost sagas together in manuscripts of *19HsG* might be accidental, but at the same time, we cannot exclude the possibility that it may be the expression of a fashion for actualising medieval sagas and making them available to contemporary audiences. As Driscoll has demonstrated, the case of *Huldar saga* suggests that, at least in the late nineteenth century, lay scholars actively sought versions of narratives that were inaccessible to them and were ready to go so far as to write new versions to satisfy their hunger for sagas (Driscoll 2017).

Until in-depth stemmatic analyses of these sagas appear, we have to assume that the co-occurrence of various sagas in these manuscripts is the result of the individual editorial decisions of scribes and/or their potential commissioners. On the one hand, this gives us insight into the contemporary reception of these texts, but on the other hand, it might lead to an overinterpretation of the significance of these co-occurrences. It is

possible that some of these sagas were copied from the same exemplars, so that their appearance together may be the result of the mechanical process of copying texts from one manuscript to another. But even if these sagas were closely related textually, questions remain concerning the possible motivations behind putting these texts together.

The analysis of the literary context of the extant manuscripts of *19HsG* presented in this section demonstrates that this new saga was produced and read together with other entertaining narratives of adventure, some of which were early modern and modern adaptations. These manuscripts were probably intended for use during the long hours of the evening wake (*kvöldvaka*), when members of Icelandic households gathered in a *baðstofa* (a multipurpose room in Icelandic farmhouses) to occupy themselves with crafts and listen to stories being recited or read aloud. This interpretation is especially convincing in light of a colophon that closes *19HsG* in one of the manuscripts. In B11109 on fol. 132r, we read: *Hafi sá góþa þökk sem las, en heiþr sem hlýðdo, en hann er skrifafi lof oc vinfengi góþra manna; en allir sameginlega tímanlega oc eilífa gleði fyrir utan enda* ‘May those who read have considerable gratitude, and those who listened have honour, and he who wrote have praise and the friendship of good people, and may all together have temporal and eternal happiness without end’. Even though this is a formulaic way of finishing the text, it still points towards the ways in which sagas are known to have been disseminated and received in nineteenth-century Iceland. They were read aloud by one person, while others listened.

2. The new saga

The new saga of *Hrómundur* is four times longer than the seventeenth-century saga of *Hrómundur* (*17HsG*) and its length is achieved not only through rhetorical amplifications, but also through the addition of episodes and motifs that change the overall impression of the saga. While *17HsG* is episodic and short of descriptive passages, *19HsG* has a strong narrative thread with elaborated descriptions of events and characters. The differences between the content and style of these two sagas are so significant that it is difficult to regard them as versions of the same work and they should rather be seen as two distinct adaptations of the same material.

The differences between them are quite clear from the beginning of the text. The seventeenth-century saga, as preserved in the oldest manuscript Reykjavík, Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, AM 601 b 4to, starts as follows:

(S)á kongr rieþe fyrir Gordom [danmorc] er Olafur hiet hann var sonr Gnóþar Asmundar, hann var frógr maþr. Bróþr .ij. kári oc ørnulfr, voru landvarnar men kongz, hermenn mikler (AM 601 b 4to, 1r)

There was a king called Olaf, the son of Gnothar-Asmund, and he ruled over Garthar in Denmark, and was very famous. Two brothers, Kari and Örnulf, both mighty warriors, were entrusted with the defence of his territories. (Translation: Kershaw 1921, 62)

Our new saga of *Hrómundur*, as preserved in B11109, starts:

Sva hefr Sögo þessa, at á þeim tímum sem margir Stólkongar voro í Norvegi, Danmorco oc Svíþjóþ, gorþost margir Höfþingjar oc stormektugir Herrar, Greifar oc Jarlar, sem bruto sic til ricja oc landa, herjuþo sva vel á vetrom sem sumrom, oc öbluþo sér sva fjár oc frægþa. A medal þessara oc þvilíkra var einn micils verþr Kónger, sem Olafur hiet, hann var ólatasti til bardaga, ör af fé vit vini sína, enn strangr oc hefnigjarn vit Ovini; hann rac af ricjom marga Konga oc höfþingja, oc hafþi vetrseto í Norvegi, sérdeilis á Hálogalandi, þar sat Kónger optast. Kónger átti ij systr sem framm tóco öllom öþrom meymom, at kostom oc qvennþríþi, hyggindom sem handvirþom, á millum Vír oc Hálogalands, hiet önnr Dagný en önnr Svanhvít (B11109, 106v)

So begins this saga, that at that time when there were many petty kings in Norway, Denmark and Sweden, many became chieftains and powerful lords, counts and earls, who gained power and land, constantly carried on wars regardless of season, and gained for themselves wealth and fame. Among these and similar men there was one important king who was named Ólafur; he was most eager for battles, generous towards his friends but harsh and vengeful towards his enemies. He drove many kings and chieftains away from their countries and had his winter sojourn in Norway, especially in Hálogaland, where the king most often was. The king had two sisters who surpassed all other women between Vík and Hálogaland in quality and beauty, intelligence and skilfulness; one was called Dagný and the other Svanhvít.

By comparing these opening paragraphs, we see not only the significant amount of rhetorical amplification in *19HsG*, but also a different structure, and the addition of new information. *19HsG* first provides a lengthy introduction to the political situation of medieval Scandinavia, then we learn about King Ólafur's characteristics and his origins in Norway, and finally we are told the names of his sisters. The beginning of *17HsG* is far more laconic and closely follows the structure of the medieval *rimur* of *Hrómundur*, in which King Ólafur is introduced first and his two retainers immediately afterwards.

The beginning of the saga indicates that a fair amount of additional information can be expected from this new adaptation. In order to make the discussion presented below more accessible, a plot summary has been

provided in the appendix at the end of this article. It will be clear to readers familiar with *17HsG* that *19HsG* contains numerous modifications and additions. These include repeated motifs and scenes known from *17HsG* placed in new contexts, and additional episodes with sources outside the *Hrómundar saga* tradition. This section highlights some of the changes present in the younger saga and attempts to identify their sources in order to shed light on the style and function of *19HsG*. In this introductory article only four motifs have been selected to illustrate how the story of Hrómundur developed. Two recur multiple times in the saga, and two are additional, originating outside the *Hrómundar saga* tradition.

2.2 Recurring motifs: Bad dreams

Recurring in *17HsG* and *19HsG* is the motif of *Bad dreams as an evil omen* D1812.5.1.2 (Thompson 1955–58; Boberg 1966). In *17HsG* there are two episodes that utilise this motif: in chapter 6 Hrómundur does not join the battle because of the bad dream he had the previous night, and in chapter 9 Blindur narrates his dreams to the king of the Swedes who consistently misinterprets them.¹⁰ In the first case, the reader does not know the contents of the dream, because Hrómundur only announces that he will not participate in the battle because of the bad dream he had, without giving an account of it. In the second case, there are detailed descriptions of the dreams, followed by the king's interpretations. The schematic presentation of the dreams and their interpretations one after another strengthen the impression that the king is misinterpreting the dreams, which in fact refer to his future.

In *19HsG* the occurrences of this motif have been doubled in relation to *17HsG*, as they appear in four independent episodes. First, Hrómundur's father Greipr summons Hrómundur to visit him. Greipur tells Hrómundur about his bad dream, specifying its contents and, to a certain extent, providing his own interpretation (chapter 8). He finishes his account of the dream in the following way:

Nú hef ec sagt þér draum minn, en þú mant ráða verða með tíþinni. Hrómundr svarar: bæþi er þat, at draumurinn þykir ecki sva merkilegr, enda erto oc maþr orþinn gamall. Satt er þat segir Greipr at ec er gamall vorþinn, en víst man draumurinn eitthvað merkja, því mér féllst hugr um hringana, oc þat villda ec, Frændi! at þú talaþir vit þær systr Olafs Kóngs, oc manto þeira njóta, en Bíld oc Vola skalto varast því þeir ero ótrúir fleyrstom oc segja Kóngi satt oc logit af öþrom mönnum. (B11109, 115v)

¹⁰ All references to *17HsG* follow the chapter division of Rafn (1829–30). The references to *19HsG* follow the chapter division and loci of B11109.

‘Now I have told you my dream, and you will have to interpret it later.’ Hrómundur answers: ‘For one thing the dream does not seem important, and for another you have become an old man.’ ‘It is true,’ says Greipur, ‘that I have become old, but certainly the dream must mean something, because I thought about the rings, and this I want, my kinsman, that you talk to the sisters of King Ólafur and enjoy their company, but you must avoid Bíldur and Vóli because they are treacherous towards most people and tell the king truth and lies about other men.’

Even though Hrómundur at first rejects the importance of the dream, he goes to visit Svanhvít and asks her to interpret his father’s dream. She tells him that he should stay away from King Ólafur because he is under the influence of the treacherous brothers Bíldur and Vóli. Greipur’s dream anticipates the events described in the following chapter, when Hrómundur is forced to flee from Ólafur’s court because of Bíldur and Vóli’s slander.

The next dream in *19HsG* has a similar function. This time it is Svanhvít who tells Hrómundur about her bad dream (chapter 9). She does not provide any interpretation of her dream, but its meaning must be clear to both her and Hrómundur, as the saga presents it in the following way:

Þat dreymdi mic eitt sinn, at ec þóktist búa um þic í eino rúmi, oc varsto lítt haldinn, en þó mæltir þú til mín, en bræþrom þínom bjó ec annat rúm, oc tölþo þeir ecki neitt til mín. Máské sva verþi segir Hrómundr oc tóç fngorgull oc gaf henni, oc géck burt síþan, en hún bat hann vel fara. (B11109, 116r)

‘I dreamed once, that it seemed to me I attended to you in one bed, and you were in a bad condition, but you spoke to me, but for your brothers I prepared another bed and they did not talk to me at all.’ ‘Maybe it will be this way,’ said Hrómundur, and took a ring and gave it to her, and afterwards left, and she bade him farewell.

Unlike in the previous episode, in this scene there is a certain amount of understanding between Hrómundur and Svanhvít about the importance and meaning of this dream. By saying ‘Maybe it will be this way,’ Hrómundur expresses his understanding of the dream’s meaning and acknowledges the possibility of its coming true, but at the same time implies that he is not going to actively avoid his fate. The dream presenting Hrómundur’s speechless brothers and the severely ill Hrómundur prepares the reader for the outcome of the forthcoming battle, in which Hrómundur is gravely wounded and all of his eight brothers fall.

Before the battle, Hrómundur himself has a bad dream, which makes him stay in his tent and not go to fight. This scene closely resembles the corresponding scene in *17HsG*, where Hrómundur only announces that he has had a bad dream and will not participate in the battle, but we do not know the contents of the dream (chapter 13).

hann leggur sig til svefnis, og lætr illa í svefni; at morgni vaknar hann, og blæs mæpilega; þeir bræðr spyrja hann eptir draumom sínom, en hann qvaþst engom segja og man ec ei út fara á þessom degi (B11109, 120v)

He goes to sleep and sleeps badly. The next morning, he wakes up and breathes heavily. His brothers ask him about his dreams, but he says he won't tell anyone, 'and I won't go out today.'

The motif of prophetic dreams is very common in Old Norse literature across various genres, from *Íslendingasögur* to *konungasögur* and *foraldarsögur*, but one of the examples closest to Hrómundur's prophetic dream can be found in chapter 12 of *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar*, a legendary saga and prequel to *Friðþjófs saga hins frækna* (Rafn 1829–30, II 383–459). A significant difference between these two narratives is, however, that Þorsteinn actually describes his dream and provides an interpretation of it, while in both *17HsG* and *19HsG* we have to find out later that the dream was related to the death of Hrómundur's brothers in the battle.

The last occurrence of the motif of bad dreams as an evil omen in *19HsG* is the sequence of Blindur's dreams, which predicts the near death of King Hálfðan.¹¹ In chapter 17 Blindur gives the king an account of his prophetic dreams, but the king misinterprets them all, just as in *17HsG*. The sequence of dreams is not identical to that in *17HsG*. Among the innovations in *19HsG* there is an additional dream, which is presented as follows: *oc þar eptir sá ec yþar betsta drecaskip, mara í miþjo kafi í brimi oc sjóaræði gangi, en allr herinn yþar stóð höfotlaus niþr í eino vatni*' (B11109, 127v) 'And afterwards I saw your best ship submerged in the surf and in the rage of the sea, and your entire army stood headless below in the water'. While there is no corresponding dream of a headless army in *17HsG*, the medieval set of *rímur* of Hrómundur reveals a possible source. There, we can read: *Dreki þinn leiz mér færðr á flóð, / flaut í báru miðri, / höfuðlaus allur herrinn stóð / í heitu vatni niðri* (*Griplur* VI: 25) 'Your ship appeared to me in the open waters, it floated in a middle of a wave, in the burning water below all your headless army stood'.

The absence of this dream from *17HsG* and its presence in *Griplur* indicates that the saga-writer of *19HsG* knew, in addition to *17HsG*, the version of the story presented in the *rímur*. This hypothesis of a relationship between *Griplur* and *19HsG* can be supported by other details that are present only in these two texts. The most striking one is the killing of Hrókur, Hrómundur's dog. Jesch, in her study of *Hrómundar saga* (1984, 90), observed that there is a misunderstanding in *17HsG* of the episode

¹¹ It is worth mentioning that the king of Swedes is called Hading in *17HsG*, but Hálfðan in *19HsG*.

from *Griplur* in which Hrómundur's dog is killed. For some reason the saga-writer of *17HsG* presented Hrókur as a man instead of a dog. *19HsG* does not reproduce the misunderstanding from *17HsG*, but instead follows the tradition derived from the *rimur*. In the *19HsG* we read:

þar hafði Kóngr vetrseto með hyrþ sína, þann vetr, hjá Burgeis nockrom, hann var Gnúði kallaþr, hann gaf Kóngi marga gópa gripi oc sva mönnom hans; hann gaf Hrómundi einn racka, sem var sva vel viti borinn, sem maþr, oc skjótr sem ör (B11109, 114v)

There the king with his army had a winter sojourn with a certain burgess, who was called Gnúði [and who] gave the king and his men many great gifts. He gave Hrómundur a certain dog, which was as intelligent as a man, and fast as an arrow.

2.3 Recurring motifs: Disguise

Another recurring motif that appears in *19HsG* and is also found in *17HsG* is that of *Disguise of man in a woman's dress* (K1836), which is widely known beyond Iceland in the literary traditions of Italy, Ireland and India (Thompson 1955–58). In chapter 8 of *17HsG*, Hrómundur hides at Hagall's house disguised as a woman grinding corn while Blindur searches the house at the request of King Halding. The same motif appears in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, where Helgi, disguised as a servant girl grinding corn, hides at Hagall's place while Blindur looks for him following the orders of King Hundingr (Bugge 1867, 191). The close similarities between these two scenes suggest that the account of *Griplur* (and secondarily also *17HsG*) has been modelled on *Helgakviða* (Jesch 1984, 91–93; Holtmark 1961, 314–18). This motif has been called *Man in danger of life dressed by hostess as woman and set to grinding corn* K521.4.1.3 (Boberg 1966). It appears again in chapter 16 of *19HsG*, where the disguise helps Hrómundur to avoid Blindur, but here it is not certain whether Hrómundur is set to grinding corn or stirring porridge:

Þá segir kerling vit Hrómund nú skalto fara í föt Eldabusko minnar, oc skalto hræra graut til matgorþar, fékk hún honom þá Mistiltein fyrir grautar þvoro, oc mælir með þvörunni má verjast ef á liggr. Litlo síþar qvomo menn Kóngs, oc sögbust vilja betr leita, en fyrr. Hagall segir þeim heimila ransökun, leita þeir nú lengi, oc finna ecki Hrómund at heldr; sáo þeir nú Eldabusku, at hún dró til Möndulinn, oc leit óhyrt til Kóngs manna

Then says the woman to Hrómundur: 'Now you must put on my kitchenmaid's clothes, and you must stir porridge for cooking.' She then gave him Mistilteinn as a ladle and says: 'You can defend yourself with the ladle if necessary.' Shortly afterwards the king's men came and said that they wanted to search

better than before. Hagall says that the house is open to investigation and now they search for a long time and still don't find Hrómundur. Now they saw that the kitchenmaid was drawing the handle of the quern and looking belligerently towards them.

It is worth noting that *19HsG* had already used the same motif earlier in the saga; in one of the additional episodes, which includes an extended description of Vóli's and Bildur's attempts to discredit Hrómundur for King Ólafur. Ólafur is informed by the evil brothers about the frequent visits that Hrómundur pays to his sister Svanhvít and decides to go to Svanhvít's house and confront Hrómundur there (chapter 9). When Svanhvít learns about the imminent arrival of her brother, she hurries to get Hrómundur safely out of her house.

Svanhvít géck at Hrómundi oc mælir nú máttu ecki tefja, því Bróþir minn kémr innan lítils tíma oc vill fanga þic, skalto taca vit qvonn-skrúpa vorum, oc mæta Kóngi vit gjættir, oc ber sængr föt oc hvílo vopir í fangi þér, enn frétti Kónger at Hrómundi skalto segja at hann qvominn sé á fund vorn, oc sé nú at tala vit mic, manot þit þá skilja, en þú skalt þá hitta Föþr þinn, oc tac bræþr þína með þér; síþan tóç Svanhvít ljósgulann stein, oc dró um andlit hans, féck hann þá yfirlit hennar þjónosto meyar; qvaþdi Hrómundr nu hana, en hún kysti hann oc bat heilan fara oc aprt qvoma; for þá Hrómundr í Meyarskrúþan, oc stritapist út með sængrfata baggan á öxlinni, oc qvom þá Kónger á móti stúlko þessari, oc spyr tíþinda, oc hvort at Hrómundi sé þar eþa ei

Svanhvít went to Hrómundur and says: 'You cannot stay here any longer, because my brother will be arriving here soon and he will capture you. You shall take my female clothing and meet the king by the gate, and you shall carry bed linen and blankets in your arms. And when the king asks about Hrómundur you shall say that he came to meet me and now is talking with me. Then you will separate and you shall go and meet your father, and take your brothers with you.' Then Svanhvít took a bright-yellow stone and moved it over his face, which gave him the appearance of her servant girl. Hrómundur greeted her and she kissed him and bade him safe travels and return. Hrómundur left then in the female clothing and struggled out with the bed-linen bundle on his shoulder, and then came the king to meet this girl and asks for news and whether Hrómundur is there or not.

This scene is neither a direct reuse of the corn-grinding scene nor a simple replication of the man in woman's dress motif, since the element of changing clothes is here expanded by a magical (?) transformation of Hrómundur's appearance. The use of the stone in this scene is significant, as it delivers evidence for the generic fluidity of *19HsG*, which builds on traditional legendary saga material, but also freely draws literary inspiration from chivalric sagas (*riddarasögur*).

Magic stones appear in various translated and indigenous *riddarasögur* where, among other functions, they can be used for transformation (D572.5 *Transformation by means of magic stone*) or give invisibility (D1361.2 *Magic stone gives invisibility*). Possibly the closest analogue to the example from *19HsG* can be found in *Gibbons saga*, an Icelandic romance dated to the fourteenth century, in which magic stones appear several times in various functions. For example, Greka passes a magic stone over Gibbon's head to remove his sexual desire and Florentina passes a red stone over Gibbon's head to foresee the future. In particular, a yellow stone is used by a dwarf named Kollur to change Gibbon's appearance when he is about to enter the chambers of Florentina with the intention of raping her.¹² By assigning to Svanhvít the ability to change Hrómundur's appearance by passing a stone over his head, the saga-writer indicates that she must be versed in magic and, consequently, that she plays the same, secondary role in the narrative as the dwarfs and exotic princesses of the *riddarasögur*.¹³

The motif of disguise appears again in chapter 16, which describes Blindur's search of Hagall's house. It is worth recalling that in *17HsG*, Blindur's house is examined only twice. In the first attempt Hrómundur is hidden under a pot, and in the second one Hrómundur is grinding corn disguised as a woman (discussed above). *19HsG* describes four attempts to find Hrómundur. First he is hidden under a pot, next he is set to grinding corn (or stirring porridge) disguised as a woman, and the third time he is disguised as a shepherd who is asked by Haddís to go and collect the sheep. While in disguise, Hrómundur meets Blindur, who fails to recognise him, and in this way Hrómundur again avoids being captured. This is the motif of *Disguise as herdsman* (Boberg K1816.6), but I have been unable to find a scene in the Old Norse literary corpus that closely resembles the

¹² There is some discrepancy between two versions of the saga: in one version, Gibbon seems to be looking at a yellow part of the stone (*lit j þan part steinsins er gulr er*), while in the other, he is looking into a yellow stone (*tekr þá vpp einn stein gulann ad lit og bidr kongsson lyta j hann*), cf. Page (1960, 73–74) and Kalinke (2018).

¹³ It is not always secondary characters however, who use magic stones in saga narratives. In *Nítíða saga*, another Icelandic romance also dated to the fourteenth century, a magic stone is used by the main character, Queen Nítíða, who in order to protect herself uses the magic stone to change the appearance of her servant woman, so that she resembles Nítíða and is kidnapped instead of the queen. The Old Norse text of *Nítíða saga* has been published by Loth (1965), while the Modern Icelandic text together with its English translation has been published by McDonald Werronen (2009). Analysis of the motif of magic stones in *Nítíða saga* appears in McDonald Werronen's monograph (2016).

scene in *19HsG*. In *Víga-Glúms saga*, this motif is used in the scene in which Skúta pretends to be looking for his sheep to avoid Glúmur's men. At the same time, this scene is quite different. Whereas in *Hrómundar saga* it is Haddís who gives Hrómundur clear instructions about how to behave, in *Víga-Glúms saga* the disguise is Skúta's own initiative (Jónas Kristjánsson 1956, 54).¹⁴

2.4 Additional motif: Flying dragon

While the change of Hrómundur's appearance by the use of a magic stone can already be treated as an additional motif introduced in *19HsG*, the last attempt to find Hrómundur in *19HsG* is an even more straightforward addition of material originating outside the *Hrómundar saga* tradition. The last of Blindur's attempts to find Hrómundur fails not because of any disguise, but, it seems, because of Hagall's supernatural abilities.

Gengr nú Hagall á móti þeim at garði út, en er þeir sáu hann varð hann undarlegr í augom þeira, sýndist þeim þá, at Flugdreki sækja at þeim, tóco þeir þá at leita aprt til baka, oc snúa heim leiðis, en Draconinn sókti eptir þeim af meirsta kappi, sýndist þeim hann blása eldi oc eytri, villdo þá sumir bíða hans, en sumir forða sér, varð þat þá fleyrstom fyrir at leita sér undan færslu, varaði þessi adsókn framm at qvöldi,

Now Hagall goes against them out to the yard, and when they saw him, he appeared somewhat strange in their eyes. It seemed to them then, that a flying dragon was hunting them. They started to run away and head back towards home, but the dragon followed them with great eagerness, and it seemed to them as if he was blowing fire and venom. Then some of them wanted to wait for him, but others wanted to escape, and it came to this that most of them decided to flee. The haunting continued until evening.

Neither *17HsG* nor *Griplur* assigns any supernatural abilities to the cottager Hagall, besides his surprising luck in catching a fish that had earlier swallowed Hrómundur's sword. In *19HsG*, we witness the saga-writer again drawing from the stock imagery of Old Norse literature, but using it in slightly different contexts from those we are used to. When flying dragons appear in the Old Norse literary corpus they are usually supposed to be slain by great heroes (Ármann Jakobsson 2010; Cutrer 2012). In *19HsG*, the dragon seems to be an illusion that is somehow generated by Hagall in order to scare the enemies. They do not engage in a fight, perhaps emphasising their inferiority to other, more courageous saga

¹⁴ I would like to thank an anonymous reader of this article for drawing my attention to the comparison with *Víga-Glúms saga*.

characters. Additionally, the appearance of the dragon in *19HsG* clearly draws on romance imagery: the dragon is not only flying, but also spitting venom and fire, features present, for example, in *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar* (Blaisdell 1980) and *Ívens saga* (Blaisdell 1979).

2.5 Additional motif: Yawning

Another scene in *19HsG* absent from both *17HsG* and *Griplur* is the episode when, while Hrómundur is being healed at Hagall and Haddís's cottage, Haddís cannot speak one day owing to the great yawning that suddenly falls upon her. As the saga tells us: *Nockro eptir þetta, þegar Hrómundr tók at verða gróinn sára sinna, sképi þat: kerling tók til at fá sva stóra geispa, at hún qvom varla framm orði fyrir þeim* (B1109, 125v) 'Sometime after this, when Hrómundur was being healed of his wounds, this happens: the woman [Haddís] started to yawn so much that she could barely say a word'. The yawning occurs when Haddís predicts that Blindur is going to reveal Hrómundur's identity and whereabouts to King Hálfðan, which later results in Blindur searching for Hrómundur. Haddís, like many other female saga characters, must possess some supernatural ability to foresee the future, and the act of yawning must be related to this ability. The knowledge of the upcoming danger suddenly falls upon her in the form of the yawning fit. It has been suggested that yawning in Old Norse literature represents inhaling spirits, which provide information about, for example, upcoming danger (Heide 2006).

While it is difficult to identify with certainty the sources of this motif in *19HsG*, yawning appears in various genres of Icelandic literature. In *Hrólfs saga kraka*, one of the most famous legendary sagas, there is a scene in which Heiður, a *völva*, yawns greatly before involuntarily delivering a prophecy regarding the whereabouts of two boys that the evil king attempts to find (Slay 1960, 10; Quinn 1998, 39–40). In *Njáls saga*, probably the best-known saga of Icelanders, the yawning appears in the scene where Svanur senses that Ósvífur is about to attack and announces it while yawning greatly (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1954, 37; Lönnroth 1976, 132). In both cases, yawning is related to some knowledge which can be mediated only through the yawning person. As Quinn observed in her study of Eddic prophecies in the legendary sagas, it is usually female characters that have access to this sort of passive knowledge, which is supposed to be communicated to the main hero and advance his adventures. In *19HsG*, Haddís warns Hrómundur to prepare himself for the visit from Blindur, but the hero does not take any action, and it is again her role to help him to escape.

2.6 Discussion of innovations

The extensive amplifications of the story of *Hrómundur* in *19HsG* establish a good case study for further examination of changing saga style in the early modern and modern period. It is clear that Icelanders continued to compose sagas, but not necessarily following the same principles as their older predecessors. As demonstrated by the opening section of the saga, the language and narrative style of *19HsG* is quite unlike the style of *17HsG*. *19HsG* has a strong narrative thread with elaborated descriptions of events and characters that are quite distinct from the sparse, episodic style of *17HsG*. Even though *17HsG* is also an early modern adaptation of the story, being a product of the seventeenth century, much later date of composition of *19HsG* creates a significant gap.

All of the motifs discussed above, as well as others that can be found in *19HsG* but have not been discussed here, can be grouped into three categories:

1. Repeating motifs derived from *17HsG*;
2. Additional motifs not included in *17HsG* but derived from *Griplur*;
3. Additional motifs originating outside the *Hrómundar saga* tradition.

The richness of additional motifs and episodes that appear in *19HsG* calls for further investigation, not only of their sources but also of the motivations behind their inclusion in the story. While some of the additions are seemingly straightforward, others appear to be more complicated, and these are especially interesting, in that they can inform our understanding of Icelandic mentalities and of the relationship between society and literature. As Jürg Glauser has suggested (1994), the close examination of textual variants in the younger versions of the sagas can be a useful source for the study of changing mentalities in pre-modern Iceland. This also holds true for younger adaptations of older texts. There is great potential for comparative analysis in cases such as the *Hrómundar saga* tradition. It can advance our understanding of the social, political or economical contexts in which subsequent episodes were incorporated into the story and the ways in which the story was rewritten at different points in time.

A promising example of this is an episode in which King Ólafur slaps his sister Svanhvít in the face and calls her names (chapter 9). This episode—absent from both *17HsG* and *Griplur*—is most likely an addition by the saga-writer of *19HsG*. It seems that, in their view, such an act should not have any negative consequences for the king and can perhaps be seen as an expression of the king putting his disobedient sister in her place. Except for the fact that *Hrómundur* is initially reluctant to help the

king because of his poor treatment of Svanhvít (chapter 12), the king's behaviour has no influence on his own fate. Even though Svanhvít is at first offended, she stays loyal to her brother and when she knows that he is about to lose the battle, she persuades Hrómundur to support him. This seems to be an unusual development in the context of the older Icelandic saga literature. In the medieval sagas, when a man slaps a woman in the face, it is taken as a great offence and brings bad luck to the man. Examples of this can be found in, for instance, *Laxdæla saga* (chapter 34) and *Njáls saga* (chapter 48). In *19HsG*, this act does not have any consequences for the man, and this causes us to question whether such behaviour towards a woman would be generally acceptable at the time of the saga's writing.

Conclusions and further research

The present article has provided the first introduction to a hitherto unknown version of the story of Hrómundur Gripsson (or Greipsson), which is related to the lost medieval *Hrómundar saga* (presumably the one cited in connection with the wedding feast in Reykjahólar in 1119), but which is preserved exclusively in nineteenth-century manuscripts. Even though questions concerning the saga's origins are important and will have to be answered in the future, such an in-depth analysis cannot be conducted in this introductory article, in which I have focused exclusively on two aspects of the saga: its transmission in manuscripts and the innovations that appear in this new saga. The analysis of the scribal milieu that produced it reveals that this version of the story can be associated with Northern Iceland in the Skagafjörður and Eyjafjörður areas, with the caveat that the geographical origins of one manuscript (B11109) are uncertain. All the manuscripts of the saga must have been written around 1805–37, but the saga itself might be slightly older.

The analysis of the saga's textual context in extant manuscripts reveals that *19HsG* frequently appears in the same volumes as other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century narratives, such as *Þorsteins saga Geirnefjufóstra* and *Huldar saga hinnar miklu*, which deal with the adventures of legendary Scandinavian heroes. There is a clear need for further study of the individual manuscripts preserving *19HsG* to understand the rationale behind the creation of these artifacts. From the evidence presented, we can assume that the sagas written at a similar time were transmitted together, presumably due to their similarity in style and/or overall aesthetics. There is, however, still a need for further research into the subject of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sagas in general, in order to help us understand the

circumstances of their creation and transmission, as well as their position in the wider context of pre-modern Icelandic literature.

By analysing selected recurring motifs and additional motifs present in *19HsG* but absent from its older counterparts *17HsG* and *Griplur*, the present study has provided insight into the contents and style of this hitherto unknown saga. It has demonstrated that motifs originating in chivalric and legendary traditions were incorporated into the younger saga. The magic stone, flying dragons and prophetic dreams added to the story make *19HsG* closer to traditional chivalric sagas than to typical legendary sagas. It is hoped that this introductory study of some of the younger saga's motifs will encourage future discussion not only of the literary sources of *19HsG* but also those of other younger adaptations of Old Norse sagas.

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Appendix: Plot summary of 19HsG

The story starts by introducing the main characters of the saga: first Ólafur and his court and then Greipur and his family. Ólafur, king of Norway, dwells mainly in Hálógaland, and has two beautiful sisters, Svanhvít and Dagný. There are two deceitful retainers in Ólafur's army, Bildur and Vóli, but Ólafur values them greatly. Greipur lives nearby and is married to Gunnlaug (Vallaug),¹⁵ daughter

¹⁵ There is some textual variation in the manuscripts. While B11109 and L679 preserve the reading 'Vallaug hiet', in L1572 and L2404 we read 'Vallaug hét /:al: Gunnlöð /: móðir hennar (+ var L2404) Brynhildur, dóttir Haka konungs í Skáney' L1572. In 17HsG Hrómundur's mother is called Gunnlöð.

of Hrókur the Black; they have nine sons. Hrómundur is the oldest and most promising of the brothers.

One day Ólafur sets off for a raiding journey with his army, accompanied by two brothers, Kári and Örnúlfur. Kári is introduced as a foster-brother of Hrómundur. They sail towards Sweden and stop by Úlfarsker where the king asks Kári and Örnúlfur to go onto the island and check whether they can see any Vikings on the other side. The brothers take their weapons and, following the king's orders, find six ships in the bay by the cliffs. Kári asks who the leader of this fleet is and Hröngviður answers that he is. They tease and challenge each other, and the brothers return to Ólafur to tell him about the fleet and that they have been challenged to fight the following day. Some of Ólafur's followers get ready for the battle, while the others arm themselves with wooden clubs and hide in the forest. The following day, the battle takes place. Kári and Örnúlfur kill many enemies, but are both killed by Hröngviður.

After the battle, Hröngviður asks Ólafur and his men to surrender. Meanwhile, Ólafur's men who have been hiding in the forest come forward with their wooden clubs. Hrómundur is one of them. He comes forward with his long grey goat-beard and wearing a floppy hat that falls over his eyes, and finds both brothers dead. The king asks who he is, and Hrómundur introduces himself as Kári's foster-brother. Even though the king doubts this statement owing to Hrómundur's advanced age, he suggests that Hrómundur should take revenge on Hröngviður for Kári's death. Hrómundur does so and kills many men in Hröngviður's army, and finally Hröngviður himself. After that, he offers the other men who are still alive the chance to surrender to Ólafur.

The following morning, Hrómundur finds Hröngviður's brother Helgi on board one of the ships he inspects. Helgi tells him he has been wounded during a battle with the Scots two weeks earlier and has not yet recovered. Hrómundur offers to heal him and Helgi, although reluctant at first, eventually accepts the offer while emphasising that he will avenge his brother's death if he gets the chance. After that, Ólafur and his army continue raiding in Sweden.

Now the saga introduces two kings of Sweden, both called Hálfðan, even though they do not play any role at this stage of the saga. Ólafur's army heads to Mánaey where they meet an old man called Máni. Máni asks who they are, and when he hears that they are serving Ólafur, he expresses his discontent that such a man as Ólafur is robbing such a poor fellow as Máni of his property. Hrómundur learns from Máni about Þráinn, the king of Saxland (Valland),¹⁶ who was buried in a grave mound with all his treasures, including a ring, a necklace and a sword. Hrómundur asks for directions to get there and when Máni tells him how to find Þráinn, Hrómundur in return orders Ólafur's men to give Máni back his property.

Now Hrómundur sets off south to find Þráinn's burial mound. After six days of sailing, the fleet arrives at a peninsula covered with thick, dark forest. They anchor the ship and go ashore to look for Þráinn. As they get closer to the mound,

¹⁶ There is some textual variation in the manuscripts. While B11109, L1572, and L2404 preserve the reading Saxland, L670 has the reading 'Valland'.

a terrible smell hits them, but they put masks on their faces and continue to walk until they reach the destination. After four days they manage to make a hole in the mound and see a black berserk, Þráinn, sitting on a golden chair with his treasures around him. Þráinn asks the intruders who dares to break into his mound and who wants to come and fetch the three treasures he has there: the sword *Mistilteinn*, the necklace around his neck and a golden ring. Hrómundur answers that if Kári was alive, he would certainly go to fetch the treasures. After a short conversation with Þráinn, Hrómundur decides to go down into the dark burial mound.

While in the mound, Hrómundur collects some of the treasures and is ready to leave when Þráinn calls him a thief and declares that Hrómundur will not rob him of his property and get out of the mound alive. Hrómundur and Þráinn start to fight and exchange insults. They fight so ferociously that the entire mound shakes and the noises they make scare Hrómundur's companions away from it. After fighting fiercely for some time, to Þráinn's surprise, Hrómundur manages to get hold of the sword *Mistilteinn* and threatens Þráinn with it, asking how many people Þráinn has killed with it. Þráinn answers that he has taken part in a hundred duels and never lost, and that he has killed twenty-four kings. Hrómundur then kills Þráinn without hesitation and burns him on a pyre. After Þráinn's death, it becomes bright in the mound and Hrómundur takes the three treasures, together with other valuable items, and leaves the mound.

His companions are gone when he comes out of the mound, so he sets off to the shore to meet Ólafur and his men and is warmly welcomed. They share the loot among themselves, but Hrómundur keeps the three treasures to himself. Afterwards, they set off back to Norway. They stop on the way and spend the night with a wealthy man called Gnúði, who gives Hrómundur an outstanding dog called Hrókur in exchange for the ring from Þráinn's mound. Vóli becomes very jealous of the dog and, together with Bildur, plans to kill him.

One winter day Ólafur and his men set off on a hunting trip that turns out to be very fruitful thanks to the outstanding performance of Hrómundur's dog. When, after the evening feast following the hunting trip, all of Ólafur's men go to sleep, Vóli and Bildur sneak over to Hrókur and stab him. Hrókur, however, manages to bite Bildur's hand before Vóli cuts off his snout and runs away. At the same time, Hrómundur wakes up and realises what has happened, but Blindur and Vóli manage to run away. Hrómundur is very upset about the death of his dog, but does not share the sad news with anybody. The following day when Ólafur sets out hunting again, Hrómundur does not join him. Ólafur enquires about Hrómundur's whereabouts and learns that he has stayed at home sick. Vóli, however, dismisses this information. He says that he is probably not so sick and is most likely just spending time as usual with Svanhvít—King Ólafur's sister—since she loves him very much. When they return, Ólafur tells Hrómundur that the trip was not as successful this time. He then learns that Hrókur was killed the previous night, and that this is why Hrómundur did not participate in the trip. The saga then turns to Greipur, Hrómundur's father, who summons Hrómundur to visit him. When Hrómundur visits his father, Greipur tells him about a bad dream he has had recently and advises his son to avoid Vóli and Bildur.

Not long after, Hrómundur and his brothers visit Svanhvít and Hrómundur asks her to interpret his father's dream. She says that the dream means that Hrómundur and his brothers should stay away from Ólafur because he is under the influence of deceitful people, and that they should rather go and stay with their father. Hrómundur says that he prefers to continue to visit Svanhvít, as long as she agrees to it. Afterwards, Svanhvít tells Hrómundur one of the dreams she has had recently, and this is again a prophetic dream that does not predict a bright future for Hrómundur and his brothers. Hrómundur then gives her a ring and goes back to Ólafur. Shortly after that, Vóli and Bildur tell the king that Hrómundur is seeing Svanhvít frequently. Ólafur is not happy about this and asks them to tell him the next time Hrómundur visits Svanhvít.

Another day when Hrómundur is spending time with Svanhvít, Bildur and Vóli go to the king and tell him about it. The king decides to investigate the matter himself and sets off towards his sister's residence. When Dagný sees Ólafur approaching, she hurries to warn Svanhvít. Svanhvít tells Hrómundur that her brother is coming to capture him and he must run away pretending to be a servant girl. She tells him that if the king asks him about Hrómundur, he should tell him that Hrómundur is still with Svanhvít, and afterwards Hrómundur and his brothers have to run away to their father. She takes a yellow stone and passes it over Hrómundur's face to change his appearance into that of a servant woman. Ólafur meets the disguised Hrómundur and enquires about Hrómundur. The 'girl' tells him that Hrómundur is in Svanhvít's bedroom. Ólafur hurries into Svanhvít's house but does not find Hrómundur. He gets very angry with Svanhvít, they argue, and Ólafur slaps her face and calls her names. Meanwhile, Hrómundur finds his brothers, changes out of the disguise and tells them that they should go to Greipur. They do so and are warmly welcomed by their father.

Now the story turns to Sweden where the Hálfðans collect their army and send twelve men as envoys to Ólafur to summon him to a battle on the frozen lake Vænir. The envoys deliver the message straightforwardly, saying that if Ólafur does not have the courage to fight, he is a Norwegian goat who has horns but no marrow. Ólafur accepts the challenge and, in the face of the upcoming battle, finds Hrómundur and his brothers' absence unfortunate. Meanwhile, Hrómundur visits Svanhvít and discusses whether he should help Ólafur. They eventually agree that it is time for Bildur and Vóli to demonstrate their skills in battle and that Hrómundur should stay at home.

When the envoys return to the Hálfðans, the Swedish kings assemble a great army and head to Vænir. Hröngviður's brother Helgi is with them, accompanied by his mistress Kára, a shape-shifter who appears sometimes in the shape of a swan and sometimes in the shape of a dragon. At the same time, Ólafur, followed by Bildur and Vóli, also gets ready for the battle. When they arrive at Vænir, the Swedish army is already there. During the first day of battle, Ólafur loses a third of his army. On the second day, Helgi fights Bildur and kills him, while Ólafur fights one of the Hálfðans and kills him. Meanwhile, Vóli is nowhere to be found and everyone assumes that both brothers are dead.

After great losses on the first day of battle, Ólafur sends one of his men back to Norway to request reinforcements. When the envoy arrives in Norway and gathers the army, Svanhvít learns that her brother is most likely about to be defeated. She sets off to Hrómundur to ask him to help her brother. Hrómundur is reluctant at first, saying that Ólafur called her names and slapped her face, but he eventually agrees to help Ólafur. Svanhvít gives Hrómundur a shield to protect him and a garter bound around his wrist to make his blows more accurate. Hrómundur's brothers decide to join him because they cannot imagine sitting at home while Hrómundur risks his life.

When Hrómundur and his brothers arrive at Vænr, they set up their tents on the other side of the lake so Ólafur does not know of their arrival. The following day when Hrómundur wakes up, he declines to join the battle, as he has had bad dreams the previous night. His brothers, however, participate in the battle. They fight forcefully and kill many Swedes. Helgi is also in the battle and Kára flies over the battlefield singing magical chants and distracting Ólafur's men. Thanks to her singing, Helgi is able to kill all of Hrómundur's brothers.

The same evening, Hrómundur learns about his brothers' deaths, and the following morning he decides to join the battle. During the battle, Hrómundur kills Helgi, who, to his own disadvantage, has inadvertently killed Kára, bringing him bad luck and, eventually, death. Hrómundur fights long into the evening, killing many Swedes. After the battle on his way back to his tent, Hrómundur sees a man carving runes on the ice and he realises that it is Vóli, the killer of his dog. Hrómundur notices that the entire lake is covered in runes and looks like a written book. Hrómundur tries to attack Vóli, but he strikes so hard at Hrómundur that Hrómundur drops Mistilteinn from his hand. When the sword falls on the ice, the ice breaks and the sword sinks to the bottom of the lake. Even though Hrómundur has lost the sword, he fights Vóli and manages to break his neck. Afterwards, Hrómundur sits down on the ice, badly wounded, and regrets not listening to Svanhvít's advice, because of which he has lost eight brothers and the sword.

After the battle, when Hrómundur is almost dead from the cold and his wounds, a man named Hagall comes to pick him up, followed by Ólafur's sisters Svanhvít and Dagný, who have summoned him for help. They take Hrómundur to Hagall's house and heal him there. Svanhvít stitches Hrómundur's belly while Hagall and his wife Haddís take care of Hrómundur's recovery afterwards.

While lodging with Hagall, Hrómundur asks the couple about the result of the battle between Ólafur and Hálfðan. He learns that the kings have either agreed on peace or paused the war until next year. Here Blindur is introduced for the first time, when Hrómundur hears from Haddís that King Hálfðan wants to find out who has killed Helgi, and he promises Blindur great treasures if he finds the killer. One day, Hagall goes fishing and catches the biggest fish he has ever caught. He comes home, guts the fish, and finds in its belly the sword Mistilteinn. Haddís laughs when she sees it, takes the sword and goes to Hrómundur, asking whether he recognises it. Hrómundur is very happy to see the sword and is very grateful to Hagall and Haddís for their care and help. When Hrómundur's wounds are almost

healed, Haddís starts to yawn so much that she can barely talk, but she manages to tell Hrómundur that King Hálfðan is probably about to talk to Blindur. The same evening, Blindur talks to Hálfðan and tells him he thinks he knows who has killed Helgi and where he is. The king orders him to find him.

Early the following morning, Blindur sets off to Hagall's house with thirty men to look for Hrómundur. They search in every corner but cannot find Hrómundur because Haddís has hidden him under a big pot. Blindur is not satisfied with the results of the search as he is convinced that Hrómundur is there, and he decides to go back and look for him again. This time, to hide Hrómundur, Haddís tells Hrómundur to put on the clothes of a servant girl and stir porridge with *Mistilteinn*, which is turned into a ladle. When Bildur and his men examine Hagall's house again, they do not find anyone but a shy servant girl. They turn around and leave the house, but Blindur is still not satisfied and tells his men that they have to search a third time. Now Hrómundur is told by Haddís to take a flute and go to collect the sheep from the pasture. When Hrómundur goes there, he meets Blindur and his men but they do not recognise him, disguised as a shepherd. They ask him whether he knows anything about Hrómundur's whereabouts, but he tells them that he is probably gone. They search again but do not find him, and Blindur realises that Hrómundur must have been the man with the flute; therefore, he orders them to turn around again. This time Hagall is irritated by the behaviour of the unwanted visitors and meets them in front of his house. He seems strange to Blindur and his companions and it seems to them that a flying dragon is about to attack them. They turn around and head back home, but the dragon follows them, and it seems to be blowing fire and poison. They come back to the king and tell him about the events of the day and their failure to find Hrómundur. The winter passes without any further events.

In the spring, Blindur comes to Hálfðan and tells him that he has had strange dreams over the winter, and asks him whether the king would like to interpret them. The king agrees and Blindur tells his dreams, but the king misinterprets all of them. In the final dream, Blindur has seen a golden ring set on the king's neck and the king riding on a lazy horse. The king asks Blindur to interpret this dream and Blindur answers that the old and lazy horse symbolises the gallows, while the ring on the neck symbolises the infamy of the noose, meaning that neither of them has many days left.

Now the story turns to Hrómundur who, fully healed, leaves Hagall's residence and heads off to his father. He tells his father about the death of his brothers, so that both his father's and Svanhvít's prophetic dreams have been fulfilled. Meanwhile, Ólafur collects his army and wants to attack Hálfðan again, even though the kings agreed on peace after the death of Helgi and the brothers Vóli and Bildur. Ólafur enquires about Hrómundur and his brothers, and one of his men tells him that they took part in the battle on *Vænir*, that Helgi killed Hrómundur's brothers, but that Hrómundur himself survived and is staying with his father. Ólafur asks his men whether they want to have Hrómundur as their leader, and if they do, they should summon him to join Ólafur's army. He sends envoys to Hrómundur, but Hrómundur rejects the offer owing to his previous bad experiences with Ólafur.

Ólafur's envoys tell Ólafur about Hrómundur's answer. Ólafur is disappointed and is not sure about the success of the attack on Hálfðan without Hrómundur's help, but decides to lead his army to Sweden anyway. Meanwhile, Svanhvít sends for Hrómundur and asks him to visit her as soon as possible. Hrómundur arrives shortly after that and Svanhvít tells him that now the time has come for Hrómundur to pay the debt he owes for her help and for the accommodation at Hagall's place. She tells him that she wants him to join her brother on the journey to Sweden and that they should go together to her brother to talk about it. They are well received at Ólafur's court, but Hrómundur remains reserved towards the king. Svanhvít tells her brother that he should compensate Hrómundur for all the evil he has suffered, and Ólafur agrees to this. Hrómundur agrees to join Ólafur on one condition, that he can marry Svanhvít if it is her wish. Svanhvít expresses her wish to marry Hrómundur and they all agree that Hrómundur will provide military services to Ólafur in return for Svanhvít's hand, and that the wedding will take place after they return from Sweden.

The following morning Hrómundur collects the army and plans the attack on Hálfðan. They set off towards Sweden, robbing and pillaging many towns on the way until they arrive at Uppsala, where Hálfðan is temporarily staying. They take Hálfðan by surprise and Hrómundur kills him. After their return to Hálogaland, the preparations for the wedding start. Hrómundur sends for his father and other relatives, while Svanhvít sends for Hagall and Haddís. Hrómundur captures Blindur and, at the request of Hagall and Haddís, Blindur is hanged. Here Blindur's real name, Baniss (Banvís), is revealed for the first time. Finally, the great wedding feast takes place and Hrómundur and Svanhvít live long and happily afterwards. They have many children and, according to one of the manuscripts preserving the saga, among their descendants was Ingólfur, the first settler of Iceland.

HOW INDIGENOUS ARE THE INDIGENOUS *RIDDARASÖGUR*?

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A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO while writing a chapter about legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*) and romance sagas (*riddarasögur*) for a Spanish-language introduction to the medieval Nordic world, I was presented with a problem when trying to explain the common distinction between those *riddarasögur* which are based on Continental translations and those which tell similar stories but appear to be original compositions written in Iceland.¹ Some of the English-language texts which I relied upon referred to these two groups of texts as ‘translated *riddarasögur*’ and ‘indigenous *riddarasögur*’. *Riddarasögur* can easily be translated into Spanish as *sagas caballerescas*, *sagas de caballeros* or *romances nórdicos/islandeses*, but, having at one time lived in Colombia, I was well aware that to translate ‘indigenous’ as *indígenas* would be misleading if not insensitive. In Colombia and other parts of Latin America the adjective *indígena* is used in collocations such as *comunidades indígenas* ‘indigenous communities’ to refer to groups of people who are often marginalised and subjected to political violence. Not only might the translation *sagas caballerescas indígenas* raise eyebrows and lead to confusion, but such a translation might misleadingly equate the cultural production of the late Middle Ages in Iceland with the very political issue of indigenous cultural production and its preservation in the face of long-standing oppression. To avoid this problem, I used the adjective *autéctonos*, resulting in *los romances autóctonos* ‘the autochthonous *riddarasögur*’.²

While the term ‘indigenous’ has a particular valency in Spanish-language writing and particularly in a Latin American context, developments within the field of indigenous rights mean that in recent decades it has increasingly come to be more loaded with associations also in English-language scholarship, which is the focus of this article.³ The aim here is to show

¹ The chapter now exists as Lavender (2017).

² It should be noted that while ‘autochthonous’ sounds rather odd used in this context in English, the register of its use in Spanish is somewhat less grandiose.

³ The immediate motivation for this article was a comment about my own usage made by Juliane Egerer, to whom I am grateful. I have used the term ‘indigenous *riddarasögur*’ in my own published research, for example in the introductions to

how the term ‘indigenous’ came to be used to categorise a generic grouping in the field of Old Norse–Icelandic studies followed by an attempt to assess how appropriate it is in such a context, my conclusion being that it is best avoided. Thus the first section presents the history of the usage of ‘indigenous’ as a qualifier within the study of medieval Scandinavian literature, while the second section looks at how ‘indigenous’ came to be an important definitional term in international law and human rights, i.e. the background of its present technical usage for social scientists and scholars of indigenous cultural production. The second section moves away from Old Norse–Icelandic studies but will I hope be of use for scholars within our field who are unfamiliar with these foundational debates over definitions of indigeneity. In the third and final section I consider how appropriate ‘indigenous’ is as a term for talking about late medieval (and early modern) Icelandic literary production. What problems might arise from its use in such contexts and what alternatives might exist?

The History of the Usage of ‘indigenous *riddarasögur*’

It is possible to find numerous examples in scholarly literature from the last few decades of the word ‘indigenous’ being applied as a generic descriptor to works which show the influence of Continental romance literature but which cannot clearly be identified as translations of any known Continental romance. Such works tend to be assigned to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (although many later examples also exist) and are distinguished from those works from the thirteenth century which are more obviously translations.⁴ The phenomenon of calling such works ‘indigenous’ seems to be unique to anglophone scholarship, with no similar problem in work written in other languages. I thus start here with a brief summary, for comparison’s sake, of terminology from a handful of other relevant languages. This forms a preface to the lengthier discussion of English-language research.

Considering the Scandinavian languages first, in Icelandic the term *lygisögur* is frequently used to describe the type of sagas being discussed here, even if the association with *lygi* ‘lies’ has evoked objections from a number of scholars.⁵ The recent critical companion to Old Norse genre also

translations of *Þjalar-Jóns saga* (Lavender 2015, 73) and of *Jarlmanns saga og Hermanns* (Lavender 2020, 34).

⁴ There are, of course, borderline cases, such as works which might be translations of a now lost source.

⁵ Anatoly Liberman has recently argued that *lygi* in Old Norse means not ‘lie’ but rather ‘a story based on questionable evidence’ and that *lygisaga* consequently

includes the alternative *frumsamdar riddarasögur* ‘original *riddarasögur*’/ ‘*riddarasögur* which are original compositions’ (Bampi et al. 2020, 314). In Danish-language scholarship, the second edition of Finnur Jónsson’s *De oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, despite being over 1500 pages long, reveals an attitude so unimpressed with these works that the author fails to characterise them other than as *efterligninger* ‘imitations’ (1920–24, II 952) and *lygisögur* because they are *opdigtede* ‘made up’ (1920–24, III 98).⁶ More recently, however, Annette Lassen, perhaps following Sigurður Nordal (1943, 180), has mentioned them as *islandske riddersagaer* (2017, 10). In Swedish Daniel Sävborg prefers to use the term *inhemska riddarasögur* (2007, 558), the adjective *inhemsk* being a word which in certain contexts, mostly biological, can be translated into English as ‘endemic’. Henrik Bagerius, on the other hand, refers to *isländska riddarsagor* (2009, 73). Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen referred to these sagas as *de originale riddersagaer* (1969, 179) in his Norwegian-language (*bokmål*) entry on the *riddarasögur* in the *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder*.

In German-language scholarship *Märchensagas* is one of the preferred terms, linking this genre to *Märchen*, commonly translated into English as ‘fairy tales’. This term was used by Kurt Schier (1970, 93) when he explained that the works often called

‘jüngere (nichtübersetzte) *Riddarasögur*’, stehen nach meiner Auffassung in so enger Verbindung zu den Märchensagas, daß sie besser mit ihnen als mit den Übersetzungen behandelt werden sollten.

‘younger (non-translated) *riddarasögur*’ are, as I see it, so closely related to the Märchensagas that they are better dealt with alongside them than with the translations.

The term was subsequently popularised by Jürg Glauser’s work on the genre where he too provides a definition, namely that Märchensagas are *jene Gruppe von originalen Prosaerzählungen, die sich um 1300 als eine Art Mischform aus Rittersaga und Vorzeitsaga zu entwickeln begann* ‘that group of original prose narratives which started to develop as a kind of mixed form of the *riddarasögur* [i.e. translated chivalric sagas] and *fornaldarsögur* around 1300’ (1983, 10–11). Note however that Astrid

is not a pejorative term but rather refers to a tale which ‘could not be confirmed by witness reports’ (2018, 42, 61). See Lönnroth (2020, 404), however, who expresses doubt concerning Liberman’s interpretation.

⁶ See also Jón Helgason who mentions *opdigtede riddersagaer* and *lygisögur* (1954, 217–18). Finnur Jónsson and Jón Helgason’s disdain for this genre is closely connected with the Icelandic nationalism of their time and the associated elevation of the *Íslendingasögur*.

van Nahl, while familiar with Schier's definition, preferred *originale Riddarasögur* (1981).

As for romance languages, I have already mentioned my own attempts at rendering the generic label in Spanish. In Italian, Massimiliano Bampi has translated *riddarasögur* as *saghe dei cavalieri* 'sagas of knights' (2014, 90) and divided such works up into *tradotte* 'translated' and *originali* 'original'. In French, Régis Boyer refers to these sagas in his *Histoire des littératures scandinaves* as *semi-créations autochtones, dites lygisögur (sagas mensongères)* 'autochthonous semi-creations, called *lygisögur* (lying sagas)' (1996, 52). In none of these European languages do we find a generic qualifier in use which has a similar valency to 'indigenous'.

Switching now to the main focus, namely English-language studies of *riddarasaga* material, Guðbrandur Vigfússon takes pride of place as an early pioneer who discussed 'fictitious Sagas composed by Icelanders out of incidents occurring in the Romances, bearing the same relation to these as the *Skroksögur* [i.e. *skröksögur*] do to the genuine *Islendinga Sögur*' (1878, cxxxvi). It seems that Guðbrandur Vigfússon had no simple term to describe these works, but some kind of consensus appears in the early twentieth century. This is principally exemplified by Henry Goddard Leach, who says of those romances which are not translations that 'we consign [them] to the limbo of *lygisögur*, "lying sagas"' (1921, 163), and Margaret Schlauch, who talks of '*riddarasögur* (knightly tales translated or imitated from foreign tongues)' (1934, 12–13) but also 'the genuine romantic sagas in which foreign influence is strongest, the *lygisögur*' (1934, 16). The *lygisögur* are only 'genuine' romances, however, when juxtaposed with the *fornaldarsögur*, which Schlauch does not consider to be romances in any sense. At this stage 'indigenous' is not part of scholarly technical vocabulary.

In 1957 Stefan Einarsson was still using the same terminology, referring to the '*lygi sögur*', normally written thus in his English-language *A History of Icelandic Literature* (1957, 162), although also provided with a blunt translation: 'Lying Stories'. He uses the term in a way which does not correspond one-to-one with the category of 'indigenous *riddarasögur*'—a recurrent approach in scholarship—since it designates not only those sagas primarily drawing inspiration from translated romance but also a number of *fornaldarsögur* of a more lighthearted and less tragic tenor. The first of the two subgroups, however, he also refers to as 'Icelandic romances of chivalry' (1957, 164), and points out that while the *fornaldarsaga*-type narratives use both native motifs and style, the romances use only the native style. 'Native' here is a word which serves many of the same functions as 'indigenous' as used by later authors.

In 1971 the first International Saga Conference took place in Edinburgh with follow-ups at intervals of two and subsequently every three years. The proceedings of the first two conferences show a general absence of papers concerning *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*.⁷ At most we have a passing reference, as for example in Patricia M. Wolfe's contribution to the second conference, held in Reykjavík, where *lygisögur* are mentioned (1973, 8). This changed, however, in the fourth and fifth conferences, held in Munich in 1979 and Toulon in 1982, for which the themes were 'The Legendary Sagas' and 'Les sagas de chevaliers'. In the fourth conference both Astrid Bucher-Van Nahl and Jürg Glauser discussed generic questions concerning the relationship of the *fornaldarsögur* to the Icelandic *riddarasögur*, and Andrew Hamer analysed a particular example of a *riddarasaga* which straddles the divide between translated and original, *Mágus saga jarls*. Bucher-Van Nahl and Glauser have their own preferred terms in German (as mentioned already) while Hamer does not use the term 'indigenous'.

Such is not the case however in the preprints of the fifth saga conference in Toulon.⁸ It is here that, for the first time, we come across the term 'indigenous' used in relation to the *riddarasögur* composed in Iceland, where in Marianne E. Kalinke's contribution 'indigenous' appears on eight occasions, for example in 'indigenous riddarasögur' and 'indigenous Icelandic riddarasögur' (1985a, 79, 83). Other terms, 'native riddarasögur' and 'Icelandic riddarasögur', are also used for such works, but 'indigenous' plays a specific role in the argumentation. Kalinke's main aim is to show that any sharp division drawn between *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* is problematic, since examples of both genres have much in common. The *fornaldarsögur*, said to be indigenous in origin (1985a, 78), were used as a source by the authors of the Icelandic *riddarasögur*: 'Icelanders also drew on indigenous traditions for their romances' and 'the translated *riddarasögur* were modified so as to evolve into an indigenous genre' (1985a, 86). Thus, it is not just because they were written in Iceland that they were 'indigenous' but also because they contain an admixture of elements from preexisting Icelandic literary material.

While other scholars, such as Stefan Einarsson as mentioned above, had seen an affinity between Icelandic *riddarasögur* and certain *fornaldarsögur*, Kalinke is the first person to have stated an argument in these particular

⁷ It is worth noting that papers on *riddarasögur* were not ruled out by the themes, which were 'The Icelandic Sagas and Western Literary Tradition' and 'The Sagas and Society'.

⁸ The conference proceedings can be viewed at <http://www.sagaconference.org/SC05/SC05.html>.

terms and to have used this particular language to describe the development of the original *riddarasögur*. The conference took place in 1982 and the proceedings were published in 1985, and in the latter year, and those following, additional influential works were to appear from her pen which would establish the ‘indigenous *riddarasögur*’ as a term for the genre. Kalinke and Mitchell’s *Bibliography of Old Norse–Icelandic Romances* appeared in 1985 and does not mention ‘indigenous *riddarasögur*’. In the same year, however, Carol Clover and John Lindow’s *Old Norse–Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide* appeared, with its chapter on ‘Norse Romance (*Riddarasögur*)’ by Kalinke (1985b). There the word ‘indigenous’ is used in connection with *riddarasögur* and Icelandic romance around forty times as part of a groundbreaking call for serious scholarly attention to be paid to such works. The term was subsequently given further support by two short articles in reference works, the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (Kalinke 1988) and *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia* (Kalinke 1993). When one considers that these latter works have been reference tools for a whole generation of Anglophone scholars, the subsequent prevalence of ‘indigenous’ as a generic term is comprehensible.

An example of familiarity with the term can be seen in Matthew Driscoll’s monograph, *The Unwashed Children of Eve*, which appeared just over a decade after Kalinke introduced it. There Driscoll alludes to ‘indigenous *riddarasögur* (“chivalric sagas”), native imitations of the translations, chiefly Norwegian, of French chivalric romances and related material’ (1997, vii).⁹ Yet while Driscoll reproduces the term, he does not wholeheartedly embrace it. His contribution on these texts in *A Companion to Old Norse–Icelandic Literature and Culture* (2005) is entitled ‘Late Prose Fiction (*lygisögur*)’. The return to *lygisögur* as a generic designation is defended by its being attested in the medieval period and in spite of its seemingly pejorative import, while ‘original romance’, ‘indigenous romance’ and ‘Icelandic romance’ are said to serve only ‘reasonably well’ (2005, 191). *Lygisögur* here, as elsewhere, is an inclusive category, embracing the subcategories of ‘indigenous *riddarasögur*’, ‘the group of *fornaldarsögur* referred to as *Abenteuersagas*’, ‘adaptations of continental material for which there is no direct source’ and ‘younger, post-medieval romances’ (2005, 193).

⁹ Driscoll also discusses ‘original Icelandic romances, i.e. works similar in theme and structure to the translated romances, but not based directly on any continental models . . . These younger Icelandic compositions are also generally, if somewhat confusingly, known as *riddarasögur*—often with the qualifying adjectives “indigenous” or “original”’ (1997, 3).

Kalinke has continued to publish prolifically on the subject of Icelandic romance, and still uses the term ‘indigenous’, for example in her most recent monograph, *Stories Set Forth with Fair Words* (2017, ix ‘indigenous *riddarasögur*’, x ‘indigenous romances’). In other recent works the ‘translated’ / ‘indigenous’ *riddarasögur* dichotomy is also common. Stefka G. Eriksen’s chapter on ‘Courtly Literature’ in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas* (2017) refers to ‘Norse chivalric sagas’ (62), ‘Icelandic *riddarasögur*’ (68), ‘Icelandic chivalric sagas’ (61) and ‘Icelandic romances’ (61), but also to ‘indigenous *riddarasögur*’ (61, 64), ‘indigenous chivalric sagas’ (62) and ‘indigenous Icelandic chivalric sagas’ (60).

Another recent example is the *Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre* (Bampi et al. 2020, 369). There, ‘indigenous’ appears nine times (‘indigenous romance’, ‘indigenous courtly literature’ and, most often, ‘indigenous *riddarasögur*’), in chapters by six separate authors as well as in the introduction written by two of the editors. It is made clear that this is not just a descriptive term for a characteristic of certain sagas but a fully-fledged generic designation, hence its inclusion in the ‘Annotated Taxonomy of Genres’ section as ‘Romances, Indigenous / Native’ (314).¹⁰ The reason for highlighting this volume in particular is that it represents the most recent and most authoritative discussion of genre in Old Norse literature and one which will be a key point of reference for many years to come. The fact that the term ‘indigenous’ is used frequently, fairly consistently and without any discussion of problematic aspects associated with its use is an unfortunate oversight. The same can be said of Shaun F. D. Hughes’s (2021) review article of ‘contemporary research on the *riddarasögur*’, which uses ‘indigenous *riddarasögur*’ throughout and appeared while this article was being written.

The decision of certain writers to continue using this term is all the more worth interrogating since not all English-language works about this genre refer to them as ‘indigenous’. Jürg Glauser refrains from using the term when writing in English, and Geraldine Barnes completely avoids using it in *The Bookish Riddarasögur*, preferring ““original” or “Icelandic” *riddarasögur*” (2014, 9). Sheryl McDonald Werronen, likewise, in her recent study of *Nítíða saga*, opts for ““Icelandic” or “Late Medieval Icelandic” romances” (2016, 18), stating that she ‘tried to avoid referring to the texts I discuss as “indigenous / native Icelandic romance” and “popular romance”, as I feel these are potentially problematic terms’ (2016, 18).

¹⁰ See also the following: ‘such genres as the *fornaldarsögur* and the indigenous *riddarasögur*’ (Bampi et al. 2020, 25–26).

She does not explain why they are potentially problematic, but I will do so here, at least with regard to the first term. Regarding the viability of these alternative designations, I shall return to a discussion of them in the conclusion. Before that, however, it is necessary to consider the semantics of ‘indigenous’ more generally.

The Use of ‘Indigenous’ in International Law and Human Rights Activism

‘Indigenous’ has, of course, a history of its own long before its conscription into Old Norse–Icelandic literary studies. The Oxford English Dictionary gives the primary meaning of ‘indigenous’ as ‘born or produced naturally in a land or region; native or belonging naturally to (the soil, region, etc.)’ and notes that in this sense the word is ‘used primarily of aboriginal inhabitants or natural products’.¹¹ The term is derived from Late Latin *indigenus -a -um*, and a cognate form, *indígena*, had already established itself in Spanish well before becoming available to Anglophone audiences, first appearing in a Spanish-language dictionary in 1492.¹² In an English-language context the introduction of the word is generally credited to Sir Thomas Browne (1605–82). One of the earliest attestations is in Browne’s work, *Pseudodoxia epidemica* (1646), in a chapter entitled ‘Of the Blackness of Negroes’. There he introduces the adjective when discussing the many people of African descent in colonial Latin America in order to make a distinction: they ‘are not indigenous or proper natives of America’ (1658, 400). It is a sad irony that one of the first uses in English of a word which has come to be so important in defending the rights of marginalised peoples is in a context where it serves to further dispossess people who are already the victims of cruel oppression.

‘Indigenous’ is thus, early on, used particularly of the indigenous peoples of South America, and this particular association has remained strong. Nevertheless, ‘indigenous’ as a term remained rather recondite, with ‘Indian’ being more commonly used in English. In fact, it was only in the twentieth century that ‘indigenous’, and the associated noun ‘indigeneity’, became a term of significance for a number of peoples around the world who had been the victims of systematic oppression by state apparatuses.

At the present time one of the most important documents to provide a definition of indigeneity is the International Labour Organization conven-

¹¹ A secondary ‘transferred or figurative’ meaning is ‘inborn, innate, native’, dissociated from questions of land or region.

¹² Ramírez Zavala (2011) discusses early dictionary appearances of *indígena*, meaning ‘native of a place’. In Spanish it also became a synonym specifically for peoples native to the Americas after the second decade of the nineteenth century.

tion no. 169 (1989) (hereafter ILO 169).¹³ The ILO, established in 1919 and becoming a specialised agency of the United Nations in 1946, works, according to their website, ‘to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all men and women’.¹⁴ Historically, the ILO became involved in indigenous peoples’ rights after Latin American delegates pushed for special protections for indigenous peoples as a subgroup of the working population. While the ILO’s focus was principally economic, the outcome of their engagement ended up being much more broadly conceptualised, thus ‘the concerns of the ILO instruments on indigenous and tribal peoples with equality of treatment, basic protection against arbitrary administrative procedures, protection of the land base which is their fundamental economic resource, vocational and literacy training, and social security and health are all closely related to the ILO’s core concerns’ (Swepston 1990, 681). ILO 169, as one of the instruments referred to in the quotation, while not free from criticism, has remained relevant up to the present day. In a special issue of *The International Journal of Human Rights* it is stated that ILO 169, despite being thirty years old, continues to be relevant since it is ‘the only international binding treaty on indigenous peoples’ rights’ and ‘the only legally-binding international instrument open for ratification that is exclusively dedicated to the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples’ (Larsen and Gilbert 2020, 83).

The wording found in ILO 169, Article 1, 1, makes it reasonably clear to whom the convention is applicable and thus serves as a definition:

peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.¹⁵

¹³ ILO 169 was drawn up by a committee of experts, most of whom were not indigenous. Indigenous peoples were involved in the overall process, however, since the ILO provided opportunities for NGOs representing indigenous and tribal peoples to speak to the Committee and the plenary sessions of the relevant ILO conferences (Swepston 1990, 686). Indigenous peoples were also able to influence decision-making through their involvement in trade unions representing workers at the ILO.

¹⁴ See ‘About the ILO’ <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/lang--en/index.htm>.

¹⁵ See https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::N0::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169 .

It is immediately clear that this technical definition goes beyond the dictionary definition in that it is contrastive. Being native to a region does not fully lead to one's conforming to the political category of 'indigenous'; rather one must be native to a region which has been colonised by non-native people or undergone a process of superimposed state-formation. Thus indigenous identity is affirmed in contrast to a non-indigenous state apparatus, or some such. In addition, 'cultural . . . institutions', among which literary traditions may be imagined to figure, are characteristic of indigenous peoples. Indigenous literature, by this definition, may be a marker of the presence of indigenous peoples.

ILO 169 was adopted in 1989 and came into force in 1991.¹⁶ After thirty years it has still only been ratified by 23 of the 187 ILO member states. Fifteen of the countries which have ratified ILO 169 are found in Latin America, while only five European countries are on that list. Iceland, which is a member state of the ILO, is not among them. Among the mainland Nordic countries, Denmark and Norway have ratified ILO 169, while Sweden and Finland have not.

It is important to highlight the fact that while the ILO definition has a particularly significant status, the United Nations is also a major actor in the question of indigenous rights. They have no legally binding definition of their own, but a working definition is that produced by José R. Martínez Cobo, one-time Special Rapporteur to the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, in the conclusions to his *Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Peoples*, published in 1987. Cobo's definition refers to

peoples and nations . . . which have a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, [and] consider themselves distinct from other sectors of societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them

and also mentions that 'They form at present non-dominant sectors of society' (1989, paragraph 379). In 1982, a few years before the publication of Cobo's report, the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations was established (Sanders 1989, 407), a decisive step leading to the adoption by the UN General Assembly in 2007 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Indigenous struggles existed prior to ILO 169 and the United Nations' adoption of indigenous rights as an issue, but these developments have meant that 'scattered disenfranchised groups have coalesced into a broad-

¹⁶ See the link in n. 15.

based, transnational social movement' and many groups have come 'to embrace a new identity as "indigenous"' (Hodgson 2002, 1040). Advocacy groups and NGOs have also played important roles. But the encompassing definitions provided by transnational actors continue to be debated and are by no means universally accepted. Julia Bello-Bravo (2019, 111), for example, discusses the problems associated with grounding indigeneity in trauma and redress: does such a definition exclude uncontacted peoples and those living in voluntary isolation? And does one cease to be indigenous once adequate reparation has been made for past suffering? Additional objections and qualifications concerning definitions exist as well as critiques of the indigenous peoples movement as a whole due to its 'essentialist ideologies' (Kuper 2003, 395),¹⁷ but pro-indigenous activism and advocacy continue unabated.

Nevertheless, the legal definitions discussed here now form the backbone of discussions concerning indigenous peoples within the social sciences, in particular anthropology and ethnography, as well as in humanist circles where indigenous art and literature is studied. While some anthropologists and activists are currently looking for ways to sidestep and thus move beyond legal debates over the definition of 'indigenous', that is not possible within the aims of this article. Thus the definitions provided by ILO 169 and Cobo will provisionally serve our purposes too, always bearing in mind that such strategic identity categories will continue to develop in the future. Legal definitions are not ideal—as Bello-Bravo points out, 'if attempts to define indigeneity in legal terms habitually and problematically sort and shoehorn a variety of peoples into its Procrustean bed, academia can commit a similar error' (2019, 115)—but they can provide a starting point for further discussion.

Indigeneity in the Past, in Iceland and in the Medieval Sagas

Having determined how the term 'indigenous' entered into saga scholarship and having looked at the contemporary prevailing definitions of 'indigenous' in international law, human rights and social sciences, the next section will consider how appropriate 'indigenous' might be as a term for referring to Icelandic literary production of the late Middle Ages. I do not believe that Kalinke, when introducing the term 'indigenous *riddarasögur*', had in mind the struggles of indigenous peoples or intended Icelandic cultural production of the late medieval period to be

¹⁷ See also the various comments appended to Kuper's opinion piece which take up his critiques.

seen in such a light. Nor do I believe that any of the scholars to use the term subsequently—myself included—have intended any such argument. Rather, I suspect that ‘indigenous’ in these contexts is simply adopted to mean ‘from this place’ as opposed to ‘having its origins in another place’, a synonym of ‘native’ or ‘homegrown’ and treated as contrastive alongside ‘translated’. Nevertheless, there may be less obvious reasons why the word became common from the late eighties on, and it is not impossible that an understanding of post-Commonwealth Icelandic experience as a kind of colonial existence may have contributed to this.

As already stated, in English-language discourse ‘indigeneity’ only started to be used as a political and legal concept in the twentieth century. It is thus closely bound up with contemporary struggles for indigenous rights. Many though certainly not all of these struggles have their origins in the conquest and colonisation of the Americas following the arrival of Europeans after 1492. This raises the question of how applicable ‘indigenous’ can be as a term to designate peoples or cultural production prior to the sixteenth century.¹⁸

To answer this question, I think it is necessary to see ‘indigenous’ in two different senses as we move into the past, both the contemporary technical sense and a more traditional one. This is in part because the contemporary technical sense does not suffice as we retreat from the present, linked as it is to self-identification. Past peoples would have had many ways of asserting their identities, for example through ideas of situatedness and shared culture, but they would not have done so through a transnational concept of indigeneity imbued with the specific associations of the term as discussed above. For all we know similar concepts of solidarity may have existed, but ‘indigeneity’ as such, would not have been the word used in their languages.

Accepting that self-identification must be dispensed with in discussions of distant-past indigeneity, some additional issues are brought into relief by a comment that Bello-Bravo makes (2019, 113):

With an experience of trauma as a defining attribute, this necessarily means that indigenous people may not have existed ten thousand years ago—prior to colonialism, globalization, evangelical Pentecostalism in Africa, or the strictures of assimilation and so on—but also that phenomena like the Mayan,

¹⁸ It should be emphasised that asking whether some medieval people can also be indigenous is distinct from problematic discourses which portray indigenous peoples as ‘medieval’. For an example of the latter, see José Rabasa’s discussion of a tendency to characterise the indigenous peoples of Mexico as ‘mere receptors of medieval culture and practices’ (2009, 28–29).

Incan, Oyo, Dahomey, and Ashanti empires themselves were somehow not indigenous, though perhaps the people they conquered (traumatically) were.

Bello-Bravo's phrasing, using 'necessarily' and 'may not' in conjunction, is somewhat ambiguous. Nevertheless, trauma is not something which we can limit to the experiences of modern peoples, even if imperialism and colonial exploitation have taken on new aggressive forms in the modern period.¹⁹ Adam Rogers' (2018) discussion of 'Indigenous Communities under Rome' is just one example, despite its archaeological focus, of how peoples of the Iron-Age past may have responded to the impositions (and trauma) of empire. Moreover, pre-modern peoples, who may not have experienced the trauma that their descendants later came to, may also be considered indigenous (in the older sense, as in 'native to a region') and this may be further justified by their transhistorical connection to descendants who are indigenous in the contemporary sense (both 'native to a region' and 'victims of trauma and marginalisation'). Thus the pre-Columbian Incan people were indigenous in at least one sense, ancestors of contemporary Quechua peoples (indigenous in both senses), and at the same time the peoples whom they conquered in the fifteenth century, such as the Chanka and Chimú, were also indigenous (in both senses, since they were the victims of conquest by their Incan neighbours).

If we can talk of peoples in the past as indigenous in the modern sense, then the next question is whether we can view specifically medieval Icelanders as indigenous. In one sense, the answer is patently 'no': large swaths of Icelandic literary tradition centre upon the settlement period, the moment of arrival which belies any autochthonous interpretation of origins. That said, it is clear when one considers human habitation in the context of lengthier time-frames that no group of people has been eternally present in any one location. There is, however, no straightforward answer to the question how long a people has to reside in one place to be considered indigenous, although by the fourteenth century Icelanders had 400 years of settlement, which is substantial, behind them. But setting the first question to one side, could Icelanders be seen as indigenous in a way which includes the sense of being victims of trauma? Were they colonised or conquered? Submission to

¹⁹ Bello-Bravo's reference to 'ten thousand years ago' links to, and may be taken from, Corntassel's mention of 'indigenous nations who have existed for 10,000 years or more on their homelands' (2003, 84). This, in turn, seems to be referring to Aboriginal Australians and fits with a study which appeared some years later in *Nature* (Malaspinas et al. 2016) and suggested that on the basis of genome sequencing, Aboriginal Australians seem to have become genetically isolated around 10,000 years ago and thus represent the world's oldest civilisation.

the Norwegian crown and subsequently the Danish monarchy may be seen in this light, but for Icelanders to have understood themselves as victims of colonisation and conquest, a prerequisite is that they must have had some kind of sufficiently distinct identity prior to 1262.

Not all scholars, however, recognise the existence of such an identity. Although the Icelanders became subjects of the Norwegian king after 1262, prior to that their relationship with Norway, a land from which many of the early settlers of Iceland came, was by no means clear-cut. Patricia Pires Boulhosa has stated that ‘Medieval Icelanders would probably not have had an idea, as we now understand it, of an “independent” Iceland’ (2005, 86). Verena Höfig, building on this, looks at the use of the word *þjóð* in Old Norse–Icelandic texts and says that ‘it is thus an anachronism to render *þjóð* with “nation” . . . *þjóð* rather denotes a community or identity in the making’ (2018, 118). Thus, in her understanding, pre-1262 Icelanders were in the process of determining an ethnic national identity, but had not yet fully established it. Guðmundur Hálfðanarson, moreover, has pointed out that pre-1262 Iceland could be seen as a colony (*nýlenda*), albeit in the older sense of *nýtt land—ný lenda—norræna manna . . . framlenging eða útvörður upprunalandins en ekki andstaða þess* ‘a new country—new-land—of Norsemen . . . an extension or outpost of the land of origin, not the antithesis of this’ (2014, 51–52). Outpost or not, Margaret Clunies Ross has noted the prevalence of an ‘ideology of difference from the Norwegian parent society’ (1999, 55) in much Old Icelandic literature, but since ‘personal identity is a composite’ (Ármann Jakobsson 2014, 279), the Icelanders’ differential identity may be similar to that expressed through the regional identity of *Þrændir* (i.e. inhabitants of Trøndelag) within the Norwegian people as a whole. As Ármann Jakobsson points out, moreover, context is important: in Norway Icelanders stand out, but ‘Icelandic nationality has no special importance in Constantinople’ (2014, 278).

If Iceland’s self-understanding prior to 1262 is open to debate, the situation afterwards becomes even more complicated. If it was already a colony in one sense, can we see subjugation to the Norwegian crown as a new phase of colonisation in a more predatory sense, as the reintegration of a colony which had strayed or as something else? Gísli Pálsson has discussed Iceland ‘as a colony of Denmark and Norway’ (2013, 37), albeit showing how conditions in Iceland as a colony of Denmark differed substantially from those on the Caribbean island of St Croix, also a Danish colony. As Sverrir Jakobsson has pointed out, however, Norwegian rule in Iceland ‘did not happen through military conquest, but because of the voluntary submission of Icelandic chieftains’ (2009, 155), thus the trauma

of colonisation cannot be assumed. This is especially the case since, as Randi Bjørshol Wærdahl points out, ‘the transition to direct royal lordship did not take the form of a revolution . . . and in Iceland the local aristocrats retained their power as royal officials’ (2011, 204). Moreover, it was only after the tribulations of the eighteenth century—by which time Norwegian rule had passed over to Danish rule—that we see clear signs of Icelandic dissatisfaction. As Guðmundur Hálfðanarson (2006, 238) has pointed out with regard to the positioning of Icelandic independence in the mid-twentieth century as the culmination of a centuries-long process,

in spite of its popularity, it is difficult to find much historical evidence for this idea of incessant struggle. Thus, until the end of the 18th century even the staunchest patriots in Iceland used every opportunity to proclaim their loyalty to the Danish king.

In fact, the idea of Iceland as a colony in the late Middle Ages and early modern period is hard to separate from the nationalist discourse of the nineteenth century. This movement emphasised the hardship suffered by Icelanders after submission to the Norwegian crown, an idea which contributed to the characterisation of post-1262 cultural production as decadent and substandard. At the same time it denied, on occasion, Denmark’s right to see Iceland as anything like a colony, thus establishing a basis for justifying independence.²⁰ This latter strategy is best known through Jón Sigurðsson’s characterisation of Iceland as having entered into a personal union with the Norwegian monarch and thus being ‘an independent state’ and ‘voluntary partner in the union with Denmark’ (Guðmundur Hálfðanarson 2006, 243).

It is not my aim here to settle the matter of Iceland’s relationship with Norway and Denmark prior to independence. It is certain that outside of legal theories and nationalist posturings, economic exploitation, especially after the imposition of the Danish trade monopoly in 1602, had significant implications for the Icelandic people which bear comparison with forms of colonial exploitation. Nevertheless, there was never any significant colonisation of Iceland in terms of movements of people, that is, Norwegians or Danes settling and displacing Icelanders (i.e. settler colonialism). And while Icelanders may have had limited access to political fora where decisions concerning them were to be made, they did not

²⁰ As Guðmundur Hálfðanarson also points out, Danes used a number of terms in official documents to define the status of Iceland—*provinds* ‘province’, *biland* ‘dependency’, *colonie* ‘colony’—revealing ambiguity in their understanding of the relationship.

become a marginalised ethnic group within their own country, which is the experience of many contemporary indigenous peoples. Cultural production was certainly influenced by contact with Norway and Denmark—see for example the influence of Norwegian translated romances and then Danish translated chapbooks—but no clear evidence of concerted suppression of Icelandic culture can be adduced.²¹ Thus, to equate the experience of Icelanders in the centuries after submission to the Norwegian crown with that of indigenous peoples' more recent experiences under colonial rule seems to me to be unfruitful and misleading.²²

At this point one can ask not just what the status was of the Icelandic people as a whole in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but what the status was specifically of those people who were responsible for producing, commissioning and disseminating the original *riddarasögur* during that period. Traditionally, associations have been made between the perceived poor quality of such works and their producers, leading to assumptions that they were the invention of a poor, low-status group of farmers. This idea was convincingly refuted by Jürg Glauser (1983, 228), who argued that

Aus den sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Veränderungen im späten 13., im 14. und im 15. Jahrhundert ging eine neue, reiche Oberklasse hervor, als deren Literatur die Märchensagas in ihrer ursprünglichen, produktiven Phase primär anzusehen sind.

Out of the social and economic changes which took place in the late thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries arose a new, wealthy upper class, and the original *riddarasögur*, in their earliest productive phase, should primarily be seen as their literature.

This theory of origins has also recently been expressed by Hans Jacob Orning in a study of AM 343 a 4to, a late fifteenth-century manuscript produced at Möðruvellir fram in northern Iceland and containing fifteen sagas, five of which are Icelandic *riddarasögur*. Orning argues that the ideology represented in the contents of the manuscript is of a post-Free State Icelandic élite: 'the most productive genres at Möðruvellir fram,

²¹ On the influence of Danish chapbooks see Seelow (1989). Suppression of popular culture by the church and intellectuals, regardless and independent of Iceland's political status, seems rather to have been an issue. See, for example, Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir (2006) on the church-led prohibition on dancing, and Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson's (1589, unnumbered page in 'formale') attack on *rímur* and romantic stories about trolls.

²² The situation of the Sami, for example, in their relations with Norwegians can be contrasted with that between Icelanders and Norwegians, by virtue of settler colonialism and economic exploitation.

namely fornaldarsögur, fornsögur suðrlanda and riddarasögur . . . often describe conflicts between centre and periphery in which agents from the centre have the upper hand against the latter' (2017, 332). In addition, one of the original *riddarasögur*, *Sálus saga ok Níkanórs*, is said to show that 'society is hierarchical, and aberrations from this hierarchy must be solved either by teaching haughty men a proper lesson or by relegating them' (Orning 2017, 332). Thus it is misleading to see the original *riddarasögur* as expressing the voice of an oppressed group within society, and while indigenous élites existed throughout the colonial world (see, for example, Garrett 2014), their peripheral status does not seem to correspond in any way to that of the wealthy Icelandic élite of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In fact, the original *riddarasögur* seem, in the words of Sheryl McDonald Werronen when discussing *Nítíða saga*, to reveal a hegemonic 'appropriation of a European identity through what could be called the cultural colonization of European romance' (2016, 218–19).

This article has mostly concerned itself with an account of research and terminology, but an example taken from a primary text may also be a useful start for future studies. In *Samsons saga fagra*, an original *riddarasaga* dated to the fourteenth or early fifteenth century, we are introduced to Samson, son of King Artús, who falls in love with Valentína, a princess, while she is kept as a hostage at his father's court. The saga is divided into two parts, the first of which takes place mostly in the British Isles and describes the vicissitudes of Samson's search for the lost Valentína—harassed by the rogue Kvintalín—and eventual reunion with her. The second focuses on Sigurðr, an illegitimate son of King Goðmundr of Glæsisvellir, who after being adopted by a humble couple makes his way in the world and ends up conquering and acquiring many lands through three successive marriages. This second part is linked to the first as Samson sends the chastened Kvintalín to steal a magic cloak from Sigurðr at the end of his life. Kvintalín succeeds and kills the now aged Sigurðr in the process, only to be subsequently tracked down and killed by Sigurðr's son, Úlfr. Samson, nevertheless, comes into possession of the magic cloak, and any residual animosity between the original owners and the new ones is smoothed out by a series of marriages. *Samsons saga* is a perfect example of the continuity between translated and original *riddarasögur*, imagining as it does an origin story of the magic cloak which can reveal whether or not someone is chaste. The said cloak is the central conceit of *Möttuls saga*, a translated *riddarasaga* produced in Norway at the court of King Hákon Hákonarson and based on the French *fabliau*, *Le lai du cort mantel*.

For our purposes here, a closer look at the beginning of the second part of *Samsons saga* is in order, in which the reader is provided with a description of the northern parts of the world where the action is to occur. We are told (*Samsons saga fagra* 1953, 31–32):²³

Þá liggir þat land er Iotunheimar heita ok bua traull ok ovættir. enn þadan til mozs vid Grænlanz obygðer geingr þat land er Sualbardi heiter. þat byggia ymissar þioder. þar eru þeir einer at þeir verða .cc. vetra enn sialldan eiga þeir fiolberni. aunnur er su þiod at kallazt mega mensker menn ok hafa þo fifla natтуру. ok er þat kallat fialla-mannuit er þeir hafa. einn skagi liggir at vthafinu þar bygger su þiod er smameyiar eru kalladar. þær verða eigi elldri en fimtan vetra en eiga baurn þegar þær eru siau vetra.

Then there is that country which is called Jötunheimar, and is inhabited by trolls and monsters, and that land named Svalbarðr extends all the way from there to the wastelands of Greenland. Various peoples live there. There are those who live up to two hundred years but rarely have more than one child. Another group of people who live there may be called human beings, but have a fool's nature, and they are said to have the intelligence of mountain-folk. An isthmus juts out into the sea. A group of people called the Small-Maidens live there. They do not live beyond the age of fifteen and have children as soon as they turn seven.

This passage seems to be a natural extension of a medieval tradition of describing the monstrous peoples, scattered across the margins of the known world, as seen on *mappae mundi* and in Icelandic travel accounts (Simek 1990, 352–56; Arngrímur Víðalín 2012, 55–56).²⁴ In its taxonomic precision, even given that this may be tongue-in-cheek, the gaze seems unapologetically colonial.²⁵ Such a logic is visible in the tentative reference to those people who are ‘fools’ and whose humanity is thus called into question (we are informed that they may be called human beings, but the text refrains from stating that they actually are). The description of the Small-Maidens, too, seems to present these women in an objectifying light as mere vessels for procreation. This impression is confirmed subsequently in the saga when

²³ The passage can also be found in *Samsons saga fagra* (1954, 380–81).

²⁴ See also Kedwards (2020, 9–18) on cartographic ekphrasis in medieval Icelandic literature. The description in *Samsons saga* is perhaps best seen as an example of the ‘verbal reminiscences of map images, descriptions that are not ekphrases but only imply their authors’ familiarity with maps’ (14) or as an example of a response to other literary cartographic ekphrases.

²⁵ The European colonial gaze has been described as ‘always seeking to “know” the world in order to have power over it’ and as a perspective which ‘sees, dominates and instrumentalises humans and space’ (Bellone et al. 2020, 29).

Goðmundr, after raiding in Jötunheimar, stops off in Smámeýjarland and sees one of its beautiful inhabitants. He has her brought to him, has her placed in a bed beside him and takes her with him when he sets sail. As a result of their sleeping together she becomes pregnant and gives birth to a boy (Sigurðr), but she falls ill prior to giving birth and dies shortly afterwards. Her role is circumscribed by the needs and desires of the raider, Goðmundr, and her tragic fate, though treated extremely matter-of-factly in the text, is sadly predictable to anyone familiar with such stories.

In addition, by describing the land-masses believed to adjoin the wastelands of Greenland in this way, *Samsons saga* not only evokes a colonial vision of lands and peoples to be appropriated but also erases the history of the actual inhabitants of Greenland of the time. By referring to these areas as *óbyggðir* ‘wastelands’ (but literally ‘un-habitations’) the reality and legitimacy of indigenous peoples’ dwelling there is negated. The last Norse settlements on Greenland, as is well known, disappeared at the end of the fifteenth century, and direct Icelandic contact during the colony’s decline would have been sporadic.²⁶ But Icelanders were aware that other peoples lived and had lived in other parts of Greenland, both the Dorset culture at an earlier time and the Thule or proto-Inuit at a later time. Icelanders do not seem to have distinguished between these peoples, using *skrælingar* as an umbrella (perhaps pejorative) term to refer to them. Thus while *Samsons saga* takes place in a semi-fantastic world in a legendary chronotope, the Thule people, ancestors of present-day Greenlanders, could still have been represented in the map of the polar regions. A choice seems to have been made not to.

Although it can be hazardous to draw one-to-one conclusions about the authors of a text based on its content, *Samsons saga* does seem to show colonial tendencies and impulses which one might imagine to be antithetical to indigenous peoples. While I am not arguing that aristocratic Icelanders of the late fourteenth or fifteenth centuries had concrete intentions or desires to engage in colonial annexation of the neighbouring arctic regions, I do believe that they were experimenting with an ideologically objectivising perspective inspired by and conversant with such colonial enterprises. *Samsons saga* is thus an example of an original *riddarasaga* which it would be difficult to align with indigenous experience. Indigenous literature, of course, can be many things, and to reduce it to just one form would be to fall back on oversimplifying and essentialist ideas

²⁶ Note, however, that contact with English merchants may have been frequent as late as the 1480s (Seaver 1996, 253), and that Icelandic emigrants may have worked aboard such ships (206).

of indigeneity. That said, certain indigenous thinkers have argued for a distinct epistemology and way of seeing the world that is manifested in indigenous literatures.²⁷ In addition to this, based on our legal definition of indigeneity, indigenous literature, as the cultural product of people who to some extent have felt the negative ramifications of colonisation or state oppression, might be expected to feel more keenly and represent more potently the effects of such oppression. The single example looked at here, however, certainly does not.

Conclusions

In the first section of this article the use of the term ‘indigenous’ to refer to those sagas influenced by Continental romance and translations thereof was considered. It was seen that the term was apparently absent from English-language scholarly literature until the 1980s, but took off after the 1982 International Saga Conference in Toulon, thanks in no small part to Marianne E. Kalinke’s various publications, and has remained in frequent use up to the present. Its adoption may, it seems, be seen as an attempt to rebrand these sagas, previously considered the unwelcome fruit of decadent foreign influence, as a cultural product more closely linked to Icelandic soil. In the second section it was shown how also in the 1980s, as a result of indigenous activism, a new definition of ‘indigenous’ became more widespread, one that acknowledged the marginal position of many indigenous peoples and the historical trauma that they have been subjected to. Despite continued debates over terminology, this definition of ‘indigenous’, developed in international law and human rights discourse, is overwhelmingly used in the social sciences (such as anthropology and ethnography) and by humanities scholars working with indigenous cultural production. In the third and final section, I argued that ‘indigenous’ can be applied to peoples and cultures from the past, but that late medieval Icelanders cannot easily be considered victims of colonisation and even less as indigenous people. Moreover, the élite who produced the original *riddarasögur* seem not to espouse a worldview which allows us to identify them in any straightforward way as indigenous. The same can be said of the perspective presented in the example taken from *Samsons saga fagra*. Here I wish to note that a categorical definition of what constitutes an

²⁷ See, for example, Krupat (2008, 367), who summarises indigenist perspectives on Native American literatures in the US. See also O’Neill and Braz (2011) who argue that, owing to the authors’ shared experience of the brutal effects of external factors, ‘comparative methodology seems especially suited to a study of Indigenous literature’.

indigenous worldview as presented in a literary text is elusive. Nevertheless, given the doubts that have been raised about alluding to the context of medieval Iceland as ‘indigenous’, the onus must fall upon anyone who wishes to argue for such an identification to show signs of ‘indigeneity’ in the literature. I am not aware of any such arguments having been made, nor have I detected any such signs.

Therefore, to answer the question of the title, one could say that if we take the word ‘indigenous’ in its everyday meaning, ‘produced naturally in a land or region’, then the Icelandic *riddarasögur* can well be called ‘indigenous’.²⁸ In recent years, however, as social justice movements have become more widely known and recognised, the everyday meaning of ‘indigenous’ has become ever more integrated with the technical meaning, so that a clear distinction is now hard to uphold in many contexts. Thus, if we choose to engage with the expanding scholarly and technical associations of the word ‘indigenous’—which it can be argued that members of a scholarly field should strive to do—then the term ‘indigenous’ is less appropriate and should be avoided.

A potential criticism of this article is that it displays a pedantic overvaluation of terminology. There are numerous examples of contemporary arguments over words, each with their own specific background and context. I hope that scholars of the humanities, however, will not need to be convinced of the importance of the words that we use to describe things. First, because inappropriate designations can lead to misunderstanding, as was my own concern as described in the anecdote with which this article began. Second, because terminology is not neutral, but rather plays a role in shaping the way we conceive of phenomena. This is all the more relevant and ethically imperative when terminology is connected to the life and death experiences of actual peoples. The aim of this article is not to shame anyone for having used the ‘wrong’ term, especially since the discussion in the second section shows that the terminology has been evolving in anthropological and activist circles over the last few decades in a way which made it unrealistic for scholars in the 1980s, especially outside of certain specialist circles, to predict the valence that ‘indigenous’ would come to have. Nevertheless, as Old Norse–Icelandic studies seek ever more to engage with the wider world and contemporary debates, it is important that we listen to the discussions which are carried out in adjacent fields (for example ethnography

²⁸ This involves more or less ignoring the word ‘naturally’, since the question of what can be considered natural or unnatural production opens fields of debate which go far beyond the confines of this article.

and indigenous literary studies) and show ourselves open to questioning our own assumptions and blind spots.

It might also be argued that indigenous issues have little to do with Old Norse–Icelandic literature, and thus the absence of alignment between the two critical vocabularies is justified. I would contend, rather, that the connections between indigenous issues and Old Norse–Icelandic literature are long-standing and profound, even if frequently underplayed and ignored. This is not the place for a full history of these intersections, but one can mention that stereotypes of indigenous Sami peoples abound in genres such as *fornaldarsögur* and *konungasögur*.²⁹ New stereotypes arose concerning indigenous peoples in North America, the so-called *skrælingar*, following the Icelandic expansion to the west, as presented in the *Íslendingasögur*.³⁰ Moving into the early modern period, the colonisation of the Americas by various European powers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not immediately make any strong impact upon Icelandic letters, but an Icelandic translation of Hans Hansen Skonning's *Geographica historica orientalis* (1641) found in the manuscript JS 43 4to describes Columbus' arrival in the Caribbean and various interactions with peoples, including 'canibalister', there.³¹ In the nineteenth century there is evidence, the focus of continuing research by Zachary Melton, that philologists working with Old Norse literature contributed to the erasure of indigenous culture by misinterpreting various artefacts in North America as products of the individuals involved in the Norse expansion to the west.³² Multiple points of contact with indigenous cultures are there to be found, if we are willing to look. The few scholars who discuss these matters, however, use 'indigenous' in their research in a way which is incompatible with

²⁹ See, for example, Aalto and Lehtola (2017).

³⁰ See, for example, Heng (2018, 274–76). Moving beyond mere literary representation, a recent genetic study has hypothesised 'the migration of at least one Native American woman . . . to Iceland around the year 1000' (Sigríður Sunna Ebenesersdóttir 2011, 98).

³¹ I am grateful to Dario Bullitta for permitting me to see the forthcoming edition of Skonning's work in Danish and Icelandic translation which he has coedited with Kirsten Wolf.

³² These findings were presented in a paper entitled 'White Man's Land: Vinland and the Pre-Columbian Discourse of Nineteenth-Century America' at the Virtual Seminar of the HM Queen Margrethe II Distinguished Research Project on the Danish-Icelandic Reception of Nordic Antiquity, on the 25th February 2021. See also Manrique Anton (2021) where the Rafn-inspired attribution to ancient Scandinavians of an abandoned pre-Columbian city in present-day Brazil (126) is discussed.

‘indigenous’ as a generic term for a group of Icelandic romances, leading to field-internal contradictions.³³

If we are to phase out ‘indigenous’ as a generic descriptor, the obvious question is, what are we to replace it with? Throughout this article, particularly in the first section, several alternatives to ‘indigenous *riddarasögur*’ have been mentioned; examples are (1) *lygisögur*, (2) original *riddarasögur*, (3) Icelandic *riddarasögur*, (4) late medieval Icelandic romances, and (5) *fornsögur suðurlanda*.³⁴ All of these have their proponents and opponents. Criticisms of the first of these options, on the grounds of its pejorative association with lies, have already been alluded to. Moreover Kalinke (1985b, 324) has argued that *lygisaga* in its early attestations is not concerned with genre definition but rather awareness of historicity and fictionality. Driscoll nevertheless preferred it (albeit for a broader grouping of texts), but Hughes has recently called this attempt at re-inscription ‘unfortunate’ (2021, 121). Option (4) is rather wordy and (5), since Icelandic, would probably still lead to glossing with an English-language alternative in anglophone scholarship. Options (2) and (3) seem to be the most popular alternatives right now. A problem with (2) arises when one sees it in a contrastive pair alongside ‘translated’: one cannot fully escape the implication that a translation is the opposite of original, which could be objected to. On the other hand, Kalinke, talking of translated and original *riddarasögur*, says ‘they are derivative, one group translated, the other imitative’ and later tells us ‘originality is admittedly rare in the indigenous *riddarasögur*’ (1985b, 317, 349). ‘Original’ is a word which everyone can comprehend, but which can mean many things, and thus very few can adequately define. Option (3), with the qualifier ‘Icelandic’, would seem less problematic. One potential difficulty, however, when talking about Icelandic *riddarasögur*, is the process of transmission of Norwegian translated *riddarasögur* in Iceland. *Erex saga*, for example, is a Norwegian translation of Chrétien de Troyes’ *Erec et Enide*. Yet despite being ‘Norwegian’, the earliest complete manuscript is an Icelandic one from around 1650 (there are also some scraps of an Icelandic manuscript from c.1500). When Icelandic scribes have played

³³ An example of such an article is Laurin (2020), where Rögnvaldr réttilbeini’s ‘indigenous identity’ (267) is discussed.

³⁴ ‘Riddarasögur suðurlanda’ has also been proposed, in contrast to the ‘riddarasögur norðurlanda’, to distinguish those romances set in southern climes from those set in northern climes (and generally categorised among the *formaldarsögur*). The term does not, however, allow us to distinguish between translations and more original works.

such an important role in preserving and shaping the text as we know it, it seems inadequate to draw a line between it and Icelandic *riddarasögur*. Any hard and fast definition naturally invites exceptions and borderline cases, however, and thus I would propose ‘Icelandic *riddarasögur*’ as the best alternative.

In the 1980s Marianne E. Kalinke’s work did a great service to *riddarasögur* in presenting them to the world as a subject more than worthy of study. The success of her clarion call may be in part due to the rebranding of the *lygisögur* as ‘indigenous *riddarasögur*’ at a time when the grand narrative of Icelandic cultural decline through decadent foreign influence was still prevalent. The call has been heeded and, as Shaun F. D. Hughes has recently observed, ‘contemporary scholars find the *riddarasögur* a seemingly inexhaustible resource for continued research’ (2021, 133). There seems no sign of the popularity of this genre abating, so that in future we can dispense with ‘indigenous’ as a term to refer to them safe in the knowledge that they are now established as an inspiring object of investigation.

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GYLFAGINNING: POETIC SOURCES
AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE ARCHETYPE

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THIS ARTICLE ARGUES that in order to appreciate the structure of *Gylfaginning* as Snorri intended it, some degree of reconstruction is necessary, especially at the beginning of the text. This is not to say that every detail of Snorri's original is recoverable, and as we shall see, some doubt remains as to exactly where the text ended. Rather, the claim is that reconstruction can take us far enough to discern the most important features of the structure. The textual witnesses of independent, text-critical value are four:

- R (Copenhagen, GKS 2367 4to [Codex Regius], c.1300–50);
- T (Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS No. 1374 [Codex Trajectinus] c.1595);
- W (Copenhagen, AM 242 fol. [Codex Wormianus] c.1340–70);
- U (Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, DG 11 4to [Codex Upsaliensis], c.1300–25).

Of these, R and T share a very similar text. W belongs to the same stemmatic branch, but differs from R and T on a number of points. U belongs to its own branch, and portions of its text have been substantially abbreviated (on the relation between the manuscripts of Snorri's *Edda*, see *Edda* FJ, xxxvii–xxxix; *Gylf*AF, xxviii; Sävborg 2012; Haukur Þorgeirsson 2017b).

This article does not focus on reconstruction in its own right, but uses it in order to test its main claim: namely, that the structure of *Gylfaginning* is intrinsically connected to its use of poetic sources. Thus, for instance, whereas *Gylfaginning* in RTW opens with a stanza in *dróttkvætt*, the archetype was in all likelihood designed as a prosimetrum containing only Eddic metre. We shall also see how abbreviations in U have obfuscated the structure of the text at various points. Such observations make possible a discussion of poetic subtexts and structural boundaries, the epistemic value of prose versus poetry and the question which sources are quoted and why.

Beginning and End of the Archetype

The most important innovation between the archetype and the RTW branch appears to have been the introduction of a new opening chapter. The first chapter in RTW is the Gefjun chapter, containing a *dróttkvætt* stanza by

Bragi. This is suspicious, since all other stanzas in *Gylfaginning* are in Eddic metre (*Edda* FJ, xix, xlii; Lindow 1977). The chapter is missing in U, which suggests that it may have been added in the RTW branch. This is seemingly confirmed by the opening of chapter 2 in W: *Gylfi er maðr nefndr, hann var konungr ok fjölkunnigr* ‘a man is called Gylfi; he was a king and skilled in magic’ (*Edda* FJ, 8; Lindow 1977, 108). Gylfi has already been presented in chapter 1, so that *Gylfaginning* appears to start twice in W. Finnur Jónsson argued, and later scholars have accepted, that the beginning of chapter 2 in W was the original opening of *Gylfaginning*, that chapter 1 was added later in the RTW branch, and that the resulting imperfection of a double beginning was retained in W but has been removed in RT.

This attractive argument poses one problem. In order to present it, a brief discussion of the first sentence in all four manuscripts is necessary. Chapter 2 in U (being the first chapter there) begins with the words *Gylfir var maðr vitr* ‘Gylfir was a wise man’ (*UE*, 10). In RT, the text reads *Gylfi konungr var maðr vitr ok fjölkunnigr* ‘King Gylfi was a wise man and skilled in magic’ (*GylfAF*, 7). In the heading in U, we read that *Gylfi sótti heim Alföðr í Ásgarð með fjölkyngi* ‘Gylfi paid a visit to Alföðr in Ásgarðr with magic’, and the word *fjölkyngi* there suggests that one should expect some mention of Gylfi’s magic in the following text, as in RTW. None is forthcoming, and since the first chapter of *Gylfaginning* in U has been abbreviated, it seems likely that its exemplar contained such a mention. The evidence of RTU therefore suggests that the archetype had a text more or less like this: *Gylfi [konungr?] var maðr vitr ok fjölkunnigr*.

In W, the word *vitr* has presumably fallen out, since it is present in the other manuscripts. We can therefore reconstruct something like *Gylfi er maðr nefndr, hann var konungr vitr ok fjölkunnigr* for the exemplar of W. If we posit this as the text of the archetype, we may reach the stage preceding RTU through the following changes: *Gylfi er* > *var maðr nefndr, hann var [konungr; deleted in U, moved in RT] vitr ok fjölkunnigr*.

The problem with such a scenario is this: if the cause for the changes in RT was the addition of a new chapter, why would U undertake similar changes, when that chapter was not present in U? The end of the Prologue and beginning of *Gylfaginning* are somewhat abbreviated in U, but cutting out an entire chapter would not conform to the method of the abbreviator (cf. Sävborg 2012). It is therefore unlikely that the chapter was present in the U branch. Furthermore, when two branches agree against the youngest member of one of them, the natural assumption is that that member, namely W, has innovated (T is a young manuscript, but its exemplar was earlier than any preserved manuscript, perhaps c.1250; see Faulkes 1985, 19–20).

If the first sentence in W is the result of innovation, however, that innovation is decidedly strange. Why would W make *Gylfaginning* begin twice? After all, the first sentence in U is not the same as that in RT: *Gylfir var maðr vitr* versus *Gylfi konungr var maðr vitr ok fjölkunnigr*. If each is produced by an abbreviation, a similar but not identical result of these abbreviations is certainly conceivable. In fact, Gylfi has already been introduced in the Prologue: *Þar var sá konungr er Gylfi er nefndr* (RTW) / *hét* (U) ‘The king who is/was called Gylfi was there’ (*Edda* FJ, 6). The ‘imperfection’ of a double introduction of Gylfi is thus present even without the first chapter, rendering independent abbreviation in both branches plausible. The second introduction of him in W makes sense as the product of an author focusing on the composition of *Gylfaginning*, but it would presumably strike scribes copying the Prologue and *Gylfaginning* as redundant, leading to its deletion in RTU. Based on these observations, I find it likely that Finnur is right in that W here represents the older text, but in light of the problems relating to U, this argument cannot carry the main burden of proof that chapter 1 is interpolated, as it has done for Finnur and subsequent scholars.¹

Nonetheless, the claim that chapter 1 has been added is likely to be right. It agrees, often verbatim, with *Ynglinga saga* chapter 5, and there are fewer variants in the stanza than one would expect if we were dealing with two separate records (Lindow 1977, 111–12; Lindow on good grounds rejects the possibility that both texts rely on the lost *Skjöldunga saga* (pp. 113–14)). The Gefjun material is well integrated into *Ynglinga saga*; where Óðinn sends Gefjun from Denmark to Gylfi in Sweden, she pulls away land from him, and Óðinn subsequently ends up settling in Sweden. There, Gylfi and the Æsir engage in a contest of magic and illusions, the Æsir constantly gaining the upper hand—apparently a reference to *Gylfaginning* (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941, 14–16).

In *Gylfaginning*, by contrast, the story of Gefjun is all but irrelevant, apart from its mention of Gylfi (Lindow 1977, 114). Since Gefjun is said to belong to the Æsir and she has pulled a considerable part of Gylfi’s kingdom away from him, his interaction with her would give him ample reason to enquire about the Æsir. In the next chapter, however, there is no trace of this experience: Gylfi is amazed at the good fortune of the Æsir, which, as we learn towards the end of the Prologue, he has just experienced first-hand. He therefore decides to investigate the matter. The thematic connection thus appears to be between the Prologue and chapter 2, not between chapter 1 and chapter 2. Since *Gylfaginning* is otherwise

¹ I am grateful to Haukur Þorgeirsson for valuable input on this issue.

extremely well structured, this lack of integration of chapter 1 suggests that it may be an interpolation.

In sum, factors that speak in favour of chapter 1 being an interpolation are:

1. The textual correspondences between *Ynglinga saga* and *Gylfaginning*
2. The absence of chapter 1 in U
3. The unlikelihood that the abbreviator deleted the chapter in U
4. The lack of connection of chapter 1 to the otherwise highly integrated framework of *Gylfaginning* versus its good integration into *Ynglinga saga*
5. The thematic connection between the Prologue and chapter 2
6. The presence of a *dróttkvætt* stanza in a text where all other stanzas are in Eddic metre (although one belongs to a skaldic praise poem; see pp. 127–31).

The addition of chapter 1 is natural from a compilatory perspective. Gylfi has been mentioned in the Prologue and *Gylfaginning* begins by mentioning him. This was thus a good point at which to insert a stanza relating to Gylfi and Nordic geography, which is the topic of the preceding section of the Prologue. In *Ynglinga saga*, the Gefjun material precedes Óðinn and Gylfi's interaction by means of illusions, which is what *Gylfaginning* describes, so the interpolation may have appeared relevant and even Snorri-like.

We are now in a position to venture a rough reconstruction of the opening of *Gylfaginning's* archetype. The first sentence draws mainly on W, but following any single witness would not affect the argument of this article (cf. *Edda* FJ, 8; *Gylf* AF, 7):

Gylfi er maðr nefndr, hann var konungr vitr ok fjölkunnigr. Hann undraðisk þat mjök [er allir lýðir lofuðu þá ok (U) / er Ásafólk var svá kunnigt at (RTW)]² allir hlutir gengu at vilja þeira. Þat hugsaði hann hvárt þat mundi vera af eðli sjálfra þeira, eða mundi því valda goðmogn þau er þeir blótuðu.

A man is called Gylfi; he was a wise king, skilled in magic. He wondered greatly at the fact [that all peoples praised them and (U) / that the people of the Æsir were so skilled that (RTW)] all things went according to their will. He pondered whether this might be due to their own nature or whether it was caused by the divine forces to whom they sacrificed.

² For this clause, I am unable to produce unequivocal criteria for reconstructing the likely text of the archetype. Suffice it to say that, unlike other differences between RTW and U in this passage, this clause cannot simply be explained as abbreviation in U. The text in U runs: *Gylfir var maðr vitr ok hugsaði þat er allir lýðir lofuðu þá ok allir hlutir gengu at vilja þeira, hvárt þat mundi af eðli þeira vera eða mundi guðmognin valda því* 'Gylfir was a wise man and pondered the fact that all peoples praised them and all things went according to their will, whether that was due to their nature or whether it was caused by the divine forces' (*UE*, 10).

The text begins *in medias res*, focusing on Gylfi's amazement at the Æsir. To Gylfi's mind, the two explanations of the Æsir's success are mutually exclusive, but as we shall see, the Æsir will have it both ways, presenting the gods as creatures of a different order, but eventually assuming their identities.

Where *Gylfaginning* ended in the archetype is a more difficult question. RTW have material on Troy at the end of *Gylfaginning* and in chapters 8–9 of *Skáldskaparmál*, whereas U does not (*Edda* FJ, 77.5–8 (from *ok honum*), 86.19–88.3). Finnur Jónsson saw the Troy material in RTW as interpolated and based on material found in the Prologue (*Edda* FJ, xx).

Finnur drew no conclusions from the fact that the Troy section in *Skáldskaparmál* contains the phrase *at ásjánda inum mikla Akille* 'while the great Achilles was watching', a calque on Latin absolute ablative (*Edda* FJ, 87). Such a pronounced Latinism is found nowhere else in Snorri's *Edda* and seems to be alien to the native style that Snorri attempted.

Finnur is thus probably right about the lengthy Trojan digression in chapters 8–9 of *Skáldskaparmál*. The same need not necessarily be true of the final clauses about Troy in *Gylfaginning*. As noted above, the often shorter text of U seems to be the result of abbreviation. Most of the time, factual information is retained, but toward the end of *Gylfaginning* and in the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál*, the abbreviator is more heavy-handed, cutting out important stanzas and chunks of text. It is therefore conceivable that he cut out the 'unnecessary' clauses about Troy after the end of the narrative. In this instance, U's usefulness for textual reconstruction is therefore unclear. The last part of *Gylfaginning* in RTW reads as follows (*Gylf*AF, 54–55):

En Æsir . . . gefa nöfn þessi hin sömu er áðr eru nefnd mönnum ok stöðum þeim er þar váru, til þess at þá er langar stundir liði at menn skyldu ekki ífask í at allir væri einir, þeir Æsir er nú var frá sagt ok þessir er þá váru þau sömu nöfn gefin. Þar var þá Þórr kallaðr—ok er sá Ásaþórr hinn gamli, sá er Qkuþórr [WT Aku-Þórr]—ok honum eru kend þau stórvirki er Ector³ gerði í Troju. En þat hyggja menn at Tyrkir hafi sagt frá Ulixes ok hafi þeir hann kallat Loka, þvíat Tyrkir váru hans hinir mestu óvinir.

But the Æsir . . . give these names, mentioned above, to the people and places that were present, in order that people should not doubt, when a long time had passed, that they were all the same, those Æsir about whom stories had now been told, and those who were then given the same names. Then Þórr received his name, and he is the old Ása-Þórr [Þórr of the Æsir], that is Qku-

³ Faulkes prints 'Þórr (Ector)', but TW have only 'Ector', and R has 'Ector' written above 'Þórr', apparently as a correction.

Þórr [wagon-driving Þórr], and to him are attributed those feats that Hector performed in Troy. And people think that the Turks have told stories about Ulysses and that they called him Loki, for the Turks were great enemies of his.

If this translation is correct, the reference to Þórr's naming is enigmatic, since he has been called Þórr throughout the text. The passage would make sense in light of the Prologue, however, where we learn that 'we' refer to the Trojan Tror, son of Munon or Mennon, as Þórr: *Munon eða Mennon . . . þau áttu son, hann hét Tror, þann kǫllum vér Þór* (*Gylf AF*, 4).⁴

The expression *var þá Þórr kallaðr* is decidedly strange, just as 'then Þórr was called' would be peculiar in English, evoking the meaning 'to be summoned' rather than 'to receive a name'. One would have expected a construction of the type 'then X was called Y', not 'then X was called'. It is therefore perhaps possible that the author intended his readers to understand that Þórr was called Ása-Þórr and Ǫku-Þórr, rather than receiving the name Þórr. If so, the subtext of the Prologue is not necessary.

In U, the text from *ifask* to the end runs (*UE*, 86):

efaðist menn ekki at allir væri einir, þeir æsir er nú er frá sagt ok þessir æsir er nú vóru, ok var Ǫku-Þórr kallaðr Ása-Þórr.

people should not doubt that they were all the same, those Æsir about whom stories have now been told, and those Æsir who were now there, and Ǫku-Þórr was called Ása-Þórr.

Here, the syntax is natural and the simplex Þórr is missing. This suggests that U has tried to make sense of the confusing text represented by RTW. A change in the opposite direction would be difficult to explain.

But what of the remaining text in RTW? Should we follow U and assume that it is interpolated, or was the abbreviator particularly invasive in this instance? First, it should be noted that the text certainly could have ended with the words *þar var þá Þórr kallaðr ok er sá Ása-Þórr hinn gamli, sá er Ǫku-Þórr*. It would then have ended with the name-change and the implication that this Þórr is the Þórr found in the preceding stories.⁵

⁴ The authorship of the Prologue has been debated (see e.g. von See 1988, 18–30; Lönnroth 1990; von See 1990). No scholar has shown why the differences between the Prologue and *Gylfaginning* should be due to authorship rather than the function of the two texts, however.

⁵ Troy is mentioned at one earlier point in *Gylfaginning* in RTW. This reference appears to have been deleted in U, since it belongs in an abbreviated passage (*Edda FJ*, 16 (app. cr.); *Gylf AF*, 13; *UE*, 20).

Such an interpretation may seem to be supported by the fact that the following clauses in RTW introduce a new etymology for Þórr's name. The Prologue presents the etymology *Tror* > *Þórr*, but here we get an implicit etymology *Ector* > *Oku-Þórr* (cf. the following *Ulixes* > *Loki*). Neither Hector nor Ulysses is mentioned in the Prologue, so it is possible that this passage is written by someone who knew that the Prologue explains the mythology with reference to Troy, but not by the one who came up with the specific explanations found there. The equation *Oku-Þórr* = *Ector* is again the centre of attention in the clearly interpolated chapter 9 of *Skáldskaparmál*.

These observations are most easily explained if the last clauses of *Gylfaginning* were interpolated by the same person who added the Troy material in *Skáldskaparmál*. If so, a likely scenario is that a scribe saw that the end of *Gylfaginning* was connected to the rise of idolatry, as described in the Prologue, and decided to elaborate on this. This is exactly what has happened in *Skáldskaparmál*, where a reference to the Prologue in chapter 8 has prompted a long digression on Troy. In *Gylfaginning*, the interpolator would have taken the name *Oku-Þórr* as his starting point for an etymology in the manner of the Prologue, but this name, as opposed to the simplex *Þórr*, led him to choose a different and better-known hero as his point of reference (Hector rather than *Tror*).

The etymology *Ector* > *Oku-Þórr* need not cancel out the etymology *Tror* > *Þórr*, however, given that conflicting etymologies were often given for one and the same word during the Middle Ages. An Ockham's-razor approach would suggest that both Troy passages are interpolated, but a scenario where the one at the end of *Gylfaginning* prompted the long one in *Skáldskaparmál* is also plausible. I therefore hesitate to conclude firmly on whether the last clauses of *Gylfaginning* in RTW are interpolated or not.

Either way, the specification that *Þórr* is the same as *Ása-Þórr* and *Oku-Þórr* remains a central element. *Ása-Þórr* is otherwise attested only in *Hárbarðsljóð* (Finnur Jónsson 1931, s.v.), and *Oku-Þórr* is not attested elsewhere. In *Gylfaginning*, by contrast, both names are used repeatedly. This suggests that the expansions of Þórr's name should not primarily be read in light of the poetic tradition, but rather that Þórr now becomes the god who has been described in the preceding stories.⁶

These observations allow us to see that the opening and the end of the archetypal *Gylfaginning* are perfectly tied together. In the opening, Gylfi

⁶ This is reminiscent of Snorri's previous statements that Óðinn's and Freyja's many names were acquired through their travels (*Gylf* AF, 22, 29).

wonders at the success of the Æsir and ponders whether this is due to their own power or that of their gods. By means of magic, the Æsir convince him that it is due to their gods. In the end, they make Þórr's name correspond to that of the hero of the preceding stories (*Tror* > Þórr or Þórr > *Ása-Þórr*, *Oku-Þórr*). Since all the Æsir carry the names of the protagonists of these stories, Þórr's name-change should presumably be taken as emblematic of a procedure undertaken by all of them. Only at this point does *Gylfaginning* conclude its treatment of the two initial options; in fact, the two are one, since the Æsir's own powers of deception are what allow them to become the gods of their stories. As we shall see below, this full-circle structure is evident also on several levels internally in *Gylfaginning*.

Before moving on to the next topic, it should be noted that the first chapters of *Skáldskaparmál* present an analogue to the plot of *Gylfaginning*, this time with Ægir or Hlér in the role of Gylfi (*Skáld AF*, 1–5). Like Gylfi, Ægir is skilled in magic, but the Æsir know of his arrival in advance and produce illusions (*sjónhverfingar*) for him. This time, their purpose is not to convince their guest of their own divinity, but rather of the divine origin of poetry, and accordingly, the speaker is no longer Hár, but Bragi. The first story Bragi tells Ægir ends in an explanation of the kenning 'speech of the giants = gold' that serves three functions. First, it introduces skaldic diction, the topic of *Skáldskaparmál*. Second, it connects skaldic diction to narratives about the Æsir, as required by the pagan conceit, rather than to metaphorical dynamics. Third, it leads Ægir to enquire about the origin of poetry. Bragi then tells him the story of the mead of poetry, which provides the narrative background of many kennings, but which also dupes Ægir into believing in the divine genesis of poetry. The Æsir have now achieved their purpose, and the text shifts to a pragmatic, didactic register.

Skáldskaparmál's *ginning* 'illusion' is much less elaborate, explicit and self-contained than *Gylfaginning*, but the connection between the two shows the conceptual unity and progression of Snorri's *Edda*. The Prologue presents the theological background of paganism, *Gylfaginning* describes it, and *Skáldskaparmál* relates these topics to skaldic diction. The following, pragmatic bulk of *Skáldskaparmál* focuses on poetry proper and works in tandem with the metrical exposition of *Háttatal*. As noted above, the end of *Gylfaginning* and beginning of *Skáldskaparmál* are heavily abbreviated in U, and the clearest analogues between *Gylfaginning* and the opening of *Skáldskaparmál* (the guest's magical skills, the Æsir's knowledge of his arrival, *sjónhverfingar*) have fallen out in the process—partly, perhaps, because they were seen as unnecessary repetition (*UE*, 86).

Structure and Poetic Sources

The likely absence of the first chapter, including the Gefjun stanza, in the archetype allows us to see that in Snorri's *Gylfaginning*, poetry served to mark structural and functional boundaries. In the beginning, the two first poetic quotations mark two levels of deceit. The first half stanza is from Þorbjörn hornklofi's *Haraldskvæði*, here attributed to Þjóðólfr ór Hvini. It is the only skaldic stanza in *Gylfaginning*, but it is composed in Eddic *málháttur* (a variant of *fornyrðislag*).⁷ It is quoted to corroborate the statement that Valhöll had a roof of shields, as may be seen from a kenning in the stanza: *Sváfnis salnæfrar* 'Sváfnir's [Óðinn's] hall-birch-barks [roof-shingles] = shields'.

Directly after this stanza, Gylfi sees a man juggling seven short swords. Gylfi tells the man that his name is Gangleri (the name is taken from *Grímnismál*, found later in *Gylfaginning*). The context is thus that of deceit, of giving a false name or imitating the magical arts—a prelude to the actual magic of the Æsir. The text quotes *Haraldskvæði* 11, and the second part of *Haraldskvæði*, roughly stanzas 13–23, describes life in the hall and—uniquely for a long skaldic poem—jesters (*SkP* 1, 115–16). John Lindow has suggested that the jester in *Gylfaginning* alludes to the jesters of the poem, but since the authenticity of stanzas 13–23 of *Haraldskvæði* has been debated, this claim warrants further discussion (Lindow 1977, 116–24; von See 1961; see overview in *SkP* 1, 91–92). For Snorri to allude to these stanzas, a putative expansion of the poem must predate his time.

Klaus von See thought that a poetic pastiche on *Haraldskvæði* found in Flateyjarbók supports the view that stanzas 13–23 are a later addition (von See 1961, 105; *SkP* 1, 60–62).⁸ On the contrary, however, these stanzas show that, to the imitator, the first and second halves of *Haraldskvæði* belonged together. The pastiche is mainly based on the second part of *Haraldskvæði*, but the imitator also echoes the couplet *Leiddisk fyr Lúfu / landi at halda* in stanza 10 with the words *Leiddisk fyr Lúfu / lengr at haldask* (*SkP* 1, 62, 104).

Von See's argument regarding the irregular use of *ljóðaháttur* in the final stanzas of the poem is doubtful, since a mixture of *málháttur* and

⁷ This claim could be qualified somewhat, since *Haraldskvæði* contains a number of *hendingar* (ok *Freys leik heyja*, á *baki létu blíkja*, etc.), but while this may be indicative of the skald's affiliation with skaldic discourse, it does not change the fact that the basic metre is Eddic and therefore suited to the prosimetrical form of *Gylfaginning*.

⁸ Stanza 5 is found only in *Fagrskinna* and its connection to the preceding stanzas is uncertain (*SkP* 1, 63).

Ijóðaháttur is found in *Eiríksmál* and *Hákonarmál* as well. Von See's final and, to his mind, probably most important argument is that *Haraldskvæði* contains borrowings from *Atlamál*, but despite his claims to the contrary, there is little to show the direction of borrowing (von See 1961, 102–03). Stanzas 15–23 of *Haraldskvæði* are found only in *Fagrskinna*, but this is a reliable source overall. The reason for their absence in *Heimskringla* is presumably that they add little factual information about the king, since Snorri sifted his sources more thoroughly than the authors of either *Morkinskinna* or *Fagrskinna* (Andersson and Gade, 25).

These observations suggest that the entire poem may well be authentic, but *Haraldskvæði* remains a difficult case, with complex transmission and shifting attribution, and with a remarkably different tone in the first and second halves of the poem. The agent suffix *-ari* in *leikari* (stanza 22) in the second half is suspicious, since Rudolf Meissner notes that such agent nouns are otherwise found only in poems betraying Christian influence (e.g. *græðari* 'healer, saviour'; cf. Meissner 1921, 333; cf. Fidjestøl 1993, 13). A search in the new *Lexicon Poeticum* under development by the Skaldic Project confirms that the earliest skaldic examples, outside of *Haraldskvæði*, are found in stanzas by Sighvatr.⁹ *Tjúgari* 'robber' in *Völuspá* 40 is probably somewhat earlier, but nonetheless much younger than *Haraldskvæði*. This argument should be accorded some weight, since the poetic record is full of agent nouns and thus provides a clear chronology of such formations. Another factor that may suggest that the second half is a later addition is the fact that, while *ulfheðnar* have been mentioned in the first part of the poem, the explanation of the term in the second part looks like an antiquarian comment: *Ulfheðnar heita / þeir es í orrostu / blóðgar randir bera* 'They are called wolf-skins, who carry bloody shields into battle' (*SkP* 1, 114).

If the poem has been expanded, this probably happened in the twelfth century, since stanzas 15–23 are found in *Fagrskinna*, and since that century saw a rich production of historical poetry (Fidjestøl 1991). As shown by the discussion of *Hyndluljóð* below, it is also plausible that Snorri would have alluded to material found in a twelfth-century expansion. I refrain from passing a final judgement here on the authenticity of the second half of *Haraldskvæði*. Suffice it to say that *Fagrskinna* suggests that a complex of skaldic stanzas in Eddic metre, treating Haraldr and the battle of Hafsfjörðr and roughly corresponding to *Haraldskvæði* in modern editions, was recognised by Snorri's day, and this impression

⁹ I have conducted a search for '%ari' in <https://lexiconpoeticum.org> (28 December 2020).

is strengthened by the pastiche in Flateyjarbók.¹⁰ Based on these observations and on Snorri's sophisticated use of poetic subtexts in *Gylfaginning* (see below), it seems likely that he is indeed alluding to the last stanzas of *Haraldskvæði*.

Haraldskvæði is a poem about a real-life king and his actual hall by his court poet, and quoting it here is a pointer to the real situation in which Gylfi finds himself, before magic blows it completely out of proportion. Only after this do we find a shift to the poetry of the magicians/gods. Granted, Gylfi is said to be *ffjolkunnigr* 'skilled in magic', but his greatest magical feat is to dress like an old man and to lie about his name. Perhaps he is given this epithet only to stress what great magicians the Æsir are, to be able to dupe him.¹¹ Overall, he is quite ordinary and amazed at those who are not.

This interpretation—that the quotation from and allusion to *Haraldskvæði* are meant to underline *Gylfaginning*'s initial, real-life setting—has contextual support. First, as we shall see in the case of *Hávamál*, the subtext of an entire poem of which only a fragment is quoted is a fundamental compositional device in *Gylfaginning*. Second, *Grímnismál* 9, describing Valhøll and containing the words *skjöldum er salr þakiðr* 'the hall is roofed with shields', is attested in both GKS 2365 4to and AM 748 1a 4to and was therefore in all likelihood known to Snorri (Neckel and Kuhn, 59). He could thus have quoted one of his main sources rather than a skaldic one, so his choice of *Haraldskvæði* appears deliberate. Third, there is another subtle pointer to a gradual detachment from reality in the same chapters.

When Gylfi had entered Ásgarðr, *sá hann þar háva/Háva höll* 'he there saw a high hall / the hall of the High One' (*Gylf* AF, 7). Then follows a quotation of the first stanza of *Hávamál*, after which Gylfi is told the names

¹⁰ *Fagrskinna* first quotes *Haraldskvæði* 1–6 and 15–23, about Haraldr and his court, and ascribes these to Hornklofi. A little later, it quotes stanzas 7–11, on the battle, and assigns these to Þjóðólfr, as in *Gylfaginning* (Finnur Jónsson, ed., 1902–03, 6–12, 15–17). *Heimskringla* quotes stanzas 6–11 and 14, and Snorri now appears to have revised his opinion and assigns the poem—including stanza 11—to Þorbjörn hornklofi (*SkP* 1, 92–93; Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941, 112, 115–17, 119). The argument for the perception of a complex of stanzas hinges on stanza 6, which is quoted in both *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*, meaning that Snorri quotes from both of *Fagrskinna*'s groups of stanzas.

¹¹ Anne Holtmark (1964, 17–21) construes Gylfi as skilled in magic and the Æsir as demons. This is a forced interpretation, however, since the Æsir are presented in a purely euhemeristic manner, with no indications of demonology (see Wellendorf 2018, 87–91).

of the members of the mock-trinity: Hár, Jafnhár and Þriði ‘High, Equally High and Third’. Hár then tells him that *heimill er matr ok drykkir honum sem ǰllum þar í Háva hǰll* ‘he [Gylfi] is entitled to food and drink, like all others there in the hall of the High One’ (*GylfAF*, 8). This echoes the phrase *Háva hǰllu í*, found in the last stanza, as well as stanzas 109 and 111, of *Hávamál*. Snorri dispenses with the dative *-u*, which presumably did not belong to his preferred linguistic choice, and he places the preposition in its natural position. Given that this passage is preceded by *Gylfaginning*’s only quotation of a full stanza from *Hávamál*, there can be little doubt that the allusion is intentional.

Gylfi has now entered the illusion, where the hall is that of the High One, the author of the poem bearing his name. Here, the words *Háva hǰll* are unambiguous, since the phrase is in the dative and therefore does not mean ‘a high hall’; that would be expressed by **hárrir hǰll*. But the reader has read the words *háva/Háva hǰll* immediately before, and in that instance they are ambiguous, since *hǰll* is in the accusative. Did Gylfi see a high hall, or the hall of the High One? Translators unanimously opt for the first alternative, but the syntax does not opt for anything: the interpretation is simply based on context. When that context changes, and the same phrase now unambiguously means ‘the hall of the High One’, what are the implications? Does this not suggest that we are dealing with the same hall, but that the onset of the illusion has transformed it from a high hall to the hall of the High One? The phrase follows the progression towards delusion, from reality to wonder, which will eventually give rise to idolatry. It illustrates how language is part of this process, as noted in the Prologue and in the discussion of Óðinn’s many names (*GylfAF*, 4, 22).¹²

The first, ambiguous occurrence of the phrase *háva/Háva hǰll* follows the stanza from *Haraldskvæði*, and the reader will naturally take it to refer to a grand, but not supernatural, hall, like that of the poem. In fact, the hall *is* supernaturally high—the reader knows from the preceding sentence that the Æsir have already begun to produce optical illusions—but before Gylfi enters and listens to the Æsir’s tales, its size and its shielded roof appear to be the products of craft or magic, but not of divinity.

The second occurrence of the phrase, specifying that the hall that Gylfi has entered is that of the High One, follows the stanza from *Hávamál*

¹² This may also be suggested by the mention of the twelve main tongues in Troy (*Edda FJ*, 4; *GylfAF*, 4). Finnur has emended *hǰfuðungur* to *hǰfðingjar*, against the principle of *lectio difficilior* and manuscript evidence from two stemmatic branches.

and is thus placed just inside the border of the poetic domain of Óðinn. The stanzas and the repeated phrase, which alludes to stanzas that are not quoted, thus reinforce each other, and this technique supports Lindow's claim that Snorri in his prose evokes the subtext of *Haraldskvæði* 22–23 while actually quoting *Haraldskvæði* 11.

A final point to note about the quotation of *Haraldskvæði* 11 is that while it belongs to a 'human' courtly poem, its form is not the typically courtly *dróttkvætt*, but rather a variant of *fornyrðislag*, like the following 'divine' poems. This formal similarity emphasises the euhemerist message of the Prologue and *Gylfaginning*. Human and divine poetry are actually both human and are distinguished only by perception, just as the hall is human but is rendered divine by magic and lies. The metrical consistency of *Gylfaginning* thus creates a poetic counterpart to the narrative: the poetry and the real-life setting never actually change, but Gylfi is led to believe that he has crossed the line between human and divine when proceeding from the first to the second stanza and when entering what appeared to be a high hall, but has turned out to be the hall of the High One.

We have already touched upon *Hávamál*, and this is no doubt the most underestimated poetic source with regard to the structure of *Gylfaginning* (cf. Lindow 1977, 117; Males 2020a, 166). Gylfi's first words in *Gylfaginning* are a quotation of the first stanza of that poem (*Gylf* AF, 8):

Gáttir allar
áðr gangi fram
um skygnask skyli
þvíat óvíst er at vita
hvar óvinir
sitja á fleti fyrir.

One should peep around all doors before one enters, since it difficult to know when enemies are sitting on the bench before one.

Gylfi's reciting of this stanza is deeply ironic, since Óðinn is the speaker of *Hávamál*, and Gylfi is here quoting his poem as if to warn himself against the deceits awaiting him, which are presented by none other than Óðinn. Óðinn's name in *Gylfaginning* is, in fact, that of the title of the poem, *Hár* (in *Hávamál* it is in the weak form *Hávi*). Immediately after speaking the stanza, Gylfi sees the three Óðinns, and the *ginning* proper begins.

Just as the first stanza of *Hávamál* opens the illusion, so its last stanza ends it. *Hár*'s last words are (*Gylf* AF, 54):

'En nú ef þú kant lengra fram at spyrja þá veit ek eigi hvaðan þér kemr þat, fyrir því at óngan mann heyrða ek lengra segja fram aldarfarit. Ok njóttu nú sem þú namt.'

‘But if you can enquire further into the future, then I do not know how that came to you, since I have heard no man relate the passing of the ages further ahead. And now make use of this as you have learnt it.’

The alliterative pair *njóta* : *nema* is a hallmark of *Hávamál*, where it is found twenty-one times. Outside *Hávamál* it is found only in one other Eddic poem, in one of *Sigrdrífumál*’s many allusions to *Hávamál* (Lehmann and Dillard 1954, 108–09). Significantly, the last stanza of *Hávamál* ends with the words *njóti sá er nam / heilir þeirs hlýddu* ‘may he who learned this make use of it / happy be those who have listened.’ In light of the opening quotation of the first stanza of *Hávamál*, there can be little doubt that Hár’s closing words *njóttu nú sem þú namt* are an allusion to *njóti sá er nam* in the last stanza of *Hávamál*. We cannot be certain, of course, that the *Hávamál* that Snorri expected his audience to know was identical to the one found in GKS 2365 4to, but since the exemplar of that text is likely to have been written *c.* 1225–40, it would probably have been largely similar (Lindblad 1965, 273, 276).¹³ At least, the correspondence between its first and last stanzas and the first and last poetic references within the illusion in *Gylfaginning* can hardly be coincidental.

The illusion ends immediately after these words have been uttered and is thus coterminous with Hár’s speech. *Hávamál* is the canonical manifestation of Hár’s speech in the Norse tradition, as well as being the store of wisdom of the pagans, just as Hár’s discourse in *Gylfaginning* is. This discourse thus, in a sense, becomes *Hávamál*, but *Hávamál* as a container, wrapped around other poems treating the cosmology and most important myths of the pagans. Even if only one stanza is quoted, *Hávamál* thus holds the primacy among all poems in *Gylfaginning*, serving as a subtext to the entire discourse.

Immediately before his last words, Hár quotes a stanza from *Vafþrúðnismál*. I give the passage in full (*Gylf* AF, 54):

‘Eina dóttur
berr Alfrøðul
áðr hana Fenrir fari.
Sú skal ríða
er regin deyja
móður braut mær.

En nú ef þú kant lengra fram at spyrja þá veit ek eigi hvaðan þér kemr þat, fyrir því at øngan mann heyrða ek lengra segja fram aldarfarit. Ok njóttu nú sem þú namt.’

¹³ Lindblad (1965, 263–64) sees the exemplar of *Hávamál* as independent from the exemplar(s) of the rest of GKS 2365 4to, but he does not posit an individual *ante quem* for it.

Því næst heyrði Gangleri dyni mikla hvern veg frá sér, ok leit út á hlið sér. Ok þá er hann sæk meir um, þá stendr hann úti á sléttum velli, sér þá önga holl ok önga borg.

‘Alfröðul [the sun] gives birth to a daughter before Fenrir kills her. That maiden shall ride the path of the mother when the gods die.

‘But if you can enquire further into the future, then I do not know how that came to you, since I heard no man relate the passing of the ages further ahead—and now make use of this as you have learnt it.’

Immediately after this, Gangleri heard a great noise from all directions, and he looked to his side. When he looks about further, he is standing on a level field and sees no hall and no fortress.

The stanza quoted above—the last one in *Gylfaginning*—is *Vafþrúðnismál* 47. *Gylfaginning* is a wisdom contest, and if Gylfi/Gangleri cannot produce questions or Hár/Jafnhár/Priði cannot answer them, the one who runs out has lost the contest and his life (*Edda* FJ, 10.7, 48.16–24; *Gylf* AF, 8. 23, 36.32–40). This is a peculiar and by all appearances unfair format, since it is easier to produce questions than to answer them. *Gylfaginning* shares this format with *Vafþrúðnismál*, in which Óðinn, under the name Gagnráðr, travels to Vafþrúðnir to test his wisdom. In laying down the rules of the contest, *Gylfaginning* echoes *Vafþrúðnismál* 7. *Gylfaginning* has *Hár segir at hann komi ekki heill út nema hann sé fróðari* ‘Hár says that he [Gylfi] will not come out whole, unless he is the wiser [of them]’ (*Gylf* AF, 8), whereas *Vafþrúðnismál* has ‘*Út þú né komir . . . nema þú inn snotrari sér*’ ‘you will not come out, unless you are the wiser [of us]’ (Neckel and Kuhn, 46). This threat is a functional part of the narrative situation in *Vafþrúðnismál* but a blind motif in *Gylfaginning*, where Gylfi escapes unharmed despite his ignorance; this suggests a direct borrowing in *Gylfaginning* from the poem. In addition, both texts stress that the visitor remains standing (*Vafþrúðnismál* 9–11; *Gylf* AF, 8).

Since *Vafþrúðnismál* is one of the three ‘backbone poems’ of *Gylfaginning*, there is little reasons to doubt that Snorri imported these features from the poem, although he took the name Gangleri from *Grimnismál*, rather than retaining Gagnráðr. Unlike *Vafþrúðnismál*, however, Óðinn is not the one asking questions in *Gylfaginning*; rather, he has taken on the role of Vafþrúðnir. Another difference is that while the questioner in *Vafþrúðnismál* knows the answer, Gylfi is ignorant and asks out of real curiosity. This adaptation is presumably borrowed from dialogues between a master and a disciple, such as *Elucidarius*, for the didactic purposes of *Gylfaginning*. Finally, in spite of the harsh rules of the contest, no one dies; rather, Hár confesses to having no more knowledge

(*þongan mann heyrða ek lengra segja fram aldarfarit*) and pulls out of the contest before Gylfi can ask the lethal question (*ef þú kant lengra fram at spyrja*). For the narrative purposes of *Gylfaginning*, neither of them could have died, since Hár/Óðinn was supposed to live on and establish his rule and worship, whereas Gylfi had to live to tell the tale and so give rise to paganism.

Hávamál and *Vafþrúðnismál* are brought into close contact at two points in *Gylfaginning*. One of these points is found in the passage above, the other is found in the beginning of the *ginning*: After the first stanza of *Hávamál*, we find the echo of *Vafþrúðnismál* 7. These observations allow us to see that Snorri, within the confines marked by the first and last stanzas of *Hávamál*, has created a similar structure based on *Vafþrúðnismál*, but further into the poem, just as we are now one step further into *Gylfaginning* (he quotes stanzas 7 and 47 out of a total of 55 stanzas).

We are now in a position to discern three ‘frames’ in *Gylfaginning*.¹⁴ The first frame is the physical setting where Gylfi and the Æsir meet, containing one ‘human’ stanza (*Haraldskvæði* 11). As we have seen, the beginning and end of the archetype of *Gylfaginning*, written in the prose of real life, are connected: in the beginning, Gylfi is amazed that all things go according to the will of the Æsir, and in the end, the Æsir become the Æsir of their own stories, thus perpetuating Gylfi’s initial reaction. Within this is the *Hávamál* frame, where the Æsir deceive Gylfi and where the credibility of the deception is supported by the poetry of the magicians/gods, and close to the borders of this frame is the frame of *Vafþrúðnismál*, demarcating the contest. This structure can be visualised as follows:

Æsir amaze-----*Gylfaginning*/historical setting-----Æsir renamed
 Stanza-----*Hávamál*/The *ginning* proper-----echo
 [---] echo-----*Vafþrúðnismál*/contest-----stanza [---]

¹⁴ The walls of these frames can also be construed as mirror images. Lukas Rösli (2013, 291) has discussed some of the relevant prose features and writes: ‘Spiegelungen . . . sind in der *Gylfaginning* ein produktives narratologisches Prinzip, um Welten konstruierend zu erschreiben.’ In a recent study of Snorri’s *Edda* based on Performance Theory, Sandra Schneeberger focuses on frames (*Rahmen*) and repetition (*Wiederholung*), but in her study, ‘frames’ roughly denotes ‘paratext’ and is not connected to repetition. As a result, there is little significant overlap with the present study, except that the presence of a ‘*ginning*’ within the *ginning*’ (see below) has been noted by Schneeberger and other scholars (Schneeberger 2020, 93–97).

This structure is signalled by intertextual hints, to poems or to other parts of *Gylfaginning*. These hints not only mark the lines of division between concentric sections, but also serve as keys to interpreting the situation: *Hávamál* marks the borders of Óðinn's domain and *Vafþrúðnismál* that of the contest. The keys can also be of a more sophisticated nature. Thus, the structure above interacts with a structure of irony relating to the first and last stanza of the *ginning*, that is, *Hávamál* 1 and *Vafþrúðnismál* 47. In the first, the irony is directed at Gylfi, warning himself against Hár by quoting Hár's own words. In the last, it is directed at Óðinn, since while he is the winner of the contest in *Vafþrúðnismál*, he pulls out of the contest in *Gylfaginning*. He is now the one who has no more answers to give and is forced to break the illusion in order to escape. The direction of the irony is in perfect symmetry with who is prevailing at these two points.

Hár's impotence at the end of the contest is rife with meaning. The reader knows that the Æsir did not have access to the ultimate future, since only Sacred Scripture could have provided this. If Hár had been a Christian, *Gylfaginning* need not have ended here—nor would it, of course, have been a *ginning* at all—and Hár would have won the contest. For lack of true knowledge, however, he loses. The end of the *Hávamál* frame, containing the words of the gods, thus also signals the inability of pagan beliefs to bring about ultimate salvation. Quoting his own last words—*Hávamál* 164—Hár must now fall silent. The elaborate structures of *Gylfaginning* are thus not mere technical exhibitions, but they interact with the historical and religious analysis that underlies the text. These structures and their functions are far from obvious, however, and the abbreviator in U cut out Hár's words after *Vafþrúðnismál* 47 as adding no relevant information (*UE*, 84–86).

These structural devices lead us to another one in the same passage, namely the great noise, Gylfi's shifting glance and the disappearance of the illusion, which is paralleled at another point earlier in *Gylfaginning*, namely at the end of the *Útgarðaloki* episode. This episode is a smaller version of the main *ginning*, but with Þórr playing the role of Gylfi/Gangleri.

Let us first compare the opening of the two *ginnings*. At the beginning of the main *ginning*, we read *en er hann kom inn í borgina þá sá hann þar háva holl, svá at varla mátti hann sjá yfir hana* 'and when he [Gylfi] came into the fortress, he saw there a high hall, so that he could barely see over it' (*GylfAF*, 7). At the beginning of the *Útgarðaloki* episode, Þórr and his fellows *sá . . . borg . . . ok settu hnakkann á bak sér dór*

þeir fengu sét yfir upp . . . sá þá hǫll mikla ‘they saw . . . a fortress . . . and put their necks on their backs before they could see over it. [They went in and] then saw a great hall’ (*Gylf AF*, 39). In both instances, there is a *borg* ‘fortress’ around a *hǫll* ‘hall’, the only difference being that in the first instance, it is the hall, not the fortress, that is unnaturally high. This avoids confusion, since it is only the first structure that is *Háva hǫll* ‘the hall of the High One’.

Both *gimmingar* also end in the same way. In the passage ending the main *gimming* quoted above, the narrative runs (*Gylf AF*, 54):

Því næst heyrði Gangleri dyni mikla hvern veg frá sér, ok leit út á hlið sér. Ok þá er hann sésk meir um, þá stendr hann úti á sléttum velli, sér þá önga hǫll ok önga borg.

After this Gangleri heard a great noise from all directions, and he looked to his side. When he looks about further, he is standing on a level field and sees no hall and no fortress.

The *Útgarðaloki* episode ends thus (*Gylf AF*, 43):

En er Þórr heyrði þessa tǫlu greip hann til hamarsins ok bregðr á lopt, en er hann skal fram reiða þá sér hann þar hvergi Útgarðaloka. Ok þá snýsk hann aprtill borgarinnar ok ætlast þá fyrir at brjóta borgina. Þá sér hann þar vǫllu víða ok fagra en önga borg.

But when Þórr heard this talk he grasped for his hammer and swings it into the air, but when he is about to throw it he nowhere sees *Útgarðaloki*. And he then turns back to the fortress and intends to break the fortress. Then he sees a wide and beautiful field, but no fortress.

Just like *Gylfi/Gangleri*, *Þórr* apparently turns his glance away, since when he looks back, the illusion is gone (cf. *Gylf AF*, 68). We note the similarity in wording: *á sléttum velli, sér þá önga hǫll ok önga borg/ sér hann þar vǫllu víða ok fagra en önga borg*. The only factual difference—the mention of a hall in the first instance—corresponds to the opening markers of the main *gimming* and the *Útgarðaloki* episode, where in one instance it is the hall, in the other the fortress, that suggests that something unnatural is going on.

Within these markers of the central illusion, and on both sides of them, there is a complete absence of poetry. This is remarkable, since *Snorri*’s overall method in *Gylfaginning* is to corroborate his narrative by means of poetic quotations or, as he says, *i orðum sjálfra ásanna* ‘in the words of the *Æsir* themselves’ (*Gylf AF*, 34).¹⁵ Some factors are relevant for

¹⁵ In *U Hár*’s comment, which ends in this phrase, has been replaced by *ok enn segir* ‘and [the poem] also says’ (*Edda FJ*, 45).

understanding this absence of poetry. First, we recall that at the end of *Gylfaginning*, the Æsir present themselves as the gods of their own stories, and this is exemplified by Þórr receiving his name. In the innermost frame, this god is himself deceived by an illusion, and I would suggest that he should here be understood in the same way, as a representative of the Æsir as a group.

Furthermore, this is the only time that the Æsir, through Þórr, must give in to reality. In the *Útgarðaloki* episode, Snorri resorts to personification allegory, using expressive names: Hugi is *hugr* ‘mind’, Logi is *logi* ‘flame’, Elli is *elli* ‘old age’. This *ginning* is not meant to obscure, but rather to reveal the true nature of things, and by this means, it unveils the Æsir’s *ginning*. Their own words, in the form of poetry, allow them to present themselves as gods, but when confronted with forces that no human beings, not even magicians, can alter, they are powerless and we no longer hear their words.

This interpretation is supported by the fact that the preceding and following episodes also lack poetry and that the resulting prose section is roughly three times longer than any other in *Gylfaginning*. The preceding episode about Skrímir, the ‘real’ giant behind *Útgarðaloki*, is clearly an introduction to the central frame and is presented as such: *Þat er upphaf þessa máls . . .* ‘It is the beginning of this story . . .’ (*Gylf AF*, 37). The following episode, on Þórr’s fight with the *Miðgarðsormr*, is presented as Þórr’s revenge for his humiliation in *Útgarðaloki*’s fortress, and Snorri returns to this topic by saying that Þórr fooled the *Miðgarðsormr* no less than *Útgarðaloki* had humiliated him (*Gylf AF*, 44). The entire central prose section is thus firmly tied together.

It is not entirely clear which poetic sources Snorri could have quoted in these chapters. Since he did not quote skaldic poetry except in the outermost frame, he could not have quoted the relatively rich body of skaldic poetry relating to Þórr’s fight with the *Miðgarðsormr* (Mogk 1880, 282–88). He seems to have known *Lokasenna* (see below), and one might have expected that he had quoted stanza 60 or 62, where the Skrímir episode is described (Neckel and Kuhn, 108–09).

Snorri does not appear to have known *Hymiskviða*, or at any rate does not use it. In *Hymiskviða*, Hymir is said to be Týr’s father, the reason for the fishing is that Þórr eats too much, Þórr travels with Týr and the bull’s name is not given, all of which is at odds with *Gylfaginning* (the father of Týr is not mentioned in *Gylfaginning*, but Óðinn is his father in *Skáldskaparmál*). Furthermore, there appears to be no significant verbal overlap between *Gylfaginning* and

Hymiskviða. The wording *þá er sagt at jǫtunninn Hymir gerðisk litverpr* ‘it is said that the giant Hymir then changed colour’ (*Gylf* AF, 45) seems to suggest a poetic source, and the name of the bull, *Himinhrjótr*, may also have been culled from such a source. If so, this source has since been lost.

In sum, it seems likely that Snorri had access to Eddic poetry that he could have quoted, but the evidence is scant, with *Lokasenna* being the most convincing potential source. Even in the event that a scarcity of quotable sources suggested that the narrative be in prose, however, he clearly used this conspicuously long prose section as the setting for the *ginning* cancelling the *ginning*. His sophisticated use of poetry as a structural device, connected to the truthfulness or falsehood of the discourse, invites us to see this fact as significant. We are now in a position to draw a chart of all four diminishing frames of *Gylfaginning* and their markers:

Æsir amaze-----*Gylfaginning*/historical setting-----Æsir renamed
 † stanza-----*Hávamál*/The *ginning* proper-----echo †
 [---] echo-----*Vafþrúðnismál*/contest-----stanza [---]
 prose †-----prose/second *ginning*---- † prose

In this figure, the arrows signify the protagonists’ glances, † for looking up, † for looking away. The beginning and end of *Gylfaginning*, as well as of the two *ginningar*, are connected by topic: the magic and deceit of the Æsir in the first instance, glances in the second. The beginning and end of the main *ginning* and the contest are marked by poetry. Poetry serves as an indicator of pagan lies and could therefore not be used to mark the beginning and end of the real historical setting or of the *ginning* cancelling the *ginning*. The confines of the main *ginning* are indicated by both poetry and topic: Poetry marks the borders of the world of pagan deceit, whereas the topic of glances creates a connection between the two *ginningar*. In addition, the act of looking up and looking away creates a thematic connection to the means by which the *ginningar* are produced, namely by *sjónhverfingar* ‘optical illusions’ (literally ‘sight-turnings’), as Snorri twice specifies (*Gylf* AF, 7, 42). Like so many other features in *Gylfaginning*, the two occurrences of this word are perfectly balanced between Gylfi and the Æsir, between truth and falsehood: Gylfi is the victim of the first set of *sjónhverfingar*, Þórr of the second. The epistemic ‘sight-turnings’ (*sjónhverfingar*) of the protagonists are thus paralleled by their physical ‘sight-turnings’ (looking up, looking away).

Treatment of Poetic Sources

The preceding discussion treats Snorri's use of poetry as a structural device, as well as his use of 'true' prose in contrast to 'false' poetry. This aspect of religious truth and falsehood should not be confused with that of historical reliability, however, where the relationship between prose and poetry is inverse: the poetic quotations are the guarantors of the historical accuracy of Snorri's account. In order for the quotations to serve this function successfully, Snorri needed to create a synthesis between older material and his own structured exposition. As we shall see, the structures described above and Snorri's general treatment of poetic sources combine to produce an impression of order, both among the gods and within the poetic tradition.

In another context, I discuss how Snorri aligns his interpretations of poetry with a Christian world-view in *Gylfaginning* (Males 2020a, 164–75). Here it may suffice to say that he seems not to have altered the sources he quotes, but only slanted their interpretation. Only in one instance does he go to extremes, namely in extracting a pagan flood story from *Vafþrúðnismál* 35, which mentions nothing of the sort (Males 2020a, 170–71). Chapter 3 of *Gylfaginning* is a noteworthy exception, however, since Snorri there gives a Genesis-based description of Creation, contradicting much of what follows. Uniquely, he here uses the Christian masculine *Guð* (as shown by the pronoun *sá* in *Hvar er sá guð* . . . , found in all manuscripts), rather than the pagan neuter form (Mogk 1880, 217–19).

I turn now to two passages where I would argue that Snorri's main motivation for deviating from his source was to leave no loose ends. The starkest contrast to a likely source is found in the creation of the first human couple, Askr and Embla, in chapter 9 (Mogk 1880, 234–36). Snorri quotes no source at this point, but the story is known from *Völuspá* 17–18. While *Völuspá* has Óðinn, Hœnir and Lóðurr (= Loki?) create the first humans, in *Gylfaginning* Óðinn, Vili and Vé do so, and whereas in *Völuspá* the Æsir come *at húsi* 'to the house', in *Gylfaginning* they walk *með sjávarströndu* 'along the shore'. In *Völuspá*, the gods find Askr and Embla somehow ready-made, whereas in *Gylfaginning* they find *tré tvau* 'two pieces of wood', from which they fashion the first couple. These differences are far greater than any that are found between *Völuspá* in *Gylfaginning* versus *Völuspá* in R and H, the most significant variant being that *Völuspá* 3.2 has *þar's ekki vas* in *Gylfaginning* against *þar's Ymir byggði* in R and H (Mogk 1880, 220). It is therefore difficult to believe that the differences in Snorri's narration are based on a different version of *Völuspá*.

I would suggest that the account is Snorri's own, based on *Völuspá* as we know it. In chapter 3, Snorri construes the omnipotent Alfqðr ('all-ruler', but reinterpreted as 'all-father' from the late tenth century onwards; see Kuhn 1937, 56–57; Males 2020b, 156–57) as a counterpart to the Christian God. He there says that Alfqðr's greatest creation was that of humankind (*GylfAF*, 8). In chapter 7, we learn that Óðinn, Vili and Vé are omnipotent (*GylfAF*, 11), and in chapter 9, they create the first couple. Snorri thus construes Óðinn, Vili and Vé after the Christian model, as three persons in one Alfqðr.

The alignment with Genesis and Christian doctrine demanded that it be this trinity that created humankind, not Óðinn, Hænir and Lóðurr, whose internal differences did not commend them as three aspects of one godhead. In addition, *Völuspá* 17–18 poses other problems. The phrase *át húsi* raises the question 'which house?', and the statement that the gods found Ask and Embla before giving them life raises the question 'what were they before then?' Snorri may have found an answer to the second question in the name Ask 'ash-tree'. The description of the Æsir walking along the shore may have been prompted by *Völuspá*'s statement that the couple was found *á landi* 'on land', which suggests that they were close to the sea. All differences between *Völuspá* and *Gylfaginning* can thus be accounted for by the Christian alignment of *Gylfaginning* and by a wish to produce a coherent, self-contained account.

This explanation is supported by two factors. First, the relevant stanzas are found in both R and H, and there is thus every reason to believe that Snorri knew them. So why did he not quote his poetic source for the 'greatest act of creation', when he quotes it profusely on the creation of the dwarves? This suggests that for some reason he could not quote it. Second, we have a relatively good grasp on Snorri's sources for Vili and Vé, and it is possible to reconstruct how he drew on these for the overall conceit of *Gylfaginning*. The only source mentioning them both is *Lokasenna* 26, and Snorri at one point quotes a stanza that is pieced together from *Lokasenna* 21, 29 and 47 (*GylfAF*, 21, 63). This suggests that he knew the poem. Furthermore, he seems to draw on *Lokasenna* 26 in chapter 3 of *Ynglinga saga*, where he says that Vili and Vé both married Frigg when Óðinn was away, which is precisely what Loki is accusing her of in *Lokasenna* 26. It therefore seems likely that Snorri extracted Vili and Vé from *Lokasenna*. Vili's relation to Óðinn is clear from *Ynglingatal* 3 and *Sonatorrek* 23, which refer to Óðinn as *Vilja bróður* and *bróður Vilis* respectively (*SkP* 3, 12; *Skj* A I, 43). *Ynglingatal* is quoted in *Ynglinga saga* and *Sonatorrek* 23 in *Skáldskaparmál* (*SkáldAF*, 9). These are all

the known references to Vili/Víilir and Vé, and Snorri apparently knew them all.¹⁶

These sources could easily be combined to suggest that Óðinn, Vili and Vé were brothers. By this means, Snorri got a second Odinic trio, which was necessary in order to build the elaborate conceit of *Gylfaginning*: Hár, Jafnhár and Þriði needed to have internal correspondences that could serve as protagonists of their stories, and more specifically as pagan counterparts to the omnipotent Creator in three persons. But for that purpose, the description in *Völuspá*—featuring three gods that were quite distinct from one another—needed to be altered in order to be consistent with the preceding account. Such a tacit alteration of his source would conform to Snorri's methods in *Gylfaginning* generally, as when he produces a flood from a source that does not mention one or when he places the punishment of the wicked after the doom of the gods, unlike *Völuspá*. If my hypothesis is correct, this is Snorri's greatest alteration of a source so far detected.¹⁷

A similar wish to leave no loose ends may be seen in Snorri's reinterpretation of two other stanzas from *Völuspá* (cf. Mogk 1880, 295). In his description of Ragnarökkr, Snorri says that *Hrymr heitir jötunn er stýrir Naglfara* 'Hrymr is the name of the giant who steers Naglfari' (*Gylf* AF, 50). Here, Snorri has combined statements from two stanzas that follow soon after. I quote the relevant portions (*Gylf* AF, 51):

Hrymr ekr austan
hefisk lind fyrir . . .
Naglfar losnar.
Kjöll ferr austan . . .
en Loki stýrir.

Hrymr drives from the east; he has a shield in front of him . . . Naglfar gets loose. A ship travels from the east . . . and Loki steers it.

The stanza that confirms that Naglfar gets loose also contains the otherwise unknown Hrymr, apparently driving a wagon with a shield in front of him, and it is unclear whether Loki is steering Naglfar or some other ship. In order to quote his source for key aspects of his narrative without leaving any loose ends, Snorri had to account for the name Hrymr found

¹⁶ In *Gylfaginning*, he uses the form *Vili* found in *Lokasenna* and *Ynglingatal*, whereas in *Ynglinga saga*, he uses the form *Víilir* found in *Sonatorrek* (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941, 12).

¹⁷ He also moved the creation of humankind before that of the dwarves, perhaps owing to a perceived precedence of rank.

in the quotation. Since only the verb *ekr* ‘drives’ shows that Hrymr is not steering a ship, Snorri appears to have thought it permissible to let him take over as captain for Loki, who is accounted for in other ways in the prose. By this means, both Loki and Hrymr received clearly delimited functions in the narrative.

These examples illustrate how Snorri would sometimes deviate from his source not only to achieve greater similarity to Christian narratives, but also to produce a sense of coherence regarding all mythological phenomena mentioned in *Gylfaginning* (see also the discussion of *Angrboða* below). I turn now to his treatment of *Hyndluljóð*, which—or part of which—he calls *Vǫluspá in skamma* ‘the short *Vǫluspá*’ (*Gylf AF*, 10; for a discussion of the name and its implications, see von See et al. 2000, 687–88, 773–74). His use of this poem is informative with regard to the character of the poems that he considered quotable in *Gylfaginning*, but also—like *Vǫluspá* 17–18—for showing how he sometimes created order by not quoting his source.

Snorri quotes only one stanza of *Hyndluljóð*, and he does so in much the same way as he quotes *Vǫluspá*: *svá segir í X* ‘as it says in X’; *svá er sagt í X* ‘as it is said in X’. He thus makes no apparent distinction between *Hyndluljóð* and other poems as witnesses to paganism, apart from the fact that he quotes the three main poems (*Vǫluspá*, *Grímnismál* and *Vafþrúðnismál*) much more often. *Fáfnismál*, *Lokasenna*, *Skírnismál* and the otherwise unknown *Heimdallargaldr*, like *Hyndluljóð*, are also quoted only once. What is remarkable about this even-handed treatment is that *Hyndluljóð* is not likely to be a product of the pagan period, but rather of the mythological renaissance of the twelfth century (this may be true of *Skírnismál* as well, but the evidence is inconclusive).¹⁸ This is a crucial point for the evaluation of Snorri’s use of his sources and warrants some discussion.

¹⁸ *Fáfnismál* has secure instances of alliteration in *vr-* and *Lokasenna* has likely instances, as well as a high incidence of expletive *of* (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2017a, 35–36, 54; *pace* von See et al. 1997, 384). Only two lines are quoted from *Heimdallargaldr*, and little can thus be said about that poem (*GylfAF*, 26). Regarding *Skírnismál*, von See et al. argue that the words *móðtregi*, *vafþrlogi* and *endlangr* are only found in young poems, but this may easily be due to chance, and some of these ‘young’ poems are in turn dated based on debatable criteria (von See et al. 2000, 59–60, 64, 526). The incidence of the expletive particle *of* is low, which may point to a late date, but this is an insufficient criterion on its own (Fidjestøl 1999, 224). None of the poems discussed here displays conflicting evidence that might point to a mixture of old and young stanzas.

Hyndluljóð exhibits no alliteration in *vr-*, which would have placed the poem in the period before *c.* 1000. The combined ratio of breaks to the V2 principle in unbound clauses and use of the particle *oflum* in *Hyndluljóð* is well below that of *Völuspá*, but *Hyndluljóð* contains more of these features than *Merlínuspá* (*c.* 1200) (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2012, 264). Given that the period *c.* 1015–1120 is unlikely for the composition of a heavily mythologising poem like *Hyndluljóð*, it is probable that it was composed around the middle of the twelfth century (Males 2020a, 56–75). This is also contextually plausible, given the mythological revival at the time. The words *æ trúði Óttarr | á ásynjur* ‘Óttarr always believed in the *ásynjur*’ in stanza 10 may suggest a Christian perspective, since belief is not an issue in sources that can plausibly be considered pagan. More importantly, it is not likely to have been an issue, since stipulations about what one should believe emerged with the Judeo-Christian tradition and would not be easily compatible with an open, polytheistic outlook. One may compare, for instance, the Classical tradition, where ritual, not belief, was at the centre of attention and where new deities were frequently adopted and adapted to local traditions.

Unlike *Völuspá*, there is little unique mythological material in *Hyndluljóð*, and it may nearly all have been gleaned from older poems (*Völuspá* and *Grímnismál* in particular, but the poet also appears to have used *Eiríksmál* and Eyvindr skáldaspillir’s *Hákonarmál*, both from the tenth century) and historical lore.¹⁹ Snorri seems to draw the name Angrboða from *Hyndluljóð*, which might suggest that he could not find this information elsewhere (*Edda* FJ, lii, 34; *Gylf*AF, 27). The more likely explanation, however, is that Angrboða in *Hyndluljóð* should be understood as a *heiti* ‘poetic synonym’ meaning ‘boder of sorrow’, used of a giantess who would bring ruin to gods and men, and that Snorri construed the word as a proper name in his efforts to be genealogically comprehensive. The presence of this name in *Hyndluljóð* is thus probably due to knowledge, not of mythology, but of poetic diction.

Hyndluljóð exhibits an encyclopaedic tendency, gathering the major royal families with a divine background into the lineage of the otherwise unknown Óttarr heimski. It does not have the linearity of earlier genealogical poems, but rather, is a kind of mythological and legendary

¹⁹ von See et al. 2000, 687. The names of Heimdallr’s nine mothers in *Hyndluljóð* 37 are unique, but a mention of them is found in *Húsdrápa*, quoted in *Skáldskaparmál* (*Skáld* AF, 20). This enumeration of giantesses’ names could easily have been produced in the context of learned speculation and the compilation of *þulur*.

‘best of’. In this regard, it bears comparison to *Háttalykill* (c.1140) and *Íslendingadrápa* (second half of the twelfth century), each of which gathers much historical material into one poetic compendium. *Málsháttakvæði* (c.1200) also collects much seemingly random mythological lore. The name of the unknown and possibly non-existent addressee, Óttarr ‘the stupid’, supports the possibility that we are dealing with learned speculation.²⁰ There are thus many and good reasons to assume that *Hyndluljóð* was composed in the twelfth century.

This means that quotation in *Gylfaginning* is not a guarantee that a poem was composed in the pagan period, although such a rule would probably have few exceptions. It seems likely that Snorri quoted authoritative, pagan compositions when he could, but that he quoted a poem like *Hyndluljóð* when it contained information he wanted. Since *Hyndluljóð* contains little unique information, this happened only once. Still, it was a long mythological poem, and as such it could receive the distinction of being quoted.

At another point, it is the lack of a quotation of *Hyndluljóð* that is informative. As noted above, Snorri apparently got the name Angrboða from *Hyndluljóð* 40. Hár mentions her before enumerating Loki’s three children with her: *Eitt var Fenrisúlfr, annat Jormungandr (þat er Miðgarðsormr), þriðja er Hel* (*Gylf* AF, 27). Snorri could not have quoted his source at this point, since that stanza mentions the wolf (with Angrboða), Sleipnir (with Svaðilfari) and Hel (no mention of the other parent). This would not make for a systematic overview of Loki’s children with different partners. As noted in the discussion of *Völuspá* 17–18, it would appear that Snorri avoided quoting his source if this would upset the sense of internal coherence.

We note here also that Snorri uses the designation *Jormungandr* ‘great staff’ for the *Miðgarðsormr*. This name is not only descriptive, like *Miðgarðsormr*, but also figurative, since a snake is not a staff. It is found in Bragi and in *Völuspá*, and its figurative nature in combination with its first attestation in the work of a poet who is semantically daring even by skaldic standards suggest that *Jormungandr* was originally not a name, but a poetic circumlocution, later echoed in *Völuspá*. Based on Snorri, *Jormungandr* is today often construed as the ‘real’ name of the *Miðgarðsormr*, and this was certainly how Snorri wanted his text to be

²⁰ Andy Orchard (2011, 339) has argued that Óttarr heimski could be a satirical designation for Óttarr birtingr, who despite his lowly birth married the widow of King Haraldr gilli before being assassinated in 1140. If so, this would support a late date and a reconstructive approach to the mythology.

understood—compare, for instance, how he extracted the names of Hár, Jafnhár and Þriði from the list of poetic *heiti* for Óðinn in *Grímnismál*. I would suggest, however, that both *Angrboða* and *Jormungandr* became proper names only in *Gylfaginning*, and that one of the ways in which Snorri used his poetic sources was to extract names from poetic synonyms. By this method, the mythological world gained clearer contours, but Snorri nonetheless appeared to have tradition behind him in his descriptions. This was a brilliant and successful technique, with ramifications reaching deep into modern scholarship.

Snorri's treatment of another stanza is informative with regard to the kind of poetry he did not quote, even if it would not hurt the sense of internal coherence. It now seems clear that Snorri made use of the treatise on kennings and *heiti* called *Litla Skálda* in modern scholarship (Males 2020a, 129–47). Among other things, he transformed a stanza found in *Litla Skálda* into prose. The stanza lists the components of Gleipnir, the fetter that was finally able to hold Fenrir (Jón Sigurðsson et al., II 432, 515):

Ór kattar dyn
ok ór konu skeggi,
ór fisks anda
ok ór fugla mjólk,
ór bergs rótum
ok bjarnar sinum,
ór því var hann Gleipnir gerr.

From the noise of the cat and from the beard of the woman, from the breath of the fish and from the milk of birds, from the roots of the mountain and from the sinews of the bear—from this Gleipnir was made.

Gylfaginning has (*Gylf* AF, 28):

Hann [Gleipnir] var gjørr af sex hlutum: af dyn kattarins ok af skeggi konunnar ok af rótum bjargsins ok af sinum bjarnarins ok af anda fisksins ok af fogs hráka.

It [Gleipnir] was made from six things: from the noise of the cat and from the beard of the woman and from the roots of the mountain and from the sinews of the bear and from the breath of the fish and from the spittle of the bird.

By inverting the order of the words, Snorri has removed the metre from the stanza (for a discussion of the variants *mjólk/hráka*, see Males 2020a, 142–43).

I would suggest that Snorri's main reason for transforming the stanza into prose was that it did not belong to a known and prestigious poem. He quotes single stanzas from *Hyndluljóð*, *Fáfnismál*, *Lokasenna* and *Skírnismál*, and the name *Heimdallargaldr* suggests that the couplet he

quotes is also from a longer poem. The provenance of four and a half stanzas in *Gylfaginning* is unknown to us, but given how Snorri worked with poetic subtexts and pointers, it is likely that he expected his most competent readers to recognise them (*Gylf* AF, 24.3–15, 30.11–20, 48.4–9). This is supported by Saxo's knowledge of two of these, namely the stanzas spoken by Njörðr and Skaði (*Gylf* AF, 24; see Friis-Jensen 1987, 158–61). The stanza about Gleipnir, by contrast, does not appear to belong to a higher poetic register or a longer poem. Its main function is probably mnemonic.

Snorri's reworking of such a stanza into prose suggests that he applied a criterion of dignity in choosing his quotations. What made a poem worthy of quotation was not, or at least not exclusively, that it was authentically pagan, but rather its potential for activating textual connections: from stanzas to the poem where they belonged and from keywords to the stanzas where they belonged. I would argue that he inherited this technique from the skalds. Already in the tenth century, skalds made pointed allusions to each other's poems by twisting memorable kennings and phrases and placing them in a new context (Patria 2020, 177–233; Males 2020a, 'Index', s.v. *paraphrase*). A canon of longer poems and well-known stanzas took part in this network of textual communication, whereas single stanzas serving pragmatic functions had no context that could be altered and no prestige to add to the composition.

This skaldic mode of intertextuality may also be recognised in the occasional use of a noteworthy word or expression found in a famous poem. Thus, for instance, Snorri says that bellows are called *isarnkol* 'iron-coals' *i sumum fræðum* 'in some lore' (*Gylf* AF, 14.3). In fact, the word is used in *Grimnismál* 37, and the reader—invited to join in the multi-layered wisdom contest that is *Gylfaginning*—is challenged to retrieve it.

Later, when reporting the story of the binding of Fenrir, Snorri adds these seemingly superfluous words about the sword: *þat er góm sparri hans* 'that is his gum-spar' (*Gylf* AF, 29; for a detailed discussion, see Males 2020a, 85–87). *Góm sparri* is here presented as a designation for the sword in Fenrir's mouth, and this unique word has been extracted from the kenning *gylðis kindar góm sparri* 'the wolf's offspring's [wolf's] gum-spar [sword]' in Einar Skúlason's *Geisli* (stanza 48). *Geisli* is a twelfth-century hagiographical poem about Saint Óláfr, and this kenning comes as a shock, being the only specific mythological kenning in the entire poem. Snorri's allusion to it is equally startling, as the only reference to a hagiographical text in a cosmos of pagan lies. This is skaldic referentiality of the highest order.

Less spectacular, but equally informative, is an echo of *Húsdrápa*. At the end of Þórr's encounter with the Miðgarðsormr, *Gylfaginning* says that *segja menn at hann lysti af honum hqfuðit við hrönnunum*²¹ 'people say that he hewed his head off over the waves' (*GylfAF*, 45). *Húsdrápa*, which is quoted in *Skáldskaparmál*, reads *laust . . . af fránum naðri . . . hlusta grunn við hrönnum* 'hewed . . . off the gleaming snake . . . the ground of hearing [head] . . . over the waves' (*Skáld AF*, 17).

Hár alludes to *Húsdrápa* as the opinion of 'people', to the effect that the Miðgarðsormr was killed, but he then says that the truth is that he is still out there (as in Bragi and *Hymiskviða*). This is, as far as I am aware, a unique instance where Snorri passes sentence on conflicting information found in the skaldic canon.²² The intertextual dimension is lost in U, where the abbreviator has Þórr beating Hymir's head off, rather than that of the serpent (*Edda FJ*, 63).

Snorri's treatment of *Húsdrápa* is part of his overall engagement with the poetic canon in order to present a 'Vulgate' version of pagan mythology. In *Gylfaginning*, the great poems are woven together into a synthesis, proper names are assigned and inconsistencies are ironed out. The structure and coherence of *Gylfaginning* is based on the poetic tradition, but *Gylfaginning* in turn works as a lens through which that tradition appears more coherent than the vicissitudes of oral transmission on their own would have allowed.

Conclusions

Scholars have investigated Snorri's use of poetry in *Gylfaginning* with an eye to the reliability of the narrative, and for good reason, but that is only part of the story. *Gylfaginning* is by far the most artful prosimetrical composition in Old Norse literature, and it should be studied as such. I would suggest that the genesis of such a structural and allusive masterpiece should not be sought in other prose texts, but in the poetic tradition. Snorri was a skald, and long skaldic poems—*drápur* in particular—display a structure of symmetrical frames (*upphaf*, *stefjabálkr* and *slæmr*) and pointed intertextuality, like *Gylfaginning*. Just as the First Grammarian

²¹ Thus WT. R has *grunninum*, presumably due to confusion with *grunn* in the stanza. This is supported by *háunum* 'rowlocks' in U, which must go back to *hrönnunum*, not *grunninum* (*UE*, 74).

²² In the discussion of *lið/lið* in *Skáldskaparmál*, by contrast, he gives two conflicting accounts at different points in the text (see discussion in Males 2020a, 161–64).

inherited some of his analytical acuity from the skalds, so Snorri could draw on established techniques in his novel undertaking. In *Gylfaginning*, he took all of his influences—scholastic dialogues, Eddic plots, skaldic structural principles and allusive techniques—to new levels of complexity. The prosimetrum of *Gylfaginning* is built with these tools, but additional aspects raise it to the level of genius: the illusions are coterminous with the ‘words of the gods’, and the subtext of the parts of poems that have been left out at times becomes almost as important as the stanzas Snorri actually quotes.

In order to retain a sense of coherence on a more detailed level, Snorri left out quotations from some sources and slightly reinterpreted others. Poetic sources of a less dignified nature were reworked into prose, and allusions invited the reader to activate his knowledge of the poetic canon—a canon based on tradition, but further defined by its presentation in *Gylfaginning* itself. The semantic range and structural brilliance of *Gylfaginning* can only be appreciated by taking poetry seriously into account, and it could not have been produced by any other method.

Manuscripts

A: Reykjavík, AM 748 Ib 4to, c.1300–25

Copenhagen, GKS 2365 4to (*Codex Regius* of Eddic poetry), c.1270

H: AM 544 4to (Hauksbók), early fourteenth century

Reykjavík, AM 748 Ia 4to, c.1300–25

R: Copenhagen, GKS 2367 4to (*Codex Regius* of Snorri’s *Edda*), c.1300–50

T: Universiteitsbibliotheek, Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht, Traj 1374 (*Codex Trajectinus*), c.1595

W: Copenhagen, AM 242 fol. (*Codex Wormianus*), c.1340–70

U: Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, DG 11 4to (*Codex Upsaliensis*), c.1300–25

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PRINTING THE PAST? SEEKING ‘AUTHENTIC’ ICELAND THROUGH PROVERB COLLECTION

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IN COPENHAGEN IN 1830, Guðmundur Jónsson published the first ever printed book dedicated entirely to Icelandic-language proverbs: *Safn af íslenskum orðskviðum, forn-mælum, heilræðum, snillir-yrðum, sannmælum og málsgreinum*. In his introduction, he cites three eighteenth-century manuscripts as his sources, but until now, only one of those sources has been publicly identified. This article presents the results of a study of Guðmundur’s project, identifying his three source manuscripts and offering some preliminary conclusions about his collecting habits. As it turns out, Guðmundur did not limit himself to the three manuscripts he mentions, and in fact he was very selective in his use of these sources for his printed collection.

Throughout this article, I will use proverbs beginning with A (long and short) as a control group to render manageable the large quantity of data, though I will also make reference to select sets of proverbs outside of this group. For the sake of thoroughness, I have treated variant readings as constituting separate proverbs. Hence *Annað er á vori, annað á hausti* ‘It’s one thing in spring and another in autumn’ and *Annað er vorhugi, annað vetrarhugi* ‘It’s one thing in spring thoughts and another in winter thoughts’ are counted as two different proverbs, although Guðmundur lists them as one with *er vorhugi, annað vetrarhugi* as a variant (1830, 35). A comparison of Guðmundur’s book with his sources provides evidence for strong biases in what he considers worthy of print; in particular, he demonstrates a decided preference for proverbs written in the third person, even though his sources offer many first-person examples, and he excludes almost all proverbs that have to do with Christianity or a monotheistic God, which are plentiful in his sources. Guðmundur’s approach offers insight into an educated Icelander’s relationship with his cultural past in a period of increasing national pride, which went hand in hand with a prevailing antiquarianism. Far from being a neutral transcriber of the past, Guðmundur uses his power as editor to exercise aesthetic judgments about how a proverb should sound, and also to create an archive of what he considers ‘authentic’ Icelandic wisdom

sayings by excluding almost everything that explicitly post-dates the Viking period.

Although there are earlier printed collections of proverbs, Guðmundur's *Safn* has a special place in history because earlier collections such as his sources were limited to manuscript form, or, like the earlier published collections of Peder Låle or Peder Syv, were printed primarily in Latin or Danish. Gunnar Pálsson's 1728 collection, the only printed assembly of Icelandic-language proverbs that precedes Guðmundur's *Safn*, consisted of a single chapter in a larger primer. *Gudmundi Olavi Thesaurus adagiorum linguae septentrionalis antiquae et modernae*, which was assembled by Guðmundur Ólafsson in the last decades of the seventeenth century, was not published until 1930 (see Jón Friðjónsson 2014, xvi–xvii). Hence, Guðmundur's *Safn af Íslenzkum orðskviðum* is the first printed, book-length collection dedicated solely to the preservation of proverbs in Icelandic.

The staff at the Árni Magnússon Institute and National Library in Reykjavik have helped to identify Guðmundur's three cited sources as JS 116 8vo, Lbs 3720 4to and Lbs 648 fol.¹ For convenience, I will refer to them as the octavo, the quarto and the folio. Each manuscript stands in a unique relationship to the *Safn* that is worth exploring in some detail.

The octavo is a complicated case, highlighting the difficulties of this kind of archival work when so little evidence survives. In fact, it is not at first glance the most likely candidate because Guðmundur describes his source as an *autographum* by Eyjólfur Jónsson of Vellir, 1670–1745 (see Páll Eggert Ólason 1948, I 459). A completely different manuscript, JS 407 4to, is the only surviving proverb collection known to be in Eyjólfur's own hand (see Páll Eggert Ólason 1948, II 567; see also ÍB 67 4to, which is known to have been penned by Eyjólfur).² It would seem, then, that JS 407 4to is likely to be Guðmundur's source. However, this manuscript consists of a mere fifteen pages, with half that length given over to a Latin explanation of each proverb. Among the proverbs in the control group selected for this study, only one is unique to this shorter collection; all the others are witnessed by at least

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² I am grateful to Halldóra Katrinsdóttir for alerting me to the connection with ÍB 67 4to.

one of the other source manuscripts. The presence of this one unique proverb seems likely to be a fluke rather than evidence that this was Guðmundur's source; we will see below that Guðmundur did not adhere strictly to the three manuscripts he specifies. The octavo, on the other hand, makes no claim to be an autograph, and the handwriting is distinct from that of JS 407 4to. Nonetheless, several factors argue in its favour as being at least a copy of Guðmundur's actual source.

The material in the octavo collection is very likely to have been compiled by Eyjólfur even though this copy is not in his hand. First of all, the collection is simply much more capacious, having 221 proverbs beginning with A as opposed to thirty-four in JS 407 4to. It stands to reason that Guðmundur would choose an extensive collection as his source. Second, the Latin catalogue of bishops that forms the last portion of this compilation manuscript was assembled by Eyjólfur (*concinatus a Domino Ejufo Jonæ filio*) and is dated 1744, a year before his death (p. 167). The hand that copied this catalogue is the same one that copied the proverb collection at the beginning of the manuscript. So the two works at some point passed through the same hands, possibly within Eyjólfur's household or sphere of influence, meaning that the proverb collection copied into the octavo could very reasonably be his. Lastly, the sheer number of proverbs from the octavo that appear in Guðmundur's book argue for its being his source. Approximately ninety percent of the octavo's proverbs beginning with A are found in the *Safn*, a significantly higher rate than for either of the other two sources and high enough to preclude chance as an explanation. Guðmundur may not have used this exact copy, but the material seems almost certainly to be the same as his actual source.

It is worth noting that in the octavo, Eyjólfur's proverbs are bound together with two other collections of proverbs in addition to the catalogue of bishops. The first is in a different hand from that of the main one, bound in after circulating separately for some time: the first page of the second collection shows wear typical of first pages in pamphlet-bound manuscripts. The second set, in a much later hand, cites sources of many of these proverbs in a second column on each page. This set of proverbs is dated to the 1840s and so would not have been available to Guðmundur (see the catalogue entry for JS 116 8vo on *handrit.is*). In his introduction to the *Safn*, Guðmundur states that one Benedikt Pálsson added to Eyjólfur's collection (14), but it is unclear whether he is referring to this second collection in the volume or whether he means that Benedikt's contributions were incorporated by Eyjólfur into his fair

copy. Because the second collection clearly circulated in the sphere of Eyjólfur's influence and is not much later than the main collection, it is conceivable that Guðmundur could have had access to this second collection when he used the autograph manuscript as his source. However, it seems unlikely that he did see it because he clearly did not use it as a source: of the proverbs on the first two pages, 48% are not represented in the *Safn*, and of the ones that are, only one is not found in one of Guðmundur's other manuscripts. I suspect this outlier is another coincidence. If such a trove of additional proverbs was available to him, surely he would have used it.

The quarto, written by Halldór Hjálmarsson of Hólar, 1745–1805 (see Páll Eggert Ólason 1948, II 256–57), is the least problematic of the three manuscript sources: the title page and colophon, which Guðmundur transcribes in his introduction (14–15), confirm it to be the book Guðmundur used. However, the manuscript has itself a complex history, in that Halldór is not the one who compiled the proverbs in it: this was done by Magnús Hálfðan Einarsson, who, Halldór claims in his colophon (Lbs 3720 4to 159), wrote up the collection in Copenhagen. Another man ('old Jón of Grunnavík', Halldór calls him) supplemented Magnús's collection with additions from six other books, making, apparently, quite a mess of Magnús's manuscript. Halldór went to the labour of creating a fair copy which, he notes, he compared with Eyjólfur's collection because they were so similar he at first suspected that Magnús might have used Eyjólfur's book as a basis for his own.³ Eyjólfur's farm of Vellir in the north of Iceland is very close to Hólar, and there is a fairly high overlap rate between the octavo and the quarto. Eighty-four proverbs beginning with A are shared between the octavo and the quarto, compared with eight proverbs shared between the octavo and the folio, and twenty-nine between the quarto and the folio. Despite this high overlap rate, if Magnús really had used the octavo as his source text, we would probably expect rather more of the octavo's 221 A-proverbs to show up in his collection, which is Halldór's conclusion as well.

The folio, written in 1761 by Ólafur Gunnlaugsson of Svefneyjar, (1688–1784; see Páll Eggert Ólason 1948, IV 49–50), is in some ways

³ Halldór writes, *Síra Eyjólf's málshætti, autogr., hefi eg sæð, voru þeir réttskrifaðir, sem von var, af hönum, og vel niðrsettir eptir stafrofinu; en þar þessa vaniæði víða þetta hvortveggja, er það nóg bevising til þess, að rektor sál. hefir ei skrifað eptir hans autogr* (Lbs 3720 4to 159, quoted in Guðmundur 1830, 15).

the most interesting case of all. In his 1918 catalogue of the National Library's manuscript collection, *Skrá um handritasöfn Landsbókasafnsins*, Páll Eggert Ólason specifically identifies this manuscript as Guðmundur's source (*aukabindi* 3, 11), yet it is the source with the lowest rate of correspondence to the *Safn*. This is an absolutely voluminous collection, with sometimes more than eighty proverbs on each page, often with items crammed into the empty spaces at the ends of lines. Of the 1,250 proverbs beginning with A in the folio, only 423 are found in Guðmundur's *Safn*. That means that fully 66% of the A-proverbs in the folio are unaccounted for by Guðmundur, compared with 10% in the octavo and 13% in the quarto. The explanation for this anomaly lies in the manuscript's title page, where Ólafur describes his book as a collection of *orðskviðar og málsgreinir* 'proverbs' and what we might call 'sayings', which he considers wholesome and useful. As his own sources, he cites Scripture first, then the sagas, then *rit fornaldarmanna* 'the writings of men of old', then other various materials in Icelandic and other languages, and lastly material *af eigin eptirtekt og reynslu diktað* 'dictated by his own observation and experience' (Lbs 648 fol. 1, quoted in Guðmundur 1830, 16).

The items collected so copiously in this folio, then, are not all 'proverbs' *per se*, but more generally moral sentiments expressed in aphoristic form, and their sources are wide-ranging and international. Guðmundur notes in his introduction that the use of this manuscript greatly expanded the scope of his project (*Hefir því safn þetta vaxið langt fram yfir það, sem eg í fyrstu tilætlaði* (17)), and yet even so, he was extremely selective in what he recorded, and his reasoning is not always easily deciphered. For instance, the folio has twenty-two proverbs about the *ágjarn maður* 'ambitious man' (Lbs 648 fol. 5). Guðmundur uses two of them. Why only two? It stands to reason that some of Ólafur's *málgreinir* would not fit what Guðmundur thought of as a proper proverb, but if one saying about an ambitious man counted as proverbial, why not the others? One source of insight is Jón Friðjónsson's 2014 *Orð að sönnu*, a compendium of Icelandic proverbs from a large number of printed sources.⁴ Of all the twenty-two 'ambitious man'

⁴ Hermann Pálsson also compiled a large compendium of Icelandic proverbs and Latin equivalents, but the project was unfinished upon his death and remains unpublished. I have not examined this work myself, but I am grateful to Rudolf Simek for informing me about it and hope other scholars may find knowledge of its existence useful.

proverbs in the folio, Jón lists only those two that Guðmundur used. He found them in the *Safn* to begin with, but it may be significant that of all the other sources Jón cross-referenced for his compendium, the folio's other twenty 'ambitious man' proverbs do not appear in any. Whether Guðmundur, then, was comparing his three main source manuscripts to others he does not cite, or whether he was relying on his own recognition of proverbs that he had heard before, he seems to have eliminated from his *Safn* any 'anomalous' material that he felt would not have been popularly recognised as proverbs.

By looking at these three manuscripts together, we can gain some idea of which proverbs in Guðmundur's *Safn* were, in fact, popular and recognisable to Icelanders of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Of the 645 proverbs beginning with A in Guðmundur's *Safn*, eighty appear in all three manuscript sources. These popular proverbs include such items as *Af börnum verða aldraðir menn* 'from children come old men', *Af góðum huga koma góð verk* 'from good thoughts come good works' and *Af tómri könnu tapar enginn þorsta* 'from an empty jug no thirst is slaked'. Interestingly, although the multiple witnesses attest to the popularity of these proverbs, popularity is not necessarily an indicator of their antiquity: of the eighty proverbs witnessed by all three manuscripts, forty-seven are dated by Jón G. Friðjónsson to the eighteenth century—that is, during or within a few decades of the lifetimes of the manuscripts' authors. By contrast, only four are found in the sagas or other medieval material, one each from *Hávamál*, *Brennu-Njáls saga*, *Hugsvinnsmál*, and *Elis saga og Rósamundu*.⁵

Guðmundur sometimes records proverbs in the *Safn* that do not appear in the manuscripts he says that he used. Fully twenty-two percent of the *Safn*'s A-proverbs are not found in any of his three sources. This anomalous clutch of proverbs does not, in fact, come from nowhere; their presence is probably a function of the fact that, as Guðmundur himself notes in his introduction, Benedikt Thorsteinsson, who wrote the Danish preface to the *Safn*, went through Guðmundur's draft and added material from a collection by Jón Árnason (not the folklore specialist).⁶ This

⁵ Respectively: *Að kvöldi skal dag leyfa* (Jón G. Friðjónsson 2014, 407), *Allt orkar tvímælis, þá gjört er* (583), *Ást fylgir aums gjöfum* (30), *Af litlu má manninn marka* (359).

⁶ 'Nokkrum af þessum málsgreinum hefir fækkað Hra. Amtmaðr B. Thorsteinsson, sem hefir auðsýnt mér þá velvild að gegnumganga þetta safn, og bæta þarí nokkrum málsháttum úr orðskvðasafni fyrrum Hólastóls Ökónóms Jóns Arnasonar' (Guðmundur 1830, 17).

manuscript I have been unable to identify, and so comparative study is currently impossible. However, interpretive questions are raised by the 10% of the octavo's proverbs and the 13% of the quarto's which are not represented in the printed book that purports to use those manuscripts as a source. Twenty-two of the octavo's A-proverbs and thirty-five of the quarto's are passed over by the *Safn*. Eleven of these appear in both manuscripts, meaning that Guðmundur leaves out a total of forty-six proverbs just from the A's. They include *Allt er vitskunni undirgefit* 'everything is subject to wisdom' (JS 116 8vo 5),⁷ *Allt hold er lygi gjarnt* 'all flesh is eager for a lie' (JS 116 8vo 6; Lbs 3720 4to 8), *Allir kunna nokud* 'everyone knows something' (Lbs 3720 4to 6) and *Ad oskum eru aller eins riker* 'everyone wants to be rich' (Lbs 3720 4to 11). That is to say nothing, of course, of the folio's 825 items beginning with A that are not found in the *Safn*. In other words, although a few of these proverbs occur in other collections, like *Allir hlutir hafa tvo álit* 'all things have two sides' (JS 116 8vo 4), which is attested from the seventeenth century (Jón G. Friðjónsson 2014 27), a huge number of them have never found their way into print and can only be known now through the manuscripts that preserve them.

Why are these proverbs left out? By what standard does Guðmundur judge the items in his sources, given that he passes over so many even from the octavo and quarto, which do not share the folio's eclectic approach? And when his text does not match the version in the manuscript witnesses, where does he get his version from and how does he choose what to record? Although definitive answers may be impossible, some intriguing hypotheses are suggested by the evidence available to us.

A number of Guðmundur's editorial decisions demonstrate how active he is in curating his collection. Although Guðmundur's practice of listing variant readings in parentheses gives an air of scholarly thoroughness to his project, there are cases in which the manuscripts have variants that Guðmundur does not record: for instance, he records one familiar proverb as *Að kvöldi skal dag leyfa* 'in the evening shall the day be praised', but two of his three sources add the expected *enn morgun mey* 'but in the morning, the maid' (Guðmundur 1830, 22; JS 116 8vo 2; Lbs 3720 4to 2; Lbs 648 fol. 9, the latter two having the additional phrase). This proverb from *Hávamál* is too well known for Guðmundur not to have recognised the last phrase as genuine; either he thought it so well known that it was unnecessary to take up space with the additional

⁷ All abbreviations are silently expanded.

three words (unlikely, given that he sometimes records more words than his sources attest, as discussed below), or he thought them indelicate. There is limited evidence to support the notion that he may have avoided the indelicate where possible, albeit a different kind of indelicacy: although he seems to have had no issue with the past participle of the verb *skíta* ‘to shit’, recording it in ten different proverbs over the course of his book, at least twice he avoids the word when his witnesses feature it as the main verb or noun. He gives *Sá er fuglinn verstr, sem í sjálfs síns hreiðr dritr* ‘the worst bird is the one that fouls its own nest’ (281) where the quarto has *skítr* (Lbs 3720 4to 118) rather than the milder *dritr*, with its etymological link to bird droppings. Likewise, he gives *Skarni launar hegrinn fóstrið* ‘the heron is rewarded with dung for fostering young’ (316) where both witnesses have *skíti* (JS 116 8vo 69, Lbs 3720 4to 129) for *skarni* ‘manure’. The resulting proverbs are perhaps less colourful but slightly more decorous than those in his sources.

On the other hand, in three instances Guðmundur records more than the manuscripts do, always with phrases at the end of a proverb: for instance, both witnesses lack the last four words of what Guðmundur records as *Allt er það matr, sem í magann kemr, nema holtarót og harðasægjur* ‘everything is food that comes into the belly, except holt-root and hard-boiled eggs’ (Guðmundur 1830, 32; Lbs 3720 4to 9; Lbs 648 fol. 16). This proverb, which is attested from the sixteenth century (Jón G. Friðjónsson 2014, 384), offers at least one easily attainable explanation for the variation between Guðmundur and his sources: these proverbs, in which he records more than the manuscripts do, were well-known sayings that probably even the manuscript scribes expected their readers to know. In one case, in fact, the folio has ‘etc.’ where the phrase cuts off (Lbs 648 fol. 13). It is similar to the way in which English-speakers now say, ‘If you can’t stand the heat . . .’ trusting their interlocutors to fill in ‘get out of the kitchen’ on their own.

Most cases of variance are less easy to explain. At times the manuscript witnesses agree with each other against Guðmundur’s version: for his proverb *Andsvar hlýðir ei öllum spurningum* ‘there is not a fitting answer for all questions’ (35), both witnesses agree on *hæfir* rather than *hlýðir* (JS 116 8vo 6, Lbs 3720 4to 11), a verb with approximately the same meaning but nevertheless a different verb. In fact, the *Safn* contains no fewer than seventeen A-proverbs where no manuscript exactly matches Guðmundur’s version. It also has at least twelve proverbs in which variants listed by Guðmundur are not attested in any witness. And even when the version Guðmundur records does appear in his sources,

it is often impossible to say why he chooses one variant over another. For instance, Guðmundur gives one proverb as *Argr er sá, sem engu verst* ‘disgraceful is he who defends himself with nothing’ (37), which is the version in the octavo (JS 116 8vo 7). But the quarto has *verndar* for *verst*, rendering the same meaning with a different verb (Lbs 3720 4to 10), while the folio replaces *engu verst* with *med Eingu verndar sig*, having the same meaning but clearer syntax (Lbs 648 fol. 18). What makes Guðmundur choose the variant in the octavo over the other two options? In such cases, there is no discernible pattern in which he prioritises one manuscript over another. Perhaps the best hypothesis, in the absence of other evidence, is that Guðmundur was relying on his own extensive knowledge of Icelandic proverbs, picking the version he recognised or knew best and ignoring or recording as variants the other versions that he found in his sources.

Personal taste may be a tenuous explanation for the above discrepancies between source and *Safn*, but two patterns for particular exclusions tell us something about Guðmundur’s project and, in fact, support the idea that taste had a great deal to do with his process. These are the seemingly deliberate reduction in the number of proverbs beginning with the first-person pronoun and the passing over of proverbs having to do with Christianity. The octavo records sixty-five proverbs beginning with the pronoun *ég* ‘I’. Of these first-person proverbs, forty-three (66%) are absent from Guðmundur’s printed collection. Similarly, 57% of the quarto’s first-person proverbs and 74% of the folio’s are absent from the *Safn*. To be fair, some of those missing proverbs do show up in different forms, often transformed into the third person: for instance, Guðmundur has *Hann á í vök að verjast* ‘He has to defend himself in a hole’ for *Ég á . . .* ‘I have to . . .’, an idiom for being ‘in a tight spot’ (Guðmundur 1830, 129; JS 116 8vo p. 16). But the fact that the proverb appears in the third person only proves that Guðmundur distinctly favours proverbs that were not in the first and uses other versions whenever possible despite the fact that first-person proverbs are plentiful in general. Whereas first-person proverbs make up 17% of the total E-proverbs in the octavo and 12% of the total in the quarto, in Guðmundur’s *Safn* only 5% of the E-proverbs begin with *ég*. The percentage is higher than the folio’s 2%, but the folio’s proportions are skewed by the vast number of entries beginning with *ecki* ‘not’ and negative pronouns like *einginn* ‘no one’ and *eckert* ‘nothing’.

We can only speculate as to the reason behind the disproportionate exclusion of first-person proverbs, but one possibility is that statements that began with ‘I’ simply did not seem properly proverbial to Guðmundur.

English may share this prejudice; one of the only first-person examples familiar to English speakers now would be, ‘I complained I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet’, and that is not even English in origin. It is probably Persian, derived from the thirteenth-century poet Saadi Shirazi (2013, Chapter III, Story 19):

I never lamented about the vicissitudes of time or complained of the turns of fortune except on the occasion when I was barefooted and unable to procure slippers. But when I entered the great mosque of Kufah with a sore heart and beheld a man without feet I offered thanks to the bounty of God, consoled myself for my want of shoes.

Proverbs, one might conclude, feel aesthetically more proverbial when they take the third-person form familiar from gnomic verse. Wolfgang Mieder’s (2004, 1) comment on the nature of proverbial wisdom is useful here: ‘Proverbs fulfill the human need to summarise experiences and observations into nuggets of wisdom that provide ready-made comments on personal relationships and social affairs.’ Underlying this statement is the implication that before they can be applied to personal experiences, they must first be generalised; citing a first-person proverb seems only to apply some other individual’s experience to one’s own. Guðmundur did consent to record a total of forty-eight proverbs beginning with *ég*, so his archival impulses must sometimes have overcome his aesthetics, but there may simply have been something about the immediacy and individuality of a first-person voice that felt too personal for a proverb.

More significant is the exclusion of proverbs explicitly invoking religion. Of the proverbs beginning with the letter G, 11% of those in Guðmundur’s *Safn* begin with some form of the word *Guð* ‘God’. But in the octavo the proportion is 14%, in the quarto 19% and in the folio 32%. In other words, Guðmundur records only a small portion of the ‘God’ proverbs that were available to him in his sources. Proverbs he omits from his sources include *Guð er í öllum áttum* ‘God is everywhere’ (JS 116 8vo 34, Lbs 3720 4to 63), *Guð veit hver godr er* ‘God knows who is good’ (JS 116 8vo 34), *Guð rædr giöfunum* ‘God speaks in gifts’ (Lbs 3720 4to 63), and *Guds er lánid* ‘to God is owed the debt’ (Lbs 3720 4to 63). None of these is recorded in the compendium *Orð að sönnu*, so effectively, as is the case with the other unprinted proverbs, the only place they are preserved today is in these manuscripts.

The contrast between manuscript and printed collection is even starker if we consider proverbs invoking Christ or Christianity by name. The quarto has three proverbs that begin with some form of the word *Chris-*

tus or *Christni* ‘Christianity’, while the folio has fully nineteen ‘Christ’, ‘Christian’ or ‘Christianity’ proverbs. Not one of these appears in the *Safn*. To be fair, Guðmundur does not eliminate all mention of Christ in his collection; the word does appear four times, but it never comes at the head of the sentence. The word *kristinn* ‘Christian’ only appears three times in his entire book.

Three facts are available to contextualise Guðmundur’s practice regarding religious proverbs. First, the only other C proverb, shared between the quarto and the folio, is *Crocodilus tár kreista þurrar brár* ‘dry eyelashes squeeze out crocodile tears’ (Lbs 3720 4to 22, Lbs 648 fol. 30). It is likely that Guðmundur ignores this proverb because the crocodile is such a decidedly un-Icelandic animal; the proverb is obviously a borrowing from more southerly sources. Note also that both the quarto and the folio use the Latin form of Christ’s name, *Christus*, rather than the Icelandic *Kristur*, which is the only way it appears in the *Safn*. In using the K, Guðmundur is following Rasmus Rask’s reform of Danish orthography of 1826 (*Dansk Rettskrivningslære*), which sought to regularise and eliminate redundancies in spelling (like the letter C) but had the effect of setting the orthography of Norse languages apart from others that used the Latin alphabet. Guðmundur, however, takes this setting-apart one step further: he not only transliterates the name of Christ but translates it into Icelandic with the grammatical ending, stripping the word of its foreign roots just as he strips the collection of foreign animals.

The second hint lies in Guðmundur’s orthography. While all three manuscript sources, originating some half-century before the print version was published, use what are now modern standard spellings, Guðmundur tends to use the older forms. Most noticeable is the nominative singular masculine ending, which today, and in the manuscripts, is spelled *-ur*, but which Guðmundur spells *-r* as was done in the Middle Ages. Assuming this was his choice and not the house style of his publisher, S. L. Möller, Guðmundur demonstrates himself to be deliberately archaising his collection.

The last hint lies not in the *Safn* itself but in the folio’s note of its own sources, mentioned previously. First and foremost, the folio cites Scripture; in fact, the verso of the title page is given over to a verse from Job: *Dagarnir skulu mælaoc fíolde aaranna skal tala visdom. En ande er í mannum, oc inblaastur hins almaattuga gefir þeim skilning* ‘days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding’ (Lbs 648 fol. 2; Job 32:7–8, KJV). In other words, the

folio attributes its whole project to the inspiration of God. A full study of the folio's extensive collection to determine the exact proportion of scriptural to non-scriptural items is beyond the scope of this project, but even a cursory glance at the first two pages of the folio reveals six proverbs that invoke God, one that invokes Christ and four that mention abbots—all of which Guðmundur leaves out of his collection. By its own admission, Scripture and Christian culture are the folio's most important source, and Guðmundur's highly selective use of the folio's contents means that this would be the subject matter of the largest proportion of what he sifts out. If Guðmundur is trying to eliminate foreign influence from his collection, as we see in his passing over of the crocodile and the nativising of Christ's name, the greatest non-Icelandic influence he is likely to find is Christianity. As mentioned above, not a huge number of the proverbs in the *Safn* can actually be traced to medieval, much less Viking, roots, yet Guðmundur seems systematically to eliminate most of the proverbs that advertise themselves as originating in the Christian era. All evidence points to an unspoken desire to reach back beyond Christianised Iceland and represent the wisdom of the Icelandic people as stemming not from foreign influence but from native roots: true Norse, true Viking.

This impulse, strange as it may seem in a project that purports to record and preserve what exists and does not advertise itself as a curated collection, actually puts Guðmundur very much in the thick of the most important cultural movements that were going on in his day—both in Iceland and in Europe more broadly. Guðmundur was working at the height of the Romantic period, which saw a sharp upswing in interest in the Celtic and Norse pagan past. Rasmus Rask had published his *Undersøgelse om det gamle Nordiske eller Islandske Sprogs Oprindelse* 'Investigation of the Origin of the Old Norse or Icelandic Language' in 1818. At the time Guðmundur published his *Safn*, Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, inspired by the Brothers Grimm, was beginning to collect Norwegian folklore and fairy tales, which he would publish with Jørgen Moe a little over a decade later (*Norske Folkeeventyr*, 1842–44). Guðmundur's project stood at the crossroads of this important cultural-linguistic movement and the rise of Romantic nationalism all over Europe.

As would happen a century later in the colonised areas of Africa and India, the study of native language and culture increased a sense of the value subjugated nations placed on their own native inheritance. This increasing sense of self-worth went hand in hand with a rising desire for

self-rule in states governed by external powers, as Iceland was by Denmark. In 1835, five years after the *Safn* appeared, the nationalist literary magazine *Fjölnir* would begin publication; in 1844, the great Icelandic nationalist Jón Sigurðsson would be elected as a member of the newly reestablished Althing. Publishing his proverb collection in 1830, Guðmundur calls Icelandic proverbs *prýði vors móðurmáls* ‘the glory of our mother tongue’ and the *þjóðar vorrar lifnaðar-vísdomr* ‘our nation’s living wisdom’ (20). Guðmundur, then, was not only making a subtle political statement; he was actually working at the very vanguard of the nation-making movement in his country.

The three manuscripts Guðmundur used as sources are complex collections that offer a field of study far richer than I have been able to harvest in this article, and Guðmundur’s approach to archiving his people’s proverbs bears scrutiny as evidence of a turning point in Icelandic culture and history. In the midst of this fraught cultural moment, Guðmundur printed the first book-length collection of Icelandic-language proverbs, and his archival impulses were at times subjugated to his desire to present a body of folk wisdom that at least *looked* as if it had come down to the present from the Vikings themselves—even if, in fact, it did not. Rejection of modernised spelling, minimal intrusion from obviously non-native material, and only the smallest of nods to the religion that had ruled the island for over eight hundred years: these exclusions were Guðmundur’s contribution to the push for Icelandic independence, which was only beginning as he published his work, and which would not come to fruition until long after he had died. It is my hope that other scholars will delve into this field of study and contribute more to our knowledge of these archiving impulses than I have been able to do here.⁸

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⁸ Personal and professional circumstances prevent me from developing this study in greater depth myself, but I would happily share my data with others who are interested in pursuing it further.

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REVIEWS

KOMMENTAR ZU DEN LIEDERN DER EDDA. GÖTTERLIEDER. 1/I: *VǫLUSPÁ* [R], *HÁVAMÁL*. 1/II: *VAFBRÚÐNISMÁL*, *GRÍMNISMÁL*, *VǫLUSPÁ* [H], ZWERGENVERZEICHNIS AUS DER *GYLFAGINNING*. By KLAUS VON SEE, BEATRICE LA FARGE and KATJA SCHULZ. *Winter*. Heidelberg, 2019. 1724 pp. ISBN 978-3-8253-6963-7.

The publication of this double volume completes the Frankfurt-based commentary on the lays of the *Poetic Edda* which was initiated almost thirty years ago with the support of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft under the leadership of Professor Klaus von See. Sadly, he died in August 2013 and so did not live to see the project completed, but the work has now been brought to a triumphant conclusion by his colleagues. The first of these two volumes (Band 1/I) covers the Codex Regius version of *Vǫluspá* [R] and *Hávamál*, while the second (Band 1/II) deals with *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Grimnismál* and the Hauksbók version of *Vǫluspá* [H] (with a synopsis of the differences between the two versions), and includes an analysis of the list of dwarfs in Snorri Sturluson's *Gylfaginning* and an overall bibliography for the whole series of volumes. In this review the two volumes which make up Band 1 will be referred to as *Kommentar*.

Now that the project is complete, it is clear that somewhat different criteria were used to decide which mythological poems and which heroic poems should be included. Mythological poems in Eddic metres are included even when they only appear in manuscripts other than the Codex Regius (so *Vǫluspá* [H] and the list of dwarfs from *Gylfaginning* both appear in Band 1, and *Baldur draumar*, *Rígsþula*, *Hyndluljóð* and *Grottasöngur* are included in Band 3), while the only heroic poetry included which is not in the Codex Regius is the strophes which must have appeared in it before the loss of a missing quire, which are now preserved only in the corresponding section of *Vǫlsunga saga*; these are included in Band 6. However, the boundaries of the *Poetic Edda* have always been flexible, no two editions of it include exactly the same poems, and this decision is based on practical common sense, since the surviving corpus of mythological poems in Eddic metres is limited and fairly coherent, while the heroic Eddic poems outside the Codex Regius are many and various.

The commentary on each poem is preceded by a comprehensive introduction divided into standardised sections under the headings *Bibliographie*, *Überlieferungszustand* 'Textual Transmission', *Forschungsgeschichte* 'History of Scholarship', *Stoffgeschichte und literarisches Nachleben* 'History of Content and Literary Afterlife', *Gedankliche Konzeption* 'Intellectual Concepts', *Komposition* 'Structure', *Strophen- und Versform* 'Metre', *Wortschatz und stilistische Eigentümlichkeiten* 'Vocabulary and Style', *Literaturgeschichtliche Standortsbestimmung* 'Relationship to Other Texts' and *Datierung* 'Date'. The commentary on each strophe is preceded by an edited text and a translation of it into German.

The text-specific and general bibliographies are a considerable achievement in themselves. They clearly set out to be as exhaustive as possible, and most of the arguments put forward in each item are summarised and discussed at the appropriate

points in the commentary. Nearly all relevant publications from the beginning of the nineteenth century until about 2014 are included, but a few recent contributions have been missed, including:

- Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington, eds, 2002. *The Poetic Edda, Essays on Old Norse Mythology*. New York and London: Routledge (Lars Lönnroth. ‘The Founding of Miðgarðr (*Völuspá* 1–8)’, 1–25, and Svava Jakobsdóttir. ‘Gunnloð and the Precious Mead [*Hávamál*]’, 27–57).
- Terry Gunnell and Annette Lassen, eds, 2013. *The Nordic Apocalypse: Approaches to *Völuspá* and Nordic Days of Judgement*. Turnhout: Brepols (see especially Vésteinn Ólason, ‘*Völuspá* and Time’ (25–44), but also the essays by Gísli Sigurðsson, Terry Gunnell, Henning Kure, John McKinnell, Kees Samplonius, Gro Steinsland and Karl G. Jóhannsson).
- Gísli Sigurðsson 2014. ‘Snorri’s Edda: the Sky Described in Mythological Terms’. In *Nordic Mythologies: Interpretations, Intersections and Institutions*. Ed. Timothy R. Tangherlini, Berkeley and Los Angeles: North Pinehurst Press, 184–98.
- Lilla Kopar 2012. *Gods and Settlers: The Iconography of Norse Mythology in Anglo-Scandinavian Sculpture*. Turnhout: Brepols.
- John McKinnell 2013. ‘Personae of the Performer in *Hávamál*’. *Saga-Book* XXXVII, 27–42.

It is probably an unfortunate accident of timing that the overall bibliography does not mention the colour images of all the relevant manuscripts that can now be found on the website of Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum (<https://handrit.is>), which for most readers will make it unnecessary to search for copies of Wimmer and Finnur Jónsson’s editions of the Codex Regius (1891) and AM 748 4to (1896).

In some respects the *Kommentar* now seems slightly old-fashioned, but that is by no means always a bad thing. Its analyses of grammatical difficulties are clear and thorough and cite examples of parallel constructions wherever necessary. The probable derivations of names are also carefully presented, especially when rival interpretations have to be considered, and the sections of each introduction which cover metre not only list all metrical irregularities, but also consider many of their effects, as well as looking at examples of deliberate ornament such as double alliteration, lengthened strophes of *ljóðaháttur* and sudden introductions of *galdralag*.

The sections on vocabulary include lists of words that do not appear elsewhere, or which otherwise appear only in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century prose. The unstated implication may be that the poems in which these words appear are of late date, but as these lists include many compounds made up of familiar elements they may in fact have more relevance to the analysis of poetic innovation than to the question of date. In the specific case of *Völuspá* it would also have been interesting to comment on the poem’s occasional tendency to create literal images out of abstract words borrowed from other Germanic languages: thus in OE and OS *Me(o)tod* usually means ‘fate’ or ‘(the Christian) God’ (perhaps originally ‘that which has been measured out’, cf. Bosworth-Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*,

682; de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 390), but in *Vǫluspá* [R] 2,7 and 45,2 it looks as if the abstract concept of *miǫtviðr* ‘measuring tree’, creating a concrete image of a tree which has not yet grown in the primeval world of st. 2 and which bursts into flames as Ragnarǫk is about to begin in st. 45. Similarly, OS *mudspelli*, OHG *Muspilli*, meaning ‘Doomsday’ (de Vries 396–97), is personified as a leader of the forces opposing the gods at Ragnarǫk in *Vǫluspá* [R] 49,2–3.

The commentaries on individual strophes summarise, usually very fairly, the interpretations of textual and literary problems put forward by earlier scholars, and include ample quotations of comparable material, both in the original languages and in German translation, on a scale that few other modern publishers would allow. In most cases the editors do not present radically new ideas, but there are exceptions: for example, the commentary on the mysterious *Vafþrúðnismál* 48 and 49 argues convincingly that 49,1 should be read, not as *Priár þjóðar* ‘three nations’ but as *Priár þjóð-ár* ‘three mighty rivers’, and that this makes it possible to interpret these two strophes as a logical part of the theme of survival after Ragnarǫk—human survival of the terrible winter (*Vm.* 44–45), the heavenly bodies’ survival of the attack by Fenrir (*Vm.* 46–47), survival of benign forces after the earth has sunk into the sea (*Vm.* 48–49, cf. *Vǫluspá* [R] 55,2: *sigr fold i mar*) and survival of some of the gods after Surtr’s fire has subsided (*Vm.* 50–51).

There are a few disappointing omissions—for example, there is no discussion of the possible reasons why the gods who survive Ragnarǫk in both versions of *Vǫluspá* are quite different from those in *Vafþrúðnismál*—but an important compensation is the separate analysis of *Vǫluspá* [H], which emerges as a fast-moving poem with a coherent structure of its own.

Comparisons with iconographic sources, particularly those which depict the fight between Óðinn and Fenrir, are less assured. On pp. 388–93 the commentary on *Vǫluspá* [R] 52,1–6 includes extensive quotations and translations of passages from *Gylfaginning* ch. 39 and the Uppsala manuscript of *Snorra Edda* ch. 31, together with citations of *Vafþrúðnismál* 53, *Lokasenna* 58, *Grimnismál* 23, *Hyndluljóð* 44 and *Sonatorrek* 24–25, but makes no reference to iconographic sources. The corresponding discussion of *Vafþrúðnismál* 53 (pp. 1167–69) does include most of them, but could have been more cogently organised. The Andreas cross slab, the Heysham hogback, the Ledberg rune stone and the Skipwith stone panel (which is not a hogback as it is said to be) share the iconographic motif of a large quadruped biting the foot of a warrior, and must all refer to the same story. But at Andreas the warrior is holding a large spear (presumably Gungnir) and has a bird of prey on his shoulder (probably Huginn and/or Muninn), and at Skipwith the motif is part of a larger battle-scene which also includes a giant and a snake-like figure, probably Surtr and the Miðgarðsormr. Together these sculptures show that a version of the myth of Ragnarǫk very like the ones in *Vǫluspá* and *Vafþrúðnismál* already existed by the late tenth century, whatever the dates of the surviving Eddic poems themselves.

The section of the *Kommentar* which seems likely to be most controversial is the commentary on *Hávamál*, which reflects von See’s opinion that the gnomic

sections of the poem have borrowed extensively from *Hugsvinnsmál*, the Icelandic translation and adaptation of the Latin work known as the *Disticha Catonis*. If this view is correct, *Hávamál* cannot have been composed before the later twelfth century, especially since the version of the *Disticha Catonis* used by the poet of *Hugsvinnsmál* seems to have been a relatively late one. In many places, however, it seems at least equally likely that the poet of *Hugsvinnsmál* has ‘naturalised’ or adapted the wisdom of his Latin source by echoing similar sentiments which are actually derived from *Hávamál*. For example, *Disticha Catonis* II, 18 says that it is the height of wisdom to pretend to be stupid when the occasion demands it; *Hugsvinnsmál* 72,1–3 changes this sentiment to: ‘A man should not be boastful about his own intelligence unless it becomes necessary’, which keeps the idea of an appropriate occasion but seems mainly derived from *Hávamál* 6,1–3: *Afhyggiandi / skylit maðr hræsinn vera / heldr gætinn at geði* ‘a man should not be boastful about his own intelligence, but rather cautious in mind’. Similarly, *Hávamál* 134, *Hugsvinnsmál* 122 and *Disticha Catonis* IV, 18 all advise that one should never laugh at old people, but whereas both Old Norse sources say that this is because old people often give good advice, the Latin one claims that it is because every elderly person has regressed into childishness. If, as these examples suggest, *Hugsvinnsmál* has borrowed from *Hávamál* rather than vice versa, comparison with the *Disticha Catonis* cannot tell us anything about the date of *Hávamál*. However, the copious quotations in the commentary on each strophe will make it easy for each reader to make up his or her mind on this issue. There are also many quotations from other gnomic sources, some of which (e.g. Hesiod) cannot have been known to the Eddic poets, but these may help to situate *Hávamál* within wider traditions of European gnomic literature.

Most editors and commentators have seen *Hávamál* as an anthology of diverse poems and scraps of verse loosely associated with the figure of Óðinn, but the *Kommentar* follows von See’s view that it was composed as a single poem and originated *als schriftliches Produkt*, probably in the late twelfth century. This may be partly a question of terminology, for even if it had a single literate author *Hávamál* must certainly have been intended for live performance, since it ends *Heilir þeirs hlýddo* ‘good luck to those who listened’. It also seems clear that some strophes are constructed from ancient material; for example, sts 80 and 142 are clearly versions of an orally transmitted strophe about runes which included alliteration of *rúnum* with *reginkunnum*, a collocation which, as the *Kommentar* points out, already appears in the sixth-century runic inscription from Noleby (Vg 63). Similarly, the reflection in st. 64,4–6 that no one is uniquely courageous is almost identical in wording to *Fáfnismál* 17,4–6; this looks like a proverbial saying, so there is no need to assume that one poem has borrowed from the other. Similarly, the account in *Grímnismál* 40–41 of how the cosmos was made out of the body parts of the primeval giant Ymir is almost identical in wording with that in *Vafþrúðnismál* 21, except that the latter does not actually say that the gods were responsible for it; but it does not necessarily follow that *Vafþrúðnismál* is borrowing from *Grímnismál* here, as the *Kommentar* editors suggest (pp. 994, 1050–06, 1402–08). It seems just as likely that both poems are using a source which was already traditional.

On a larger scale, the Codex Regius begins strophes 111 and 138 of *Hávamál* with illuminated initials, which elsewhere in the manuscript usually mark the beginning of a poem, but despite the diversity of their contents the *Kommentar* treats them as sections within a single composition, a decision which may make it difficult to distinguish the roles of poet and compiler. It may be worth extending to other mythological poems the idea recently applied to *Völuspá* by Vésteinn Ólason, that ‘the poem can be compared to an organism developing through time’ (see ‘*Völuspá* and Time’ in *The Nordic Apocalypse*, p. 25). In that case, we cannot use features of single strophes, such as the archaic *vr-* required for the alliteration in *Hávamál* 32,3 or the ‘modern’ word *formælendr* in *Hávamál* 2526, as evidence for the dating of whole poems, or even of whole sections of poems.

Despite these reservations, this double volume represents a huge achievement. The scope of its learning is impressive, its summary of the arguments of earlier scholars is reliable and usually very fair, and it will remain an essential guide to future study of the poems included in it for many years to come.

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POETIC STYLE AND INNOVATION IN OLD ENGLISH, OLD NORSE, AND OLD SAXON. By MEGAN E. HARTMAN. *De Gruyter*. Berlin and Boston, 2020. xiv + 213 pp. ISBN 978-1-5015-1832-4.

This is Megan Hartman’s first book, which presents an accomplished and insightful discussion of an often complex area of studies in Old Norse, Old English and other ancient Germanic literatures. Hartman is to be thanked for *Poetic Style and Innovation*. It is not only clear, straightforward, and successful in achieving its ambitions, but also makes an often difficult subject intelligible and appealing to students and scholars for whom metre is rough (if not altogether undiscovered) country.

Hartman identifies a problem in metrical scholarship concerning the Germanic alliterative long-line, writing that it ‘remains largely divorced from literary study’, with few scholars of metre considering its literary significance, whilst even fewer literary scholars make use of metrical patterns ‘to inform their readings of Germanic poetry’ (p. 1). Through a series of case studies which take the reader through ‘conservative’ Old English poetry (Chapter 1), Old English wisdom poetry (Chapter 2), Old Norse poetry (Chapter 3), Old Saxon poetry (Chapter 4) and late Old English poetry in *Judith* (Chapter 5), Hartman makes a case for how and why these gaps in our knowledge should be filled.

Chapter 1 takes its lead from R. D. Fulk in analysing a group of ‘conservative’ poems with ‘early features’, in order to establish a grounding for the analysis of hypermetric lines: this group includes *Beowulf*, *Genesis A*, *Guthlac A*, *Daniel* and *Exodus* (p. 16). Hartman concludes that ‘in its most formal iteration, the structure of hypermetric meter is fairly strict’ in these poems, albeit allowing for variation and the development of individual styles (p. 50). This raises interesting questions

about how and when the mechanisms governing the teaching and enforcement of these rules developed, and who might have been responsible for maintaining them.

Chapter 2, on Old English wisdom poetry, draws a distinction between gnomic hypermetrics and those found in the 'conservative' poems. Where hypermetric metre is employed, poets use it to emphasise features of 'gnomic diction' (p. 87) that contemporary audiences would recognise as characteristic of this type of verse, leading them to respond with a constellation of existing wisdom poetry in mind.

Old Norse poetry enjoys greater metrical variety than Old English. Making a case study of Eddic metres using the poems of the Codex Regius of the *Poetic Edda*, Chapter 3 considers the differences between the two traditions, and demonstrates how Old Norse metres operate. Here Hartman shows how Old Norse poets took full advantage of the opportunity to move back and forth across different metres to suit the needs of different scenes (battles, feasting scenes, etc.) as their subject demanded.

In Chapter 4 Hartman considers the Old Saxon *Heliand*, whose poet (like that of *The Dream of the Rood*) faced the difficult task of presenting the Crucifixion as a heroic martyrdom. Here, she argues, the poet succeeded in bringing together the biblical narrative and the heroic tradition in part through the use of hypermetric metre, which is used 'to juxtapose, explain, and emphasize the points of synthesis' in order 'to align the two ideologies in his audience's minds' (p. 127).

Chapter 5's discussion of *Judith*, a case study of developments in what is likely to be a late Old English poem, once again displays Hartman's elegant pairing of metrical and literary criticism, showing how the poet's style allows them 'to develop and highlight the major themes of the poem' (p. 162). Although *Judith* is conventional in certain respects in its use of hypermetric lines, Hartman shows how the poet uses them innovatively to highlight the dramatic 'reversal of fortunes' that takes place between the Bethulians and the Assyrians (p. 192).

The book's conclusion is brief—a tight summary in which Hartman emphasises the flexibility available to poets in their use of hypermetric form: 'even what standards exist are more tendencies than rules' (p. 196). She presents this study in the hope that others will see the value of this approach, and 'consider taking up this methodology and advance the discussion of metrical patterning within literary analysis' (p. 198).

In addition to the works which Hartman earmarks for potential further study, there are various other areas in which *Poetic Style and Innovation* raises questions. For readers of *Saga-Book* whose interests may lie primarily in Old Norse, it will offer both a useful method, and a solid comparative basis in studies of Old English and Old Saxon. Other questions, which Hartman does not touch on within the limits of her study, must surely include what these investigations reveal about *how* poets learned to compose, honed their craft and responded to various forms of change and innovation.

We might ask, equally, what this evidence might reveal about the social, political and other historical conditions that accompanied the emergence of more and less rigid approaches to metre, and perhaps what this tells us about the early relationships between the writing and exchange of poetry amongst speakers of different

Germanic languages. If much of the book is about responses to orthodoxy in one way or another, how and when were these orthodoxies produced—and were they invented traditions, or did they have a chance to develop organically? Might they have been in conversation with one another, and in what sorts of contexts could this have taken place?

Having successfully addressed the questions it sets out to answer, this book provokes many more. It is likely to become required reading for students of metre; this reviewer follows Hartman in hoping it will be paid the attention it deserves from literary scholars as well.

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HEIÐUR OG HUGGUN. ERFILJÓÐ, HARMLJÓÐ OG HUGGUNARKVÆÐI Á 17. ÖLD. By ÞÓRUNN SIGURÐARDÓTTIR. *Rit 91. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum*. Reykjavík, 2015. 471 pp. ISBN 978-9979-654-33-9.

Þórunn Sigurðardóttir has long been Iceland's foremost authority on early-modern funeral poetry. *Heiður og huggun* 'Honour and Consolation' is the first monograph to be published on this long-neglected corpus, which Þórunn demonstrates to be diverse and deserving of further study. She approaches this poetry through the lens of genre and function, arguing for the existence of three distinct poetic genres during the seventeenth century: the *erfiljóð*, a poem commemorating the deceased and describing his or her virtues and piety; the *harmljóð*, a first-person monologue in which the bereaved speaker's emotions and grief receive expression; and the *huggunarkvæði*, a consolatory verse epistle addressed to a specific mourner or group of mourners, where the speaker is presented as a friend to the mourners. Taking a New-Historicist approach to Icelandic literature, she balances her systematic attempt to map out the corpus with a series of case studies demonstrating how such poems can serve as entry points into the complex web of social relationships underlying them.

The book's scope is limited to the seventeenth century, with minimal discussion of origins or later developments, as its focus is largely on the social milieu of composition. It is worth emphasising, however, that many of the persons discussed here in connection with funeral poetry were also actively involved in manuscript production and the preservation and study of Old Norse–Icelandic literature. The book will thus be of interest not only to early-modernists but also to researchers into the transmission of Old Norse–Icelandic texts and the histories of individual manuscripts, scribes, patrons and owners.

The book begins with a review of prior research on seventeenth-century Icelandic funeral and mourning poetry. The patchy nature of these earlier investigations contrasts pointedly with quotations from a number of influential literary historians who made sweeping generalisations on the uniformly 'insipid' and 'impersonal' qualities of these poems, with the exception of Hallgrímur Pétursson's poetry on the death of his young daughter Steinunn. This criticism, as Þórunn demonstrates,

has little basis in examination of the corpus, the bulk of which has never been edited and is hence virtually unknown to most scholars. To remedy the lack of available material, *Heiður og huggun* includes Þórunn's editions of seven poems which appear in her discussion of commemoration, mourning and genre in Chapters 4–7, and ten which are the subjects of in-depth case studies in Chapters 8–10.

In considering seventeenth-century literary production, Þórunn makes a strong distinction between the general public and learned circles. She repeatedly reminds the reader that the poems in her study are, almost without exception, composed for and by members of a narrow, highly privileged segment of the Icelandic population. However, her book also makes a valuable contribution to our knowledge of writing by, for and about women in early-modern Iceland. Two of the *harmljóð* edited in the book are attributed to women, Arndís Sigurðardóttir and Ingiríður Ásgrímsdóttir, about whom virtually nothing is known except the scant details revealed in their poems. These two *harmljóð* are important additions to the growing body of early-modern Icelandic works by female authors.

For non-Icelandic-speaking readers, a possible point of confusion involves the terminology used to describe the genres of commemoration, mourning and consolation. Þórunn makes clear that the Icelandic terms she uses for the literary genres that are her focus are only partially based on historical usage and have no exact equivalents in other vernacular literatures. She emphasises in particular that *harmljóð* is not her translation of 'elegy' but rather defines a genre in which the speaker's grief receives heightened weight through the use of the first person, and the person consoled in the poem is the speaker himself or herself (pp. 89–95). A more general term without classical associations, such as 'mourning poem', would not be less accurate. In the English abstract, *harmljóð* is translated as 'funeral elegy' (p. 424), which may obscure the very specific definition of 'elegy' employed in the book. Likewise, *erfiljóð* is broadly translated as 'funeral poem', but an equally valid translation would be 'commemorative poem', as the *erfiljóð* does not need to be composed in connection with funeral and burial rites. In Chapter 11, Þórunn examines the possibility that *erfiljóð* were performed at funerals but concludes that there is no single uniform way of performing or disseminating them, and that the rubrics of some specify that they were sent in manuscript form to an intended recipient (pp. 320–23).

Lutheran hymnody strongly influenced the language and structure of commemorative, mourning and consolation poems in the seventeenth century, and contemporary manuscripts frequently characterise them as hymns, grouping them with verses intended for communal singing during religious services or at home as part of personal devotional practices. However, Þórunn limits the scope of her study to poems that are occasional, excluding works that deal more broadly with loss. Based on her criteria, she has identified a total of 115 *erfiljóð*, forty *harmljóð* and five *huggunarkvæði*. The book's appendix contains a useful list of the entire corpus, organised by poet, which includes basic information on the person commemorated, the manuscripts preserving the poem and any printed editions.

The funeral poetry corpus will certainly grow over time, as seventeenth-century Icelandic poetry manuscripts have not been exhaustively studied and the genres of

harmljóð and *huggunarkvæði* in particular can be difficult to identify. As Þórunn demonstrates, poems on grief and consolation often contain scant information on the specific circumstances of composition. Unedited poems like Guðmundur Erlendsson's '*Sál mín, sál mín, því syrgir þú?*' ('My soul, my soul, why do you mourn?' JS 232 4to, 58r–59v), probably composed on the death of Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason of Hólar in 1656, are not identified in their rubrics as occasional poetry. Stanza 4 of Guðmundur Erlendsson's poem describes the dearly departed as the speaker's *ástmaður* 'lover, loved one', but stanza 10 is the only one to refer to the life history of the deceased, stating that he has become in death a *himneskur biskop* 'heavenly bishop'. As Þórunn points out, the poet composed a *harmljóð* for Halldóra Guðbrandsdóttir on the death of her father, Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson of Hólar, in which she is the poem's speaker. The speaker of '*Sál mín, sál mín, því syrgir þú?*' may be Þorlákur Skúlason's widow, Kristín Gísladóttir, and comparison with other *harmljóð* indicates that this poem was probably composed in solidarity with the bishop's widow. In such a context, very deeply and personally expressed grief would be inappropriate, and the poet's focus is instead on the bishop's joyful place in heaven.

The above example illustrates the value of Þórunn's work for the exploration of poetry not directly included in *Heiður og huggun*. A complex web of social relationships underlies most pre-modern occasional poetry, but this may not be immediately obvious from the manuscript context. By using genre as a tool to examine social function, *Heiður og huggun* provides a well-defined map of otherwise poorly charted poetic territory.

KATELIN MARIT PARSONS

Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum

THE POETIC GENESIS OF OLD ICELANDIC LITERATURE. By MIKAEL MALES. *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 113. *De Gruyter*. Berlin, 2020. 353 pp. ISBN 978-3-11-064183-7.

This new book by Mikael Males divides into five main parts, devoted respectively to 'Metre and Rhyme', 'Diction: Mythology, Wordplay, Metaphor and Tmesis', 'Grammatical Literature', 'Prosimetrical Narrative' and 'Poetry, Language and Snorri's *Edda* in the Mid-Fourteenth Century', preceded by an Introduction and followed by a Conclusion, an Appendix devoted to the Wormianus Redactor, a bibliography and an index. Although each of the main parts is based to a greater or lesser degree on the author's previously published articles, the book as a whole emerges as a remarkably fresh investigation of subjects that have seen over 150 years of intensive research. Principally by means of close textual analysis and comparison between Latin and vernacular works, Males challenges older assumptions and reaches conclusions which, while sometimes questionable, at the very least need to be carefully considered by the reader.

The first part traces the development of *dróttkvætt* and related verse-forms. The author's periodisation tends to confirm previous scholarship but at the same

time represents an innovation and possibly a more rigorous approach in that it is based on the attributions in *Skáldskaparmál*. The second part, on diction, adds nuance to older scholarship by noting that mythological kennings did not fall into total disuse with the advent of Christian teachings, but continued to serve a restricted function in designating leaders in battle, warfare and the equipment used in battle. This idea was proposed in an earlier publication but is here more firmly established, with reference to volumes added to the *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* edition (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012–) in the interim. Males seeks to account for some conspicuous exceptions to the general trend, which occur in attributions to Óláfr Haraldsson, by proposing that Styrmir inn fróði composed the stanzas in question. But Males's principal evidence is flimsy, consisting of an alleged verbal parallel between an Óláfr stanza and one ascribed to Björn Breiðvíkingakappi. The possibility therefore remains open that the Óláfr stanza under discussion, along with others in Styrmir's life of Óláfr, was composed at some point prior to Styrmir.

Males agrees with previous scholarship in positing some reversion on the part of twelfth- and thirteenth-century skalds to the traditional wide scope of mythological kennings. The skalds of that time also increased the range of aspects of the Christian god encompassed in kennings, to some extent under liturgical influences. The *Geisli* of Einarr Skúlason provides supporting examples and an interesting case is made that this poem draws upon the famous 'conversion verses' attributed to Hallfreðr Óttarsson in *Hallfreðar saga*.

The third part, on grammatical literature, bases itself on the premise that Snorri's indebtedness to learned treatises has hitherto been underestimated. The arguments here are well sustained and embody some noteworthy new discoveries. An example is the discussion of *Litla Skálda* in its relation to *Háttalykill* on the one hand and *Skáldskaparmál* on the other. Also revelatory is the observation of influence from Horace's *Ars poetica* on Snorri's discussion of *nykrat* and on Óláfr Þórðarson's discussion of both *nykrat* and *finngáknat*. Males points out the difficulties inherent in documenting the use of Icelandic *grammatica* in schools and proposes instead that the grammatical treatises served as a means of transferring analytic tools and prescriptive attitudes from the Latin classroom (whatever form that took in Iceland) to vernacular poetry.

In the fourth part, on prosimetrical narrative, a central contention is that saga prosimetrum developed comparatively late, indeed scarcely earlier than the turn of the thirteenth century. This development came about, according to Males, thanks to influence from prosimetra of the type seen in the various manuscript compilations of Eddic poetry. If it could be sustained, his argument would militate against the hypothesis that, as early as the twelfth century, saga authors were compiling and even composing verses to complement their prose narratives. In reality, however, Males's argument is shaky. Relative dating is the persistent difficulty for Males, as for other scholars. While we have no guarantee that Eddic prosimetrum antedates the thirteenth century, it is hard to exclude this possibility—and indeed, Males allows that Eddic poetry and 'some sort of prose' probably did combine to form prosimetra considerably earlier than

1200 (p. 274). A key component in his argument here, evidently, is the *þáttir* in *Morkinskinna* about King Haraldr harðráði, the skald Þjóðólfr Arnórsson and a fisherman, but it remains unclear what significance Males places on this text. Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, composed during the period 1190–1208, would have provided a firmer reference point and it is a pity that Males does not address this important text in a sustained fashion. The most economical hypothesis is that the prosimetric form exhibited by the first nine books of the *Gesta* rests in part upon Icelandic antecedents, in parallel with a great deal of the content of those books. By contrast, the hypothesis of the sudden emergence of Icelandic prosimetrum more or less contemporaneously with the *Gesta* strains credulity. A related weak point is the discussion of the reference in *Þorgils saga og Haflíða* to *Orms saga Barreyjarskálds*, where Males seems over-anxious to preclude the possibility that this lost, putatively early-twelfth-century, work took the form of a prosimetrum.

Despite the above objections, in this part of his book Males advances our understanding of the evolution of specific prosimetric saga texts. Notably, the development of *Grettis saga* is elucidated through close examination of two pseudo-Grettir verses. The rowan-tree *offjóstr* in the *Ævikviða* is shown to be indebted to *Skáldskaparmál*, while the 'axe' stanza bears a kindred relationship to *Háttatal*. Males also argues cogently that, in *Egils saga*, the thematisation of runes evident in the prose narrative lacks any basis in the subset of verses that he ascribes to the historical Egill. Unfortunately, his discussion of the authorship of *Egils saga* is peculiarly tortuous, as it zigzags between claims for Óláfr Þórðarson and Snorri, neither of which is capable of proof; Males himself admits that the sequence of his logic may lead readers to suspect circularity (p. 241).

In the fifth and final main part of his book Males compares the reception of Snorri's *Edda* in the fourteenth-century Codex Wormianus with that evinced by three other monastic documents. His inference is that the *Edda* was as keenly debated in the fourteenth century as it had been in the thirteenth, but that ownership of the debate had moved into the cloister and away from secular magnates. By and large, Males's book shows a very firm grasp of prior scholarship. A strange exception is the failure, in the discussion of tmesis, to mention Konstantin Reichardt ('A Contribution to the Interpretation of Skaldic Poetry: Tmesis'. In *Old Norse Literature and Mythology: A Symposium*. Ed. Edgar C. Polomé (Austin, 1969), 200–26), who marshalled and systematised most of the available evidence on the subject even though his conclusions have been contested. Males also overlooks the pseudo-Hallfreðr *Ólafs drápa Tryggvasonar*—along with the scholarly discussion of this poem—when he claims that hiatus forms do not occur in 'archaizing' verses.

As to presentation and production values, this is the handsome volume that we would expect of de Gruyter. Regrettably, however, the author often makes unnecessary difficulties for the reader through poor drafting. Numerous errors in typography, grammar and idiom occur, far too many to list here, and the proofs do not seem to have been under the eye of an editor. Nevertheless, despite these blemishes and the substantive weaknesses pointed out earlier in this review,

Males's book offers sharp new insights and serves as a worthy continuation of the debate about skaldic poetics and the prose works in which so much of the skaldic corpus is embedded.

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GODS AND HUMANS IN MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA. RETYING THE BONDS. By JONAS WELLENDORF. *Cambridge University Press*. Cambridge, 2018. x + 206 pp. ISBN 978-1-108-42497-4.

This book is in five chapters. The first outlines its argument rather in the style of a doctoral thesis, beginning with Varro, a pagan analyst of paganism, whose division of Roman religion into mythical, civic and physical (i.e. philosophical) domains enables an approach to Old Norse pre-Christian religion similarly through myth, ritual and learning, with an emphasis on the third. Wellendorf's opening observations on the enduring disconnect between the traditional Norse gods on one hand, and Vǫlsi and the 'maurnir' in *Vǫlsapátttr*, Lytir and Þorgerðr Hǫrgabrúðr (and variants) on the other, are an effective reminder of how little we know, and a good demonstration of the mutual independence of myth, ritual and the learning which memorialises the first two domains. Saying that the less familiar names may 'represent traces of the largely lost sphere of cultic (or civic) theology' (p. 12), Wellendorf argues that such other oddities as the World Serpent's alternative fishing-trip outcomes and the inconsistencies of Kvasir may also be traced to ritual. As in Tacitus's description of the grove of Semnonic bondage-aficionados, he sees the meaning of Norse *bǫnd* 'bonds', hence 'gods', developing by 'metonymic transference' (p. 21) from rituals which involved their worshippers. His case for 'retying the bonds' is that the descendants of Scandinavian converts, knowing that the old ways had something worth keeping, revived the gods in a vibrant prose literature in which euhemerism, not demonic intervention, played the leading role.

In his second chapter Wellendorf takes us back to the roots of euhemerism, starting with the Wisdom of Solomon, which denounces paganism in three stages of decadence: worship of elements (Chaldean cosmolatry), people (Greek idolatry) and animals (Egyptian zoolatry). This model was expanded first in the *Apology of Aristides*, which rationalises the development of gentile beliefs without the doctrine of demons misleading the people; then in an apostolic romance eventually adapted into the Old Norwegian *Barlaams saga ok Josaphats*. This popular saga reaches Prince Josaphat's conversion by way of a speech delivered by Nachor, a magician coerced by the Lord. Speaking words which Barlaam would have uttered, had the prince's father not locked him away, Nachor commends Christianity only after excoriating paganism. Nachor's topics follow Wisdom's summary of Chaldean, Greek and Egyptian varieties of paganism, ascending then in value to Judaism and finally Christianity. It is the focus here on devil-free euhemerism that Wellendorf plausibly presents as the main Scandinavian mode. From this

conception of pagan error are derived also the elements, represented as giants, in *Hversu Noregr byggðisk*, the genealogy with which *Orkneyinga saga* begins.

Wellendorf's third chapter deals with *Um þat hvaðan ótrú hófsk* 'On whence unbelief began', a Norwegian adaptation of Ælfric's *De falsis deis* which survives in what was originally one codex copied for and by Haukr Erlendsson (d. 1334). This converted sermon is rightly presented as a demonising exception to the usual Scandinavian approach to old gods. The translator showed the historical power of demons who seduce men first into the worship of elements of nature, then into the idolatrous worship of former men and women whom different races end up calling by different names. Identifying Roman deities thus with Old Norse ones, his text is shown to validate the very *interpretatio Romana* which Ælfric, his source, refuted. Here Wellendorf discusses the antiquarian technique of identifying one god with another across pantheons. His claim that scholarship has dwelt on the religious designations of such *interpretationes*, rather than on their implications for Norse learning (p. 62), is very true.

The fourth and fifth chapters turn to the theme of migration in the Christian conception of Norse gods. Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* portrays his versions of these as magicians in Byzantium who make journeys to Scandinavia and are no less subject than other humans to a class of gods identifiable with the fates. Unlike the Norwegian treatise in Hauksbók, Saxo denies the identity of his Asian magicians with the Roman deities, whose roles, indeed, he blames them for usurping. Here Wellendorf aims to clear up some problems of designation by arguing that Saxo uses 'Othinus' as a term for pagan gods in general. Saxo, however, a patriot who monumentalised Danish history by borrowing from Augustan poets, is made to look rather simple when Wellendorf claims that he personally took the 'infernal gods' to be 'a nebulous group of gods, who possess real divine agency' (p. 82). The final chapter takes the theme of migration further with Óðinn in the 'Snorrionic' Prologue to *Gylfaginning* and also in *Ynglinga saga*. Wellendorf's long endnote doubting Snorri's authorship could have gone into the main text, while oddly, given the existence of *Breta sögur*, his vision of the Trojan diaspora makes no reference to Geoffrey of Monmouth. Nonetheless, he is right to call the mode of euhemerising migration myth ubiquitous, also to argue that the Æsir of the *Prose Edda* were conceived as culture heroes later deified, 'Asians' who civilise northern barbarians and give them their language and poetry. Although the problem here, how the Æsir are to be read within the setting of the *Prose Edda*, has been long discussed, this book does well by moving the discussion back to euhemerism, away from Anne Holtsmark's idea of anti-theology, on one hand (*Studier i Snorres mytologi*. Oslo, 1964), and from Heinrich Beck's of an incomplete analogy with Christian theology, on the other ('Snorri Sturlusons Mythologie: Euhemerismus oder Analogie?' In *Snorri Sturluson: Historiker, Dichter, Politiker*. Ed. Beck, Wilhelm Heizmann and Jan van Nahl, Berlin (2014), 1–21). Wellendorf ends his case with the *Prologus* in Codex Wormianus. As he shows by reference to the work of Mikael Males ('Wormianusredaktören: Språk, tro och sanning vid 1300-talets mitt'. *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 128 (2013), 41–77), this text undermines the benevolent culture-hero view of the other (i.e. older) versions of the *Prologue*,

mostly by equating Óðinn with two similarly deified humans with whom he is linked in succession, Zoroaster and Saturn. In an epilogue which might have been a chapter had it not been for the word 'medieval' in the book's title, Wellendorf provides a fascinating account of two seventeenth-century keepers of the flame, Guðmundur Andr sson in Copenhagen and the etymologically ingenious Pastor Jonas Ramus of Norderhov (20 miles out of Oslo). A few misprints aside, this book is a well-conceived, deeply researched and elegantly written monograph which gives much clarity to a complicated subject.

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BUDDHA IN BERGEN. DIE ALTNORDISCHE BARLAAMS OK JOSAPHATS SAGA. By VERA JOHANTERWAGE. *Skandinavistische Arbeiten* 25. *Universit tsverlag Winter*. Heidelberg, 2019. 304 pp. ISBN 978-3-8253-6743-5.

The recent 'global turn' in medieval studies has brought new attention to texts that manifest the worldwide interconnectedness of the period. There is perhaps no more potent literary witness to that interconnectedness than the story of Saints Barlaam and Josaphat. The originally Indian story of the young future Buddha Siddhartha Gautama's revelatory encounters with sickness, old age and death passed into Arabic, was Christianised and adapted into Georgian by eighth- or ninth-century monks in Palestine, then translated into Greek, thence into Latin, and from Latin into most of the vernaculars of western Europe, including Old Norse. During that process all knowledge of the Buddhist origin of the story was lost; the term *bodhisattva*, referring to an aspirant to Buddhahood, was corrupted to the name Josaphat, and this central character was transformed into a Christian convert, convinced of Christianity's truth by a desert ascetic called Barlaam. Both Barlaam and Josaphat were venerated as Christian saints throughout Europe. A Norwegian translation of the story, known as *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga*, was made c.1250 in the milieu of the royal court at Bergen; two Swedish versions appear in *Fornsvenska legendariet* (c.1300) and *N dendals klosterbok* (c.1440), and an Icelandic version is preserved in the late medieval legendary, *Reykjah lab k* (1525).

Scholars interested in connections between medieval Europe and the rest of the world have lavished attention on versions of the Barlaam and Josaphat story in recent years: see, for example, Donald S. Lopez and Peggy McCracken's *In search of the Christian Buddha: How an Asian sage became a Christian saint* (London: Norton, 2014) and Constanza Cordoni's comprehensive reference work, *Barlaam und Josaphat in der europ ischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014). Like versions of the life in other languages, the hitherto neglected Norwegian saga has recently begun to receive increased attention, including in an edited collection from Karl G. Johansson and Maria Arvidsson, *Barlaam i nord: Legenden om Barlaam och Josaphat i den nordiska medeltidslitteraturen* (Oslo:

Novus, 2009) and now this 304-page monograph by Vera Johanterwage, based on her 2007 doctoral dissertation.

Johanterwage's introductory first chapter announces the key themes of her study: genre, courtly style, the relationship between courtly and religious aspects of the text, and connections with the history of emotions. It also orientates her work theoretically, with reference to Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu and Hans-Robert Jauss, though after their introduction here this framework rarely reappears.

Chapter 2 surveys the history of the story of Barlaam and Josaphat, an extraordinarily popular tale in the Middle Ages thanks to its combination of entertainment and instruction. Johanterwage efficiently charts the story's passage between Buddhist, Manichaean, Islamic and Christian worldviews as it passed through Arabic and Georgian versions, and then concentrates on its medieval European reception beginning with an eleventh-century Greek version, a mid-eleventh-century Latin version that had little influence, and the so-called *Vulgata* Latin text of the twelfth century which became the basis of later European vernacular versions and of two especially widely read thirteenth-century Latin epitomes by Vincent de Beauvais and Jacobus de Voragine; this history is usefully represented in stemma form on p. 46. The story's setting in India permitted *eine aufregend-exotische Atmosphäre* 'an excitingly exotic atmosphere' (p. 27) and helped establish 'India', which can stand for the whole of the east (p. 28), as a literary setting in West Norse literature. Johanterwage describes medieval ideas about India and notes relevant connections with beliefs about Thomas the Apostle's missionary activity, the idea of Paradise in the east and Prester John. She notes the importance of India as a setting in various other Norse texts and suggests that Scandinavian relations with Byzantium produced a more positive view of the east than those prevalent elsewhere in Europe.

The chapter continues with introductory accounts of the West and East Norse versions of the story. *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga* was produced at the Norwegian court in the reign of Hákon IV Hákonarson (r. 1217–63) and is to be seen in the context of other translations from Continental languages undertaken in that milieu. There are seventeen, mostly fragmentary, manuscript witnesses to this version dating from c.1275 to the late seventeenth century, all but four Icelandic rather than Norwegian. The earliest manuscript, Holm. perg. 6 fol., dates from only around a quarter of a century after the translation was made. Briefer accounts are given of the Swedish and Icelandic versions, with a convenient summary of the relations between the Norse texts and their sources in a stemma on p. 61. Chapter 2 concludes with a survey of some medieval visual representations of the story from Denmark and Germany (the book contains black-and-white illustrations of some of these, as well as of several manuscripts), and a brief overview of the modern global reception of the story.

Chapter 3 examines in more detail the Norwegian *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga*, surveying scholarship on the saga's authorship, describing the milieu of its creation at Hákon Hákonarson's court (with its close English connections a possible route by which the story came to Norway: pp. 81–83, cf. p. 50 n. 134), and providing a brief overview of earlier research on the saga, including the editions

by Rudolf Keyser and Carl Richard Unger (1851) and Magnus Rindal (1980). There follows a detailed account of the transmission of the saga and descriptions of each surviving manuscript (pp. 94–116), helpfully summed up in tables on pp. 95 and 116. A section on the saga's structure includes comparison with the closely similar contents of the Latin source (*Barlaams saga* adds a Prologue and several interpolations which are discussed in more detail on pp. 137–58). An excursus examines the generic term 'legend' (pp. 122–37), concluding that despite connections with romance and many courtly elements, the saga is clearly hagiography. Johanterwage argues that although the translator did not always fully grasp culturally specific or sophisticatedly theological aspects of his source, he understood Latin well and translated skilfully.

Chapter 4 is a detailed stylistic study of *Barlaams saga* in the context of thirteenth-century Norwegian vernacular literature and courtly style (which Johanterwage argues cannot easily be distinguished from the so-called 'florid style'). Attention is given especially to the use of 'word pairs' (amplification, often with alliteration) and present participles. Courtliness is also manifested in descriptions of royal splendour and an interest in titles and social hierarchy (which extends to heaven and culminates in God, king of kings (pp. 189–200)). The chapter also discusses typically courtly vocabulary and the presentation of emotions, including through gesture (pp. 201–09). Long-noted connections with two other monuments of thirteenth-century Norwegian writing, *The King's Mirror* and the biblical translation *Stjórn*, are examined, as (more briefly) are those with *Duggals leizla*. After a disappointingly short comparison with the *riddarasögur*, the chapter ends by concluding that *Bei der Barlaams saga handelt sich um eine höfische Legende* 'Barlaams saga is a courtly saint's life' (p. 226).

The penultimate main chapter returns to the manuscript transmission of *Barlaams saga* from the perspective of what it can tell us about the history of style. Johanterwage argues that the remarkably consistent preservation of stylistic features across the centuries demonstrates not only that such features were employed by the Norse translator, rather than added in later copies, but also that these stylistic features were admired and appreciated by readers throughout the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.

The book's last main chapter is devoted to the Icelandic *Barlaham og Josaphat*, one of the twenty-five *vitae* preserved in Reykjahólabók (MS Holm. perg. 3 fol.). Rather than the Latin *Vulgata*, this text derives from a Low German source, which has left its mark on the language; it is believed to have been produced independently of the earlier Norwegian saga, though Johanterwage raises the possibility that *Barlaams saga* might have exerted some stylistic influence (p. 255). She describes the Reykjahólabók legendary, surveys previous scholarship and identifies areas where further research is needed, especially on the sources of the Icelandic version. Chapter 7 is a four-page conclusion which accurately and concisely summarises the book's contents.

If I were to describe this book in a single word, it would be 'thorough', a characteristic reflected in its thirty-four-and-a-half page bibliography. The book provides a useful and up-to-date account of all aspects of the text that have attracted scholarly

attention, balancing synthesis of previous work with original close textual and stylistic analysis. Johanterwage demonstrates the value of the saga for the study of translation into Old Norse, courtliness and courtly literature in thirteenth-century Norway, the history of emotions, *riddarasögur*, Norse hagiography and Norse prose styles. Researchers in any of these areas will find Johanterwage a valuable guide to this piece of World Literature (*ein Stück Weltliteratur*, pp. 23, 259).

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MOVING WORDS IN THE NORDIC MIDDLE AGES: TRACING LITERACIES, TEXTS, AND VERBAL COMMUNITIES. Edited by AMY C. MULLIGAN and ELSE MUNDAL. *Acta Scandinavica: Cambridge Studies in the Scandinavian World* 8. Brepols. Turnhout, 2019. viii + 353 pp. 14 figures. ISBN 978-2-503-57810-1.

Moving Words in the Nordic Middle Ages is a volume of essays exploring verbal culture, textual communities, the oral-written continuum, and literacy and literature more broadly. It contains fourteen chapters, including the introduction. It can be read as a follow-up to *Along the Oral-Written Continuum* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010; reviewed in *Saga-Book* XXXVII, 2013), edited by Slavica Ranković, Leidulf Melve and Else Mundal, all three of whom are contributors to the present volume; both books result partly from literacy studies research at the University of Bergen. The authors of the present volume were involved with the ‘Arrival of Writing’ research group at the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Bergen, 2003–12. In producing this volume, the major goals of this group included investigating the relationships between orality and literacy; non-canonical and overlooked sources; the oral features of written texts; and the interaction between imported Christian culture and native vernacular traditions.

Amy C. Mulligan’s introduction emphasises the coexistence of oral and literate culture. She uses the analogy of modern music, specifically the simultaneously oral and textual lyricism of Bob Dylan. The first of Leidulf Melve’s two contributions sets up the theoretical context for the volume by examining the history of literacy studies from the 1960s onwards, and arguing for the best comparative methods to progress Old Norse–Icelandic literacy/orality studies. Melve’s introduction is very informative, particularly for those unfamiliar with the field, and provides a useful background for considering the following chapters.

The first of Else Mundal’s two chapters addresses the specific context of Old Norse–Icelandic studies, and explores the factors of oral and pre-Christian culture that affected how literacy developed in Iceland. Its central argument is that by examining the ways in which the culture and society of Iceland were unusual or exceptional, we can understand how Christian culture and the technology of literacy developed distinctively. Mundal has a tendency to overstate her points, and a more comparative perspective would have been helpful. For example, the argument that Old Norse–Icelandic oral culture and myth set a uniquely high value on knowledge and learning, which then helped a strong written culture to develop,

would be improved by at least some reference to research on this subject in other medieval cultures. Likewise, its very sweeping generalisations about Icelandic history and culture need the support of a more complete bibliography and engagement with relevant scholarship.

Aidan Conti's chapter is a high point of the volume, and expands the focus in *Moving Words* on Iceland and Norway to cover Danish literature too. Conti explores the representation of the process and idea of writing in the early histories of Norway and Denmark: the *Historie Norwegie*, the *Historia* of Theodoricus monachus and Sven Aggesen's *Brevis Historia*. Åslaug Ommundsen's contribution surveys an important aspect of manuscript fragment studies in medieval Norway: the evidence these can provide for different types of scribal centres. As the only chapter that deals with liturgical texts it is vital to the scope of *Moving Words* and its goal of investigating the full spectrum of evidence for textual culture.

Jonas Wellendorf's contribution is the first of two chapters to examine epistolary writing and literacy in Norway. It focuses on a 1139 letter of King Ingi *krókhryggr*, questions of its historicity and its value for investigating the lost saga *Hryggjarstykki*. Leidulf Melve's second contribution shares this epistolary focus, addressing the context of references to letters in the Kings' Sagas, and their significance for the general development of epistolary literacy in Norway. The two chapters together provide a very detailed study of administrative and epistolary literacy throughout the Kings' Sagas.

Kristel Zilmer offers a nuanced look at Bergen runic communication, emphasising the diversity of the extant corpus of inscriptions. It is the only analysis of runic literacy in *Moving Words*, and a fascinating investigation of the forms and functions of literacy in medieval Bergen. Lucie Doležalová explores the concept of lists and listing as a literary genre and theoretical category, setting several types of lists from the Old Norse–Icelandic corpus in an ancient and medieval context. She argues for greater consideration of the form and function of lists, and against the simplistic division of them into categories of 'practical' and 'creative'. The scope of Doležalová's approach makes the chapter a useful introduction to the study of lists; however, more direct and thorough comparison between the Old Norse–Icelandic *pulur* and contemporary Latin lists would have provided a better historical context for understanding the Old Norse–Icelandic lists.

Amy C. Mulligan's second contribution examines the use of texts to interpret place and identity, as well as the verbal creation of place, through a geocritical reading of *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*. Mulligan also compares these texts to verbally constructed *Mappae mundi*, a potentially productive comparison that would have been enhanced by some consideration of medieval Iceland's own extant physical *Mappae mundi*. Mulligan's main conclusions, that these texts show medieval Icelanders using words to shape identity and their sense of place, do not altogether fulfil the promise of the theoretical framing that introduces the chapter. Slavica Ranković continues the focus on *Landnámabók*, offering a careful quantitative analysis of different types of back-referring formula in its various versions and manuscripts. She compares this to her previous research on similar types of formula in the *Íslendingasögur*, showing some fascinating differences

between the two types of texts, notably the much more extensive use of such formula in *Landnámabók* than in the *Íslendingasögur*.

Helen F. Leslie-Jacobsen explores the poem *Ævikviða* from *Orvar-Odds saga*. Her chapter demonstrates how the relationship between sagas and their sources can be thought of in terms of the overall themes of *Moving Words*, particularly situating sagas in the interface between oral and literate culture. Ingvil Brügger Budal moves the perspective from *fornaldarsögur* to *riddarasögur*, in *Moving Words*'s only focused examination of translation dynamics, illuminating specific passages that show different translation techniques in *Elíss saga og Rósamundar*. She is particularly critical of some less nuanced uses of quantitative techniques in studying translation in *riddarasögur*, and argues for a deeper investigation of how violence is communicated in translated sagas.

Else Mundal's second contribution closes *Moving Words* with a brief overview of the literary history of Iceland, surveying the various genres of the Old Norse–Icelandic corpus—including several proposed lost oral genres—while arguing how oral genres may have endured as literate culture developed. The placing of this broad survey at the beginning of the volume would perhaps have been more useful for readers new to the field, but it does reaffirm the scope and purpose of the volume as a whole, at least as far as Iceland is concerned. However, as with Mundal's previous contribution to this volume, the breadth of this chapter would have been better supported by more careful and thorough citation of other scholarship.

Overall, the variety of subjects in *Moving Words*—letters, lists, runes, liturgical texts, sagas and Latin historiography—provides a good perspective on a number of different ways of approaching and understanding the study of literacy and textual culture in Iceland and Norway. This scope is probably the volume's greatest strength, but it can give the impression of a somewhat unfocused survey that lacks depth of analysis. Those readers interested in epistolary writing and *Landnámabók* will appreciate the additional space given to these subjects, while those curious about subjects touched upon only once in the volume, such as runes and liturgy, may be somewhat frustrated. *Moving Words* is a valuable contribution to the field, and although it is inconsistent and uneven in places, it does contain significant pieces of scholarship on a variety of aspects of textual culture and the oral-literate continuum in Norway and Iceland.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SAGAS OF ICELANDERS. By CARL PHELPSTEAD. *University Press of Florida*. Gainesville, 2020. xvii + 205 pp. ISBN 978-0-8130-6651-6.

Carl Phepstead's engaging introduction to the *Íslendingasögur* 'sagas of Icelanders' will undoubtedly become required reading for anyone wishing to study this most famous and critically acclaimed of saga genres. While clearly aimed at those unfamiliar with the *Íslendingasögur*, those already acquainted with them will still find much of interest in its pages: Phepstead is as informative about the history

of the discipline as about the sagas themselves, combining a thorough knowledge of saga reception and scholarship with skilful analysis of the saga texts, informed by a range of more contemporary critical perspectives.

The book opens with a clear introduction clarifying the diverse and sometimes competing terminology which has arisen to describe the sagas, their genre and their language, which first-time readers of the sagas of Icelanders will find invaluable. The accompanying reference material is likewise extremely well thought out, comprising a chronology of significant dates, a glossary of specialist terms and a tabulated list of the *Íslendingasögur*, from which the user can instantly ascertain a saga's proposed date, *Íslenzk fornrit* edition and principal translations.

Chapter 2 focuses on the background to the sagas, both historical and literary contexts, reviewing the main historical trends of saga scholarship in the process. There is an insightful discussion of orality, and it is particularly pleasing to see issues of textual criticism brought to the fore as Phelpstead highlights the shortcomings of traditional 'best text' editorial approaches to the sagas. Phelpstead's frank admission that 'as yet, most of the published editions of sagas with which scholars and critics work do not reflect adequately the complexity and variance of the manuscript tradition' is a timely reminder of the work still to be done in the field, even if he is also forced to acknowledge that 'very few readers today are in a position to do anything other than rely on the editions that are available' (p. 48). Nevertheless, it is good to see the principles regarding the acknowledgement and importance of textual variance espoused in this chapter carried through to Phelpstead's analysis of individual sagas in Chapter 4, where he takes care to inform the reader about the multiplicity of surviving versions of the sagas under discussion and highlights some particularly important differences between recensions, such as the inclusion or absence of *Höfuðlausn*, *Sonatorrek* and *Arinbjarnarkviða* in the various manuscript witnesses to *Egils saga* (p. 113).

In Chapters 3 and 4 Phelpstead pursues his central thesis that the sagas of Icelanders make up a genre that 'is pervasively concerned with issues of identity: national, religious, social, and personal' (p. 4), by presenting a thematic overview of the sagas, followed by a selection of close readings. Phelpstead chooses as his main themes law and national identity; gender and sexuality; and nature and the supernatural (while acknowledging that 'sagas are not about only these three topics', p. 53). Each theme is used to open up a dialogue between the sagas and the contemporary theoretical approaches of postcolonialism, feminist and queer theory and ecocriticism, all of which are then integrated into a larger discourse about identity formation as an historically-contingent and contested process.

The sagas chosen for closer analysis include all the classics of the genre, from the brief *Hrafnkels saga*, *Auðunar þáttur vestfirzka* and the Vinland sagas to the extended masterpieces *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, *Laxdæla saga* and *Njáls saga*. Attention is also paid to the main subgenres, the poets' and outlaw sagas. While the rationale behind choosing such popular sagas is clear, dovetailing neatly with the syllabuses of many Old Norse–Icelandic university courses, it is hard not to feel an opportunity has been missed to introduce a few comparatively less well-known, fourteenth- and fifteenth-century *Íslendingasögur*, such as *Finnboga saga*

ramma or *Víglundar saga*, to a wider audience. As an introduction to the genre, Phelpstead's book may well become a formative influence on future scholars in the field and greater encouragement to look beyond the core selection would have been very welcome.

As a final flourish, Chapter 5 offers an entertaining and informative account of the translation history of the sagas into English from the eighteenth century onwards, charting the rise of the *Íslendingasögur* to critical and popular pre-eminence. In exploring how post-medieval reception of the sagas of Icelanders has been shaped as much by ideological concerns as the sagas themselves, Phelpstead adds a further dimension to his discussion of sagas and the politics of identity. His insight that every age remakes the sagas 'to an extent . . . in its own image' (p. 162) should encourage thoughtful reading of sagas in translation, in the awareness that no translator is ever entirely without an agenda.

A few typographical errors creep in among the Old Norse names: Óláfr Tryggvason (pp. 19 and 20); Gunnlaugr (p. 107); Skallgrímsson (p. 109); Þorhallr (p. 118); Bergþórsháll (p. 145); Angatýr (p. 148); *Gisla saga* (p. 160); Ósvífsdóttir (pp. 74 and 137) and Ósvífrsdóttir (pp. 67 and 134) alternate throughout. More concerning, because actively misleading, is the apparent confusion of the role of Guðrún Gjúkadóttir in Eddic poetry twice with that of Brynhildr: it is Brynhildr, not Guðrún, who finds herself married to the 'wrong one of two men' (p. 134)—that is, Gunnarr instead of Sigurðr—and Brynhildr who urges Guðrún's brothers to kill Sigurðr, not Guðrún herself, as Phelpstead claims (p. 139). As a result, some of the parallels adduced between the Eddic Guðrún and her namesake Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir in *Laxdæla saga* fall down.

These are minor criticisms, however. Phelpstead has not only produced a comprehensive guide to the sagas of Icelanders, but, at a time when medieval studies are increasingly under threat, he has powerfully defended the vital and continued importance of studying texts which by their very unfamiliarity 'confront us with the contingency of our own beliefs' (p. 164).

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MASCULINITIES IN OLD NORSE LITERATURE. Edited by GARETH LLOYD EVANS and JESSICA CLARE HANCOCK. *D. S. Brewer*. Cambridge, 2020. 267 pp. ISBN 978-1-84384-562-1.

Masculinities in Old Norse literature is a fine volume, beautifully produced, and containing a fascinating range of perspectives on its subject from early-career researchers to more senior figures. The editors' introduction succinctly summarises not only the contents of the collection but also the history of Old Norse gender studies to date, and some foundational principles: it thus provides the perfect starting point for students and non-specialists and a useful source of reference for the researcher. The essays themselves are divided into three sections: Becoming Masculine; Masculinity, Power, and Vulnerability; and Men's Relationships.

In the first section, Oren Falk's survey of male adolescence as a kind of gendered apprenticeship whereby the saga youth may become (one kind of) violent, accomplished and independent man is followed by Matthew Roby's clear and cogent exploration of the 'temporary troll lover' trope in *fornaldarsögur*, where socially sanctioned visits to troll-women can provide a sexual initiation enabling a man to make the transition from passive to dominant and marriage-worthy masculinity (a mode which is nevertheless critiqued by *Ketils saga hængs*). Both chapters demonstrate that masculinity is acquired rather than innate, and that Norse writers embrace differing views of hegemonic gender roles. Gareth Lloyd Evans's chapter—for me the stand-out contribution in an excellent collection—takes this concept further in a brilliant and challenging analysis of key saga scenes which feature female masculinities: successful performances which interrogate male masculinity and destabilise the supposedly natural link between those two terms. The following contribution by Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir provides a welcome insight into an under-studied text, *Mágus saga jarls*, where masculinity is itself the major theme. She persuasively argues that the saga explores identity, public personas and power/corruption via cross-dressing, disguise and masquerade episodes, critiquing manly men and unproblematically accepting (at least temporary) female masculinity.

In the second section, Philip Lavender provides another detailed and nuanced reading of a single work—*Göngu-Hrólfs saga*—which shows the importance of examining masculinity and gender in conjunction with other identity categories and in the whole range of Old Norse–Icelandic literature (not just the Family Sagas). Disability and impairment (Lavender draws our attention to the salient distinction between the two), as well as limitations on agency, illuminate ideas about power and male vulnerability. Next, Ásdís Egilsdóttir investigates clerical masculinity as an alternative, non-violent but still viable mode of gender performance, while Thomas Morcom draws on the concept of inclusive masculinity to elucidate the interrelationship of different, hegemonic and non-hegemonic, modes in the 'productive' homosocial space of the court in *Morkinskinna*. Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir turns to *Egils saga*'s accommodation of emotion and vulnerability in its hero, arguing that courtly European concepts of lovesickness and melancholy are introduced to augment, rather than diminish, Egill's status.

Interpersonal male relationships are the subject of the third section. Alison Finlay provides a detailed reading and contextualisation of *níð* in *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa*, and David Ashurst reminds us of the importance of recognising the ways in which male intimacy may signify differently in different social and historical contexts via literary representations of bed-sharing. Carl Phelpstead's chapter demonstrates that scholarship on Old Norse masculinity has hitherto neglected clerical masculinities and the context of the fourteenth century to its detriment, in a well-theorised and nuanced discussion of homosocial masculinities in *Lárentíus saga biskups*. In the final chapter, Jessica Clare Hancock examines the obligations of kinship, revealing sibling, father-son and uncle-nephew relations in the Eddic poems and *Völsunga saga* as fraught bonds with a complex relationship to hegemonic masculinity.

As will be evident, the contributors take very different approaches to their material (some are clearly more informed by contemporary theory than others).

The range covered by individual chapters varies widely, too, with some contributors surveying a sweep of Old Norse–Icelandic literature and others focusing in detail on one or two texts. This diversity is one of the things edited collections can do particularly well—providing something for almost everyone—but the editors’ introduction also does a good job of bringing the disparate parts together. There are obvious ways in which one or more chapters speak to one another, providing mutual support or useful contrast, though occasionally it felt as if there were missed opportunities. For instance, Ashurst’s chapter touches towards its close on modern fratboy masculinity; this might have interacted fruitfully with Eric Anderson’s work on inclusive masculinity employed by Morcom. No one could fail, however, to find food for thought at any point in this collection, which should prove invaluable to anyone working in this field and beyond.

I noticed only one typo (*constructed* for *constructed* on p. 206), and the volume has extremely high production values throughout, as we have come to expect from Boydell and Brewer. Though the RRP is £75, it currently retails for just over £40 in hardback, so libraries should snap it up.

From the title alone, some prospective readers might be tempted to think: haven’t we heard enough about men, particularly white men and toxic forms of masculinity? As this book makes clear, however, not only are we just beginning truly to understand men and masculinity (as well as race and sexuality) as culturally constructed—rather than universal and timeless—categories, we still have a long way to go in recognising and investigating the multiple masculinities that exist (and are alternately celebrated and critiqued) within past cultures and literatures. This kind of work is particularly important when simplistic and inaccurate misappropriations of Old Norse literature and culture are being used to fuel and justify real-world racist, misogynist and homophobic violence. The editors of this volume are acutely aware of this context and their Afterword is a call to arms and a challenge to Old Norse–Icelandic scholars not to stand on the sidelines or maintain an embarrassed silence about what is being done with and to the Eddas and sagas, but urgently to foreground the Norse modes of being male or masculine that coexist with, challenge and subvert more toxic models. Much remains to be done, of course, but *Masculinities in Old Norse Literature* is a significant and timely step along the way.

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PARANORMAL ENCOUNTERS IN ICELAND, 1150–1400. Edited by ÁRMANN JAKOBSSON and MIRIAM MAYBURD. *De Gruyter*: Boston and Berlin, 2020. vii + 438 pp. 2 b/w illustrations. ISBN 978-1-50-58044-329-6.

This collection contains twenty-three studies of the paranormal in Old Norse–Icelandic literature, some by well-established scholars, though the majority come from current or recent postgraduate students and early-career academics. The volume thus demonstrates that the study of the paranormal, which has only risen

to prominence in the last few decades, will remain a significant component of our field for years to come.

It responds to a recent volume on a similar topic, *Supernatural encounters in Old Norse literature and tradition* (ed. Daniel Sävborg and Karen Bek-Pedersen, Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), to which Ármann Jakobsson and Miriam Mayburd both contributed chapters. As indicated in the introduction and the editors' own contributions, however, this collection represents a marked shift in focus. Where the earlier volume championed the use of Old Norse–Icelandic literature to reconstruct the customs and belief systems of pre-Christian or Viking-Age Scandinavia, this one justifiably emphasises the pertinence of that literature to the context in which, according to the manuscript record, it more assuredly grew and flourished: later medieval Iceland. A necessary corollary of this shift is that we must also consider the corpus in relation to high- and late-medieval European literary and cultural movements, rather than exclusively to earlier Germanic corpora like Old English. Furthermore, this volume pivots away from the traditional aim of discovering consistent classification systems for the paranormal in Old Norse–Icelandic depictions of such entities, especially with a view to considering how these might reflect cohesive pre-Christian religious or later folk belief systems. Paranormal phenomena are imaginary entities, existing only in the minds and words of those who thought, wrote, spoke, read or heard about them, so we should hardly be surprised by the inconsistency of their portrayals or the variable terminology used to describe them. Thus, rather than attempting to define or categorise them, the editors suggest we attend to how each individual encounter with a paranormal phenomenon is narrated, how it might have been interpreted, and how it might respond to contemporaneous social and material concerns. However, it must be noted that this commitment to eschewing the taxonomising of paranormal entities is not shared by all of the volume's contributors.

Much of the editors' defence of the term 'paranormal' rather than the more traditional 'supernatural' is expressed in rather convoluted rhetoric. Both here and in prior publications, however, they have each offered plainer and more persuasive arguments on the subject. While 'natural' implies something that conforms to what is physically possible out in the world, 'normal'—understood by the editors to mean 'usual' or 'expected'—implies something that is considered ordinary in the human mind. The use of the term 'paranormal' therefore draws our attention to the true location of the subjects under scrutiny: they are not physical entities in the natural world, but rather constructs of the human imagination. Furthermore, when scholars use the label 'supernatural', they are often tacitly referring to something that is physically impossible according to modern, Western scientific precepts, which we must not assume to have been shared by people of other cultures and times. The term 'paranormal' is a better reminder that the category under examination is culturally contingent: simply that which is considered unusual or unexpected, though not necessarily impossible, in any given context, enabling the discussion of paranormal phenomena without making assumptions about medieval belief or lack thereof. A further

advantage of the term 'paranormal' is that it invites the study of depicted phenomena that seem to be presented as unusual but do not necessarily contravene modern precepts of what is possible, such as the tenuously plausible strength of some saga characters. The distance of such subjects from the 'normal' lends them a heightened potential to indicate or embody cultural anxieties similar to that of more traditional 'supernatural' entities such as witches and ghosts, making them receptive to the same interpretive models. The use of the term 'paranormal' thus represents an advantageous shift in terminology that it is hoped will be embraced by the scholarly community.

I have evaluated here only a sample of the exceptionally large number of contributions to this volume, chosen to demonstrate the admirable variety of texts, topics, theoretical lenses and contributions to recent debates presented within.

Miriam Mayburd and Daniel Remein's ecocritical contributions explore the connection between paranormal phenomena and environmental or climatic concerns. They note that the appearance of revenants and other paranormal entities often coincides with winter, arguing that these figures might symbolise the perils of inclement weather, darkness and ice, which are often conspicuously unspoken in the texts. Both these chapters are thoroughly compelling, though, on occasion, their almost poetic diction and writing style can obscure the points being made.

The topics of Ásdís Egilsdóttir and Gunnvör Karlsdóttir's chapters raise the crucial question as to whether depictions of Christian miracle should be discussed alongside those of more conventionally labelled 'supernatural' entities. Ásdís cites evidence from medieval Iceland and the broader European context demonstrating that, although many medieval Christians must have believed in miracles, such events were still considered confusing and unusual, which makes them 'paranormal' in the terms outlined above. Corroborating the value of this broader term, both of these chapters demonstrate how, just like their more trollish counterparts, the distance of Christian miracles and wonders from everyday reality was used by medieval authors to explore conceptual questions and elicit emotional responses from audiences.

Sarah Bienko Eriksen's superb contribution employs narratological theory to investigate shifts in internal focalisation during the paranormal encounters of *Grettis saga*. She demonstrates that most encounters are focalised through Grettir himself, but that the Glámr episode alternates in perspective between protagonist and monster. Drawing on robotics for the concept of the 'uncanny valley', Eriksen persuasively contends that forcing the audience to relate to this human yet inhuman Other compounds the horror of the episode as a whole.

Anna Katharina Heiniger's chapter is a refreshing return to first principles on the subject of liminality, a concept that she rightly asserts has been too loosely applied in literary study. Heiniger condenses van Gennep and Turner's works on liminality into a seven-point checklist, which should prove helpful to other Old Norse-Icelandic scholars hoping to employ this originally anthropological concept. Heiniger's own consideration of several saga depictions of paranormal encounters that take place in doorways is generally persuasive, though she acknowledges that these episodes do not perfectly satisfy her own criteria.

Arngrímur Vídalín's commendably comprehensive entry examines references to *blámenn* throughout the corpus. He rightly concludes that *blámaðr* has a broader semantic range in medieval texts than its standard definition in modern Icelandic and most Old Norse–Icelandic dictionaries, where it designates a 'black African' individual. It can refer to people from Africa, non-Christian individuals (including but not limited to Muslims), devils and demons of Christian cosmology, as well as a range of non-racially or non-religiously defined monsters and trolls. On a few occasions, Arngrímur himself seems to be influenced by the standard meaning of this word in modern Icelandic, implying racial connotations that are not explicit in the quotations presented.

Martina Ceolin's chapter builds on the well-established idea that how a saga depicts the paranormal can associate it with one or more of the traditional saga genres, such as the *Íslendingasögur* or *fornaldarsögur*. She explores how the authors of *Gull-Þóris saga* and *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar* play with the generic associations of various paranormal phenomena to set portions of their narratives in different storyworlds. This generic 'code-switching' has been discussed before, including in reference to both of these sagas, by Matteo Pavan, Fulvio Ferrari, Alaric Hall and Torfi Tulinius. Ceolin marshals this conclusion to support the broader point, also well-established in recent debates about genre, that the traditionally theorised saga genres should not be understood as elements of a strict classification system, but rather as a useful way of representing the flexible and overlapping patterns of similarity across a corpus of intrinsically heterogeneous texts.

Shaun Hughes demonstrates how the present-day topography and toponymy of the locations in which a saga is set can offer solutions to questions that remain unanswered in the text itself, using the hauntings at Þórhallsstaðir in *Grettis saga* as a case study. This creative and compelling chapter should encourage others to consider similar methods when studying texts written and set in Iceland, since the medieval audience's potential awareness of the landscapes in question was no doubt formative to their interpretations. Nevertheless, Hughes occasionally asserts the relationship between the present-day landscape and what 'must have been' meant by the silences and ambiguities of the medieval text with undue certainty. Such points would benefit from being framed more guardedly, especially since some of the topography must have changed over the centuries.

Yoav Tirosh considers how the figure of Guðmundr inn ríki is linked to the paranormal, which compounds his association with the *ergi*-complex. This chapter's most significant and compelling contribution is its epilogue, which argues that the latter portion of *Ljósvetninga saga* contains cues that guide the audience's interpretation of the former. This echoes work by Gísli Sigurðsson and Heather O'Donoghue, who identify thematic prompts in the sagas' genealogical introductions and 'fore-stories'. Tirosh couches this notion in a playful allusion to the works of David Lynch, which may not make his point clearer or more persuasive to every reader.

As these reviews of only a partial sample of its contents attest, this collection is an impressive showcase of the applicability of the study of the paranormal to a variety of topics and debates in Old Norse–Icelandic literature. The volume

demonstrates how depictions of paranormal phenomena can shed light on medieval norms surrounding gender, sex, race, religion and the environment; how they are receptive to a broad range of literary critical and interdisciplinary apparatuses; and how they can contribute to future conversations about the narrative form of individual texts and the generic make-up of the corpus as a whole.

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TÍMINN SEFUR. FORNALDARGARÐARNIR MIKLU Á ÍSLANDI. By ÁRNI EINARSSON. *Mál og menning*. Reykjavík, 2019. 197 pp. ISBN 978-9979-3-3977-9.

This beautifully produced book gives an account, richly supplemented with colour photographs, plans and sections, of about twenty years of research into an extensive system of medieval earthworks in northeast Iceland. A provision on the obligation to build so-called *löggarðar* ‘legal walls’ which would stand up in court in disputes about the trespassing of livestock, is laid out in the oldest Icelandic law book, *Grágás*. It includes detailed clauses relating to the building, specifying where and how the walls should be built, their height and thickness, at what time of year they were to be built and by whom, and what penalties were available if the work was not carried out. All of this is covered briefly in the first chapter of this book, followed by a selection of accounts of earthworks from various sources, starting with the Icelandic sagas and including folktales and various eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century accounts.

A common interpretation of the earthworks from the nineteenth century onwards was that they had served as communication routes. This may stem from the fact that at that time they were very wide in their collapsed form and many lay in straight lines. Proper investigations of them were initiated in the 1970s by Dr Kristján Eldjárn, former head of the National Museum and later President of Iceland, and Dr Sigurður Þórarinsson, the geologist who developed a chronology based on the dating of volcanic ash (tephrochronology). This dating method has been instrumental in archaeological research in Iceland ever since. There is an account of Sigurður’s and other twentieth-century investigations preceding the detail of the research project whose results are presented in this book. An attempt is made to interpret the earthworks, establish the ideology behind their construction and explain why they fell into disrepair. Finally, there is a discussion of efforts made to revive wall-making in the eighteenth century, and even of the introduction of barbed-wire fences, followed by a very brief account of earthworks in other countries for comparison. The author acknowledges that a discussion of barbed-wire fences lies outside the topic of the book, but it offers an opportunity to include Halldór Laxness’s view of this phenomenon as described wittily in his novel *Brekkukotsannáll*.

By providing many full-page, and sometimes even two-page, high-quality colour aerial photographs showing the earthworks and other man-made features

in the landscape, Árni enables readers to explore the details of the landscape for themselves. Descriptions in the captions are therefore intentionally minimal. This works most of the time, although readers who are not experienced in interpreting such remains may have difficulties in some instances, e.g. with identifying the pagan graves in the image on p. 98. The book is aimed not least at the general public. In addition to the splendid aerial photographs, this is evident, for example, in the endnote references: although they are many they are often minimal (no page numbers), or even absent (e.g. in Table 2). The author and his co-workers have published several articles and reports on this project, some in English (there is no English summary here). A scholarly English version is ‘Viking Age fences and early settlement dynamics in Iceland’. *Journal of the North Atlantic* 27 (2015), 1–21. The description of the progression of the project over its twenty-year duration, detailing how new tools and methods became available, is interesting. The many maps which are included are based on all the methods used.

The investigation showed that most of the earthworks were made between AD 940 and 960, or shortly after the initial settlement, and that they had gone out of use by AD 1300. These dates are based on the position of dated volcanic ash layers in and around the earthworks. Their function has been disputed, but the more serious researchers agree that they must have had to do with separating landholdings, keeping domestic animals in place, or have had some defensive function. This is also the author’s view, although he suggests that there is room for further interpretation. He points out that the shape of the system of earthworks is in many places closely linked to the landscape, and provides a number of schematic suggestions as to how this could work in different circumstances. Being a biologist and a specialist in animal ecology, his comparison of the behaviour of humans and animals in dividing up land is interesting (p. 78). The demise of the earthworks probably did not have a single cause. Climate change is mentioned as well as a reduced workforce owing to plagues and changes in the economy and in the ownership of land. But more research is needed to throw further light on all these suggestions. The reason favoured by the author is a combination of deterioration in the quality of the land and changes in settlement organisation—some farms were abandoned, others were relocated—but there is still room for further interpretation.

The author attempts to calculate how many kilometres of earthworks there might have been in the whole country. This he bases on the specifications in *Grágás* of how long a stretch each farmer was responsible for building, linked to information about the number of farmers paying assembly attendance dues (self-supporting farmers) in around 1095, according to Ari fróði’s *Íslendingabók*, which was 4560 (not 3800 as stated in the book, if we assume that Ari was using the customary long hundred, or 120). The preserved length in the study area is only a small portion of the estimate, leaving long stretches in other parts of the country which remain to be discovered, or not, depending on preservation.

This book gives a glimpse into the newly created rural community of medieval Iceland and will doubtless serve as the foundation for further research into its settlement organisation. After studying the landscape so extensively from the air

the author is in a good position to point to areas worthy of special preservation. Let's hope that at least some of them find their way onto the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites as he proposes.

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THE *MAPPÆ MUNDI* OF MEDIEVAL ICELAND. By DALE KEDWARDS. *Studies in Old Norse Literature*. D. S. Brewer. Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2020. 256 pp. ISBN 978-1-84384-569-0.

The corpus of maps from medieval Iceland is small, comprising only five extant items. These inestimably precious witnesses were drawn as part of larger manuscript compilations between c.1225 and c.1400, and happen to exemplify each of the main *mappa mundi* varieties (the hemispherical world map; the zonal world map; the T-O map). Despite the significance of these maps for the history of cartography in Iceland, the scholarship on them is not extensive. Dale Kedwards's book is an important and erudite contribution to research on the corpus (and related material): his holistic and context-driven approach to the subject goes far beyond any previous study of the material. Kedwards shows us how these medieval Icelandic maps emerged out of ancient and medieval traditions of map-making in Europe. Equally importantly, we come to see how the maps produced meaning for their Icelandic audiences: Kedwards notes that 'Icelanders were not latecomers to cartographic production but fared with their English and Continental contemporaries in thinking about the wider world and their place within it' (p. 102). Meticulous analysis of each map, its sources, purpose and meaning(s), lays the foundation for the persuasive argument that the maps are 'pioneering works of Icelandic historical writing that show how Icelandic thinkers were able to manipulate cartographic space to address contemporary anxieties about the place of Iceland in Scandinavia, and attendant questions of Icelandic history and identity' (p. 9).

Kedwards wears his learning lightly and succeeds throughout in communicating complex technical ideas in an accessible way that makes reading this book a real pleasure. The introduction does an excellent job of setting the scene, presenting each map in brief, explaining the book's intellectual approach and providing necessary scientific, historical and historiographical information. In Chapter 1, the two Icelandic hemispherical maps preserved in AM 736 I 4to (c.1300, at f.1v) and AM 732 b 4to (c.1300–25), at f. 3r) are discussed; Chapter 2 examines the only Icelandic example of a zonal map, copied into the fourteenth-century manuscript GKS 1812 I 4to (at f. 11v); and Chapter 3 treats the Icelandic T-O maps (a pair that Kedwards calls the 'Viðey maps') preserved in GKS 1812 III 4to (c. 1225–50, at ff. 5v–6r and f. 6v). Chapter 4 takes a closer look at the depiction of Europe, and especially Iceland and Scandinavia, on the two Viðey maps, and Chapter 5 provides yet another perspective on these, considering them and their structural principles in light of a list of forty 'highborn' Icelandic priests attributed to Ari Þorgilsson (d. 1148), whose *Íslendingabók* is found on f. 5r of the same fragment.

After the short conclusion (a summary of the book's main work and its case for seeing the maps as vitally important cultural, political and ideological texts), a diplomatic edition plus English translation of the legends for each map is printed. Commentary on the 136 names that appear on the larger and more complex Viðey map supplements the translation. A colour image accompanies the edition of each map, with marked-up black-and-white images in addition for each of the two Viðey maps. Close-up details and images of other leaves from manuscripts under discussion are also printed intermittently throughout the book. The visual aspects of the maps presented in these images is obviously vital to Kedwards's analysis, though they are not always easily legible (as is the case with many medieval Icelandic parchment manuscripts, they are dark in colour, with their text sometimes impaired by rubbing or liquid-damage).

From the outset, Kedwards emphasises the importance of the manuscript context of these maps for fully understanding their meaning. The manuscripts in which the maps were copied also preserve a range of diagrammatic material and textual contents that pertain to computistical, encyclopaedic, natural philosophical and theological themes. Previous studies have tended to view the maps in isolation, but Kedwards warns against the limitations of such constrained analysis, noting that 'inattention to the contents of the books in which we find maps can cause us to overlook what their makers tried to achieve in drawing them' (p. 8). The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and Kedwards's consistently thorough, close reading of each map in its material, manuscript context results in many new insights. When the zonal map copied into GKS 1812 I 4to is examined on the basis of other items in the same manuscript, for example, its generation of 'a productive suite of relationships with its companion items' becomes clear: the map is seen to belong to 'a sequence of texts and diagrams that thematise planetary kinematics' and is 'one step in a staged exposition of the structure of the physical universe and its clocked processes' (p. 98). This map 'was not drawn to be looked at in isolation but in consultation with its companion texts and images, which together comprise the most detailed study of the globe that survives from medieval Iceland' (p. 65). Overall, on the basis of his cumulative observations, we see that when the maps are viewed as parts of a bigger whole, they 'intersect more textual worlds than has previously been supposed' (p. 9).

Fine-grained codicological analysis adds weight to Kedwards's argument too, for example in his discussion of the Icelandic hemispherical map on 3r of AM 732 b 4to and the scribe's reuse of the compass hole on the verso side of the leaf (3v) to draw a planetary diagram, the two visual items 'connected by the material circumstances of their production' (p. 59). Kedwards is not the first to spot the reuse of the compass hole, but reflecting on how 'the exigencies of manual techniques' might align with the intellectual programme of the manuscript in question adds nuance to his analysis. Similarly, consideration of the visual argument of each map adds another interpretative dimension. Differences regarding the *mise-en-page* relationships between the two versions of the Icelandic hemispherical map (the older version in AM 736 I 4to, at f. 1v; the younger version in AM 732 b 4to, at f. 3r, as stated above) and notes that accompany both maps on an error in the

Julian calendar and on the generation of the tides ‘emphasise different aspects of the map’s design’ (p. 55). Another illustrative example concerns the larger Viðey map and the eleven African legends inscribed on it that are derived verbatim from Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies*. These legends are longer than others elsewhere on the map and having drawn attention to this, Kedwards suggests that their arrangement, with the legends laid out in columns, ‘is a bookish format that visually echoes their origin in ancient writings’ (p. 108): the *mise-en-page* indices the map’s intellectual framework and environment.

A key objective of research on the history of cartography in past decades has been to demonstrate that maps are intrinsically shaped by ideological and political beliefs, requirements and anxieties. Kedwards’s analysis of the Icelandic medieval map corpus is firmly grounded on these premises. Thus the larger Viðey Map ‘does not present a view of the world as it really was in the thirteenth century, but is an historical proposition written into a geographical framework’ (p. 115). The map’s historical proposition is articulated in several ways (one of which is language—a mix of Latin and Old Norse, with the vernacular used for areas of Scandinavian settlement: Iceland, provinces of Sweden, Denmark) and the map-maker ‘uses the geographical framework provided by the *kringla heimsins* to write a history of the Scandinavian regions, thematising Iceland’s relation to its ancient precursor, Thule, and the archaic Scandinavian presence in Central Eurasia’ (p. 146). Kedwards’s ultimate conclusion is that the larger Viðey map can usefully be seen to represent an origin myth, and even (along with the smaller Viðey Map and their companion register of priests) a critical response to the turbulent period of political change in which it was produced, a cartographic statement made by Icelanders ‘about their nation and that which threatened it’ (p. 178). This conclusion explicitly underlines the relevance of these maps in the wider context of the intellectual and political history of medieval Iceland, and the importance of the profound attention that Kedwards grants them. His study will certainly be enlightening for many readers and will hopefully encourage some of those to turn their attention to other related, but mostly understudied, material in the medieval Icelandic encyclopaedic tradition.

EMILY LETHBRIDGE

Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum

VIOLENCE AND RISK IN MEDIEVAL ICELAND. THIS SPATTERED ISLE. By OREN FALK. *Oxford University Press*. Oxford, 2021. xiii + 358 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-886604-6.

This book offers an analysis of one of the key factors of life in medieval Iceland: the ubiquity of violence, if not as a daily concern then nevertheless a constant factor in human interaction. The author proposes a new cultural-history model for understanding violence which has three axes: power, signification and risk. The axis of risk is laid out in detail, using insights from prospect theory, edgework and the calculus of jeopardy. It is shown that violence, which itself generates risks, at the same time also serves to control unpredictable elements. The issue becomes not so much whether violence was an all-encompassing feature of Icelandic society,

but rather that all social competition contained a component of risk, that any action could meet with a violent response. In a society without an executive power, political life was very much shaped by the might of individual participants and their ability to gain their objectives by the use of violence. This is especially true before the introduction of royal power in Iceland in the late thirteenth century, but even after that violence remained endemic in Icelandic politics throughout the medieval period. Only in the sixteenth century did the carrying of arms by major powerbrokers decrease dramatically, so much so that in 1581 an official tried to reimpose the carrying of arms as a social obligation through legislative means, in the so-called *Vopnadómur*.

This is not the only important issue taken up by the author, however. A crucial element in the book is the interaction of historical narrative with historical reality. The author argues against an easy assumption that historians were simply reporting events as they unfolded, and argues that 'to pose the question in terms of historical accuracy is to miss the opportunity opened by reading the sagas as expressions of *uchronia*, an agentive ideology of history. The object of cognition they shaped was not a record but a representation of the past' (p. 79). This concept of *uchronia*, the hegemonic ideology of the past, is used to explain how textual autonomy is maintained by authorial intent, and how present society is connected to its own past. The author argues that in medieval Iceland violence played a key role in the making of *uchronia*. This analytical approach is both novel and helpful in view of the varying reliability of the texts analysed, but, as the author makes clear, it is the narrators of history and their views on violence and risk that are the subject of the analysis. These narrators were, of course, the product of their society and influenced by its predominant attitudes to violence.

The book tests this model on a series of case studies from medieval Iceland, both events from the early thirteenth century and more unhistorical episodes from the saga literature. The agency of violence in shaping present circumstances, future status and past memories is demonstrated. An uncertain reality is translated into socially useful narrative, as the prevalent feud paradigm blocked the prospects of warfare and state formation, and the idiom of human violence was used to domesticate the natural environment. Following a thorough analytical discussion, the author uses the general model of violence to discuss the Battle of Helgastaðir (1220) and other episodes from the life of Guðmundr Arason, Bishop of Hólar (r.1203–37). The investigation establishes how the structural analysis of sagas—using the concepts of *récit*, *histoire*, and *uchronia*—refines the picture of history reconstructed from such sources, as occurrences are transformed into events. In the next study, the focus is on the predominant structure of violence in the sagas: feud. Two paradigmatic feuding episodes are examined, one from the Family Sagas (*Þorsteins þáttur stangarhöggs*), the other from the Contemporary Sagas (*Íslendinga saga's* account of events centred on the chieftain Sæmundr Jónsson from 1215 to 1222). The comparison of episodes from two genres brings the social ideals of thirteenth-century Iceland to the forefront. A third chapter is devoted to the analysis of feud and warfare. It is argued that while feud was embraced as a socially constructive idea, war was defined as its opposite. War presupposes

political centralisation and differentiation, which was resisted by the Icelanders, who were committed to the reciprocal logic of feuding.

The following chapter breaks into different territory, as it examines the ecology of medieval Iceland and addresses the fact that the sagas, realistic accounts of a society on a volcanic island on the edge of the Arctic, rarely address the perils posed by the natural environment. This is seen as a consequence of the symbiosis between violence and *uchronia*, as the sagas fixate on human violence at the expense of natural hazards. In the end, theoretical discussion and case studies are drawn together, and the author suggests some ways of thinking about both Viking-Age and present-day violence using the model developed in this book.

Although the book as a whole offers an original and ground-breaking view of the society and dominant discourse of medieval Iceland, on some occasions this reviewer feels that the author has over-emphasised certain aspects at the cost of others. For instance, in an interesting discussion (pp. 75–83) of an episode normally neglected by scholars, in which, after the battle of Helgastaðir, Arnórr Tumason and Sighvatr Sturluson discuss whether the improvement in Arnórr's health before the battle had been a circumstance (*atburður*) or a miracle (*jartein*), the author's interpretation of the altercation is very different from that of the present reviewer. According to Falk, Sighvatr's suggestion shows a religious bent whereas Arnórr demonstrates 'a streak of irreligiosity' (p. 83). This is, however, not the only interpretation of their conversation. Another possibility is that Sighvatr, who is habitually described in *Íslendinga saga* as cynical and secular in his outlook, is mocking Arnórr, who was probably a deeply religious man like many others in his family, including his brother, Kolbeinn Tumason the psalm-writer, and would have welcomed a miracle to demonstrate that God supported him in his struggle against Bishop Guðmundr. Arnórr, however, does not take the bait and continues to be doubtful as to whether he really has God on his side. Of course, both interpretations are possible, but cynicism about religious matters was probably not all that common in thirteenth-century Iceland, and examples in the sources are limited to very few people, including Sighvatr and his father, the chieftain Sturla Þórðarson.

Although it can be argued that some of the examples used by Falk might be open to different interpretations, this is actually one of the strengths of the book. It opens up new fields of debate, either by its use of material that scholars have hitherto neglected or by discussing well-known episodes from the primary material in a new theoretical context. The author skilfully establishes his own theoretical framework in which the concept of risk is a key aspect, and thus adds a new and exciting element to the study of the sagas and the society which produced them. In sum, this is a useful and entertaining book that adds a lot to the scholarly debate on the medieval period in Iceland and introduces a new theoretical approach to studies of pre-modern violence.

NOTARIUS PUBLICUS JÓN EGILSSON. EN SENMIDDELALDERLIG SKRIVERS SKRIFT, SPROG OG HERKOMST. By ALEX SPEED KJELDSSEN. *Bibliotheca Nordica* 9. Novus. Oslo, 2017. 316 pp. ISBN 978-82-7099-899-9.

This detailed study concerns itself, as the subtitle suggests, with the writing, language and origins of a particular scribe: Jón Egilsson, the first *notarius publicus* in Iceland, whose unusually productive career spanned at least the years from 1418 to 1440. More specifically, his writing and language are called on as evidence to illuminate the question of his origin, since—per Kjeldsen’s avowedly simplified formulation—his was either ‘rather bad Icelandic if written by an Icelander, [or] rather good Icelandic if written by a Norwegian’ (p. 271). Those familiar with Kjeldsen’s work will be unsurprised to find that he addresses the question with thoroughness and methodological clarity. The study, an exemplary representative of the more scientific approach to palaeography, follows a clear and logical structure, with chapters broken down into numbered sections and sub-sections. Though the finer details of the work are unlikely to be especially accessible to the general reader, they are expressed about as comprehensibly as they could be; the conValderclusions and the underpinnings of the work are particularly clear.

Kjeldsen’s introduction (Chapter 1) sets out his stall from the very beginning, with a concise summary of the book’s origins and aims, its structure, and a very welcome overview of terminology and notation practice: invaluable for a book which necessarily includes a great deal of very specialised and specific vocabulary. Chapter 2 goes briskly but thoroughly over the methodological basis of the book, the digital marking-up and analysis of the corpus of original charters on which the study rests. Chapter 3 sums up what is already known about Jón Egilsson: first an overview of his production, the original charters and codices in his hand; then a brief account of the scant historical information we have on him as a person; lastly a thorough précis of previous research, most notably Per Roald Landrø’s unpublished Master’s thesis (University of Trondheim, 1975) on the parts of *Bréfabók Jóns Vilhjálmssonar* (Bps B II 3) in Jón’s hand.

In the following five chapters Kjeldsen gets down to the meat of the book, analysing the twenty-seven original charters in Jón Egilsson’s hand. He deals in turn with palaeography (Chapter 4), orthography and phonology (Chapter 5), morphology and word formation (Chapter 6), lexical relationships (Chapter 7) and syntactical relationships (Chapter 8). The study is exhaustive, with ample cross-referencing between sub-sections (it would have simplified matters for the reader had these been given with page numbers as well as section numbers, but this is a very minor quibble), and Kjeldsen is thorough in relating the outcomes of his analysis to those of previous scholars, Landrø in particular. Finally Kjeldsen draws together the results of his research (Chapter 9) to examine Jón Egilsson’s writing and language, firstly in terms of their relationship to the practices found in the wider corpus of contemporary Icelandic charters and secondly with regard to possible diachronic changes within his own usage. The results are that Jón Egilsson’s usage distinguished itself from that of his Icelandic contemporaries

in almost every area, showing in particular some traits associated especially with south-eastern Norway, but also that none of the modest diachronic changes points in a particular direction: neither to an Icelander steadily acquiring Norwegian habits nor a Norwegian becoming gradually more Icelandic. As Kjeldsen notes, the unusual consistency is doubtless evidence that the earliest surviving charters in Jón's hand were the work of an experienced scribe.

The work is rounded off by a conclusion proper (Chapter 10) and an English summary (Chapter 11), which is for the most part a direct translation of Chapter 10. There are, finally, useful appendices, including examples of Jón's writing, and thorough indices. Kjeldsen's conclusion—that Jón Egilsson was in all likelihood a Norwegian who had already received his scribal training in south-eastern Norway, possibly indeed at St Mary's Church in Oslo, before moving to Iceland early in the fifteenth century—is (as the author acknowledges) not a revolutionary break from the insights of previous scholars. The argument is, however, placed on a more secure footing than ever before, supported by an impressive weight of evidence and a methodological thoroughness which will doubtless, and deservedly, prove a model for many future palaeographers.

If there is a criticism to be levelled at this excellent study, it is perhaps that it risks taking for granted its own *raison d'être*. One gets the sense that Kjeldsen takes it as read that a more scientific, more qualitative palaeography is both inherently desirable and readily achievable, a view that not all readers will share (the present reviewer included). This is made plainest in the conclusion (p. 266; I give here the corresponding sentence from the English summary, p. 272, which is translated word-for-word): 'It is my firm belief that the chosen approach, which takes advantage of the annotated data by utilising elements of reproducible research, has contributed to a more precise description with a higher level of scholarly exactitude.' The acknowledgement that only elements of reproducible research could be drawn on is welcome, but a more explicit engagement with the limitations of the approach would have been desirable. Elsewhere, for example, Kjeldsen draws the reader's attention to ambiguous letter-forms; wisely, he treats these circumspectly, but it is not clear that another researcher presented with the same corpus would interpret these in the same way, in which case this aspect of the research at least would not be truly reproducible.

Any field of study as fundamentally *human* as palaeography cannot help but include some element, however small, of subjectivity. Studies such as the present one reduce this to a great extent, but cannot eliminate it entirely; and in any case, many of the foundational insights on which they depend derive ultimately from generations who, if no less rigorous, at any rate did not conceive of their efforts in such terms. Though Kjeldsen makes an extremely strong case for the benefits of approaching palaeography as scientifically as possible, this case would be stronger still were it made more cautiously and the pitfalls of the approach more openly grappled with.

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SAXO. By LARS BOJE MORTENSEN. *100 danmarkshistorier* 12. Aarhus Universitetsforlag. Aarhus, 2018. 100pp. ISBN 978-87-7184-432-0.

This volume belongs to a series of one hundred books, each one hundred pages long, called *100 danmarkshistorier*. The series, aimed at a popular, Danish readership, presents a history of Denmark through a hundred pivotal events or topics, with each book written by an authority in the given field. Like the other 99 *danmarkshistorier* in the series, Mortensen's book serves as a general introduction to Saxo Grammaticus (fl. c. 1200). It is not intended to present controversial research, nor is it an exhaustive summary. For this reason, it sits somewhat awkwardly with the needs of the present journal's readership: non-Danes who read Danish probably require no introduction to Saxo, while those who desire an introduction to Saxo probably cannot read Danish, and therefore cannot access this publication.

The book has five chapters. The first presents the *Gesta Danorum* and its immediate historical context. The second examines Saxo's relationship with the Hvide clan, particularly Archbishop Absalon (d. 1201). The third introduces Saxo's learned background and intellectual pedigree, particularly his Classical erudition and connections with the contemporary explosion of learning in high-medieval France. The fourth largely focuses on the prehistoric, legendary and 'pagan' content of books 1–7 of the *Gesta*—though here Mortensen is careful to stress that Saxo owed as much to Latin stylistics as he did to the misty Germanic past, if not more. The final chapter is particularly useful, as it details the reception of Saxo during the Middle Ages, and into our own time.

Although it is mostly a general introduction, the book exhibits some novel intellectual manoeuvres. Mortensen uses the thought experiment of imagining that Saxo's text never existed, to highlight how basic concepts in Danish historiography, e.g. the Valdemarian Age (*Valdemarstiden*), are essentially Saxonian creations, which are impossible to disentangle from Saxo's intimacy with Absalon and his clan. Similarly, Mortensen's potted *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of the *Gesta* moves from the handful of medieval interactions, by way of its printing by Christiern Pedersen (d. 1554), and its reception by humanists, to its use by nationalists and in pop-culture. In doing so, he suavely makes the point that the *Gesta* probably did not have hegemonic cultural weight in its own time: *Saxo havde ikke gjort noget for, at værket kunne blive spredt hurtigt. Eller for den sags skyld vidt og bredt* 'Saxo made no provision for his work to be disseminated quickly. Or, for that matter, far and wide' (pp. 72–73). Modern and medieval audiences face the same challenge with the *Gesta*: it is a text containing many elegant, fascinating, moving moments, but it is impractically long and its language is readily understandable only by gifted Latinists.

One gets the sense that Mortensen is trying to resist a positioning of the *Gesta Danorum* as the source of an inward-looking, self-congratulating Danish nationalism. I could not help but imagine Mortensen gleefully winding up many Danes with sentences such as: *set gennem moderne briller er der meget lidt om Danmark i værket* 'seen through a modern lens, there is very little about Denmark in the work [the *Gesta*]' (p. 3); *det altafgørende var ikke, hvilket land man tilhørte, men hvilken mand* 'the utterly decisive thing was not to which country one belonged, but which man' (p. 13) or *Valdemar fulgte i begyndelsen sin kejsers i at støtte*

Viktor '[King] Valdemar started by following his emperor [Frederick I] in supporting Victor [Antipope, r. 1159–64]' (p. 35), see also pp. 23–24 on Valdemar's oath of loyalty to Frederick). In this vein, Mortensen speaks critically of *drømme om en fjern dansk fortid* 'dreams of a distant, Danish past' (p. 61), and entirely correctly points to Saxo's consultation of *mange udenlandske kroniker* 'many foreign chronicles' (p. 49), his *internationale uddannelse* 'international education' (p. 58) and the fact that his regionalism can be interpreted as undermining his nationalism: [*Jyder, sjællandere og skåninge*] *udgør i praksis hver sit folk—mere end de er danere* '[Jutes, Zealanders and Scanians] each constitute in practice a people of their own—more than they are Danes' (p. 4).

The problem for Mortensen of discrediting the introspective, Dano-centric image of Saxo is that the *danmarkshistorie* format of 100 pages does not provide enough space to explore an alternative understanding. Mortensen admits that Saxo was trying to construct *den gloriose danske fortid* 'the glorious Danish past' (p. 65) in his portrayal of the pre-Christian gods. He also rightly characterises Saxo's view of Absalon as *støtten til fædrelandet* 'the supporter of the fatherland' (p. 45). But it is not easy to reconcile these admissions with the earlier endeavour of destabilising Danish chauvinism. The conundrum becomes more revealing in Mortensen's admirable and sane bid to underline Saxo's erudition in Latin poetry (implicitly freeing Saxo from the national Romantic idea of books 1–7 of the *Gesta* as a tape-recording of heathen lore). For example: *at Saxo konkurrerede med de romerske digtere, bliver endnu mere klart, når man ser på det væld af latinske verssmål, han brugte* 'that Saxo competed with the Roman poets is made even more obvious when one observes the wealth of Latin metres he employed' (p. 62), and later: *Saxo her drev sin fine smag til det yderste og samtidig på paradoksal vis fik slået fast, at det danske imperium i sin oldtid havde digtere på linje med den romerske oldtids største navne* 'here Saxo pushed his fine tastes to the limits and at the same time, paradoxically, established that the Danish empire in its antiquity had poets of the same calibre as the greatest names of Roman antiquity' (p. 65).

I can see how today's nationally-minded Danes might assume that Saxo needed to 'compete' with Rome. But would a Danish church intellectual of the early 1200s have thought in these terms? The notion of competition with Rome—not the Rome of antiquity but the Roman Church—crops up again in Mortensen's narrative (p. 70; see also the reference to *pavens herredømme* 'the dominion of the pope', p. 20):

Opnåede Saxo med fortællingerne om Gorms nysgerrighed og Thorkils klogskab, at mødet med kristendommen foregik på danskernes eget initiativ. Den samme selvomvendelse finder vi i Geoffrey af Monmouths forklaring af briternes kristning. At være historiens aktører var dengang som nu afgørende for den historiske selvrespekt.

With the stories about Gorm's curiosity and Thorkil's cleverness, Saxo made it so that the encounter with Christianity happened by the Danes' own initiative. We find the same self-conversion in Geoffrey of Monmouth's explanation of the Christianisation of the Britons. Then, as now, to be the actors of history was crucial to historical self-respect.

Wouldn't a medieval man of letters have viewed the salvation of Christianity as an uncomplicated good, no matter how it was achieved? Indeed, I cannot recall any moments in the *Gesta* where there is antagonism towards Rome, either ancient or medieval. Quite the opposite: *Dania Romane benignitati debet, qua non solum libertatis ius, sed etiam exterarum rerum dominium assecuta est* 'Denmark owes no small debt to the benevolence of Rome, which enabled her to attain the right to freedom as well as giving her sway over external affairs' (*Gesta*, 886–87). This tension does not necessarily disprove Mortensen's reading. Rather, I think it is demonstrative of the ideological environment which inevitably conditions this book, and which this book admirably seeks to query.

I hope I have not been picky concerning this introductory volume. It is written concisely, with considerable erudition and panache, and will be a fine addition to the series. It is attractively produced, with twenty-two images. It would be well-placed on a syllabus for students in Denmark who are beginning their journey into medieval studies, or for students learning modern Danish outside Denmark. Mortensen valuably reminds a general readership of Saxo's international context, and of the remoteness of the medieval past from modern projects of national myth-making.

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ASPECTS OF ROYAL POWER IN MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA. Edited by JAKUB MORAWIEC and RAFAL BORYSLAWSKI. *Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego*. Katowice, 2018. 164 pp. ISBN 978-83-226-339-1.

The Centre for Nordic and Old English Studies at the Silesian University in Katowice has enjoyed a rising profile as an extremely active and important focus for scholarly activity in Old Norse studies and Scandinavian history, and recent years have seen valuable conferences (among others, the Jónsborg conferences in Wolin) and associated published volumes. This volume will strengthen its growing reputation.

A theme such as royal power may seem all too well trodden in Viking-Age history; but the contributions to this volume manage to explore new facets of this subject relating not only to themes such as power structures, law and religious and social change, but also to gender, monstrosity and Christian knowledge. There is no overall narrative to give the volume a collaborative structure, but the pieces come together to enrich our knowledge of the period.

The focus is largely on the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, undeniably a crucial period in the transformation of society and political structures not only in Scandinavia, but in northern, central and eastern Europe as a whole. Two of the pieces (by Marion Poilvez and Arngrímur Vídalín) take us beyond this period through engagement with high-medieval Old Norse literature, but in terms of political history not much beyond the mid-eleventh century is covered. The geographical coverage is mainly of Denmark, Norway, England and Iceland, with some consideration of Poland and the western Slavs.

Jakub Morawiec's contribution focuses on Sweyn Forkbeard's capture and ransom, a thorny topic where the sources diverge. Morawiec goes beyond the truth or falsehood of the assertion—which he argues 'cannot be either totally rejected or confirmed' (p. 39)—to consider the source of these varying accounts. He argues that the source consisted of hostile *níð* verses concerning the king which circulated in Denmark, and then (perhaps through the family of Bishop Odinkar of Ribe, who maintained contact with the archiepiscopal see of Hamburg) made their way to Thietmar and Adam, who recorded them in different forms, thus showcasing the movement of information not only between Scandinavia and Continental chroniclers, but between Old Norse and Latin. Although I would not disagree with this suggestion, I would be less sceptical about Sweyn's capture and ransom; appearing in two early sources, it appears solid enough. In general, Peter Sawyer's approach to Sweyn's reign (see, for example, 'Sweyn Forkbeard and the Historians'. In *Church and Chronicle in the Middle Ages. Essays Presented to John Taylor*. Ed. Ian Wood and G. A. Loud (London, 1991), 27–40)—one that emphasises Sweyn as a strong and successful monarch, and Adam's and Thietmar's accounts of him as nearly total slander, rooted in bias—is still too influential. There should be no mystery as to why Thietmar disliked Sweyn. It need not be rooted in his own family's difficulties with Viking raiders, either. Thietmar was informed of Sweyn's campaigns (and the martyrdom of Ælfheah) in England by an English cleric, whom he names as Sewald (Thietmar vii.39, vii.42). There was clearly plentiful criticism of Sweyn at the time—a predatory ruler who attacked a Christian kingdom—and most of the critics had a good point.

Four other contributions focus on the era of Sweyn, Cnut the Great and St Olav. Łukasz Neubauer looks at *Lidsmannaflokkur* and argues that the portrait that emerges of Cnut is consistent with that known from other sources, as a warrior and ruler who compares favourably with an elder, more experienced jarl. Rafał Boryslawski examines how the *Encomium Emmae* articulates Emma's power, both verbally and in the imagery of the manuscript, as female power, and the possible points where this took over aspects of male power as well. Erin Goeres provides an excellent and lively exploration of what two poems, *Vestrfararvisur* and *Kálfsflokkur*, can tell us about the dynamics of loyalty in the conflict between Cnut and St Olav, providing a picture of Cnut which is not simple praise of his generosity or the flip-side of the coin, condemnation of his bribery, but a personal picture of the engagement of individuals with the situation. Bjørn Bandlien examines the social changes in Norway around the period of Christianisation, taking as his departure point the 'facing bird' pennies of St Olav. He argues that Olav refocused a Christian identity that came to centre around loyalty to the king, and was reflected in a wide range of material culture that distinguished the new society, established by the Christian lawgiving of 1024, from the pagan one that had preceded it—which had been marked by disloyalty and chaos, as well as monstrosity and social liminality.

This is a theme picked up by Marion Poilvez, who examines the convoluted relationship between kings and outlaws in Icelandic literature, showing how these two ends of the legal spectrum had more to do with one another than one might suspect. In this, the Icelandic perspective is important, as Icelanders reflected

on their origin myths as exiles from Harald Fairhair and engaged with their thirteenth-century present, and later with their status as subjects of the Norwegian crown. Arngrimur Vídalín also turns his attention to matters of monstrosity, looking at *Elucidarius*, *Konungs skuggsia* and *Eiríks saga víðforla*, and showing the importance of knowledge of the ends of the earth and the wondrous peoples who lived there in the education of Christian monarchs, and Christians in general in the medieval north.

The final contribution, from Leszek Słupecki, offers a comparative perspective on royal power in eleventh-century Poland and Scandinavia (a consideration which does, in fact, touch on twelfth-century Scandinavia as well). He approaches the subject of titles—in particular, the difference between king/*rex* and *dux*/*jarl*, asking why it was seemingly straightforward for Scandinavian rulers to be recognised as kings by the Carolingians and their successor-states, whereas Polish and other Slavic rulers were often styled ‘*dux*’. Partially this could lie in the obvious cognate status of the words for king in west and north Germanic, but he argues that another aspect came into play, namely that of sovereignty. We should not see this in over-simplistic terms, however. In twelfth-century Denmark, German emperors did bestow the royal title on some Danish kings during the period of civil war; similarly, he argues, the adoption of a royal title in eleventh-century Poland was not an assertion of sovereignty, but a desire to take part in the system offered by the imperial structures—not to be independent, but to allow for subordination within the imperial system in order to rise higher. This is a perspective that is of value in Scandinavian history, where much historiography still bears the mark of nationalistic work which valued independence as the highest political concern.

All in all, the contributions to this volume add up to a pleasing whole, and it offers a refreshing and invigorating take on a subject whose familiarity belies the new seams that can be opened up in its study.

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BOREAS RISING: ANTIQUARIANISM AND NATIONAL NARRATIVES IN 17TH- AND 18TH-CENTURY SCANDINAVIA. Edited by BERND ROLING and BERNHARD SCHIRG in collaboration with MATTHIAS STELZER. *Transformationen der Antike* LIII. *De Gruyter*. Berlin and Boston, 2019. vi + 284 pp. 52 figs. ISBN 978-3-11-063245-3.

This engaging volume, which has its roots in a 2016 workshop held at the Finland Institute in Berlin, comprises eleven chapters on the emergent role of antiquarianism in Scandinavia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The editors take a broad approach in their definition of antiquarianism. As Kristoffer Neville notes in Chapter 3, ‘to describe a big and complex field far too simply, it is basically concerned with the early modern practice of incorporating material objects into the study of history’ (p. 81). *Boreas Rising* attempts to chart the variable accomplishments of this practice, while expanding the compass of ‘material objects’ to include artwork, literature, translations and artefacts.

In their introduction, Roling and Schirg take up the modern scholarly objection to the notion that the early-modern period featured a renaissance of purely classical antiquity, with the highlights of philological, etymological and archaeological research being solely in the ancient civilisations of Greece and Rome. Here then is a Scandinavian answer, aware that the rediscovery of northern antiquity was not merely a collective academic effort, but also involved contemporary history. From an Old Norse–Icelandic perspective, this process and many of its actors have been well-documented in compilations such as Andrew Wawn's *Northern Antiquity* (Enfield Lock: Hisarlik, 1994), Else Roesdahl and Preben Meulengracht Sørensen's *The Waking of Angantyr* (Aarhus University Press, 1996) and Peter Fjågesund's *The Dream of the North* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2014). It is a familiar idea that the fortunes of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Estonia provided both inspiration for antiquarian scholarship and the imperative for its development. The volume presents antiquarianism as a reactive movement which starts in Denmark and, spurred on by Icelandic sagas and Eddic literature, makes its way to Sweden, Finland and beyond. The writers examine the role of Baltic Sea antiquarianism as an exchange of 'patriotic self-glorification' on an international scale (p. 6). The background for this is explored in Gottskålk Jenson's extensive first chapter, which provides a descriptive account of how rivalry between Sweden and Denmark led to the adoption of Old Norse–Icelandic literature into Scandinavian antiquarianism and specifically the *Antiquitates Danicae*, often to the detriment of the scholarly standing of Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*. From influential figures such as Ole Worm and Peder Hansen Resen, through the antics of Þormóður Torfason and the short-lived brilliance of Thomas Bartholin, Gottskålk establishes a lively picture of the international rivalries behind seventeenth- and eighteenth-century research. In a similar vein but with a more specific focus, Raija Sarasti-Wilienius catalogues the seventeenth-century student speeches in Turku, in an effort to highlight patriotic descriptions of Finland. Part of a Swedish educational policy, these mandatory lectures offer a view into the minds of budding Finnish scholars and their concepts of *patria*. Among the often predictable and unqualified hypotheses put forward by the students, Sarasti-Wilienius identifies an intriguing pattern of literary homage, with figures such as Odysseus lending their voices as examples of love for one's homeland, to the point that undergraduate antiquarianism became a process of assimilation rather than a matter of cold hard facts.

Kristoffer Neville further charts this discrepancy between the historical and antiquarian study of the Nordic lands, demonstrating that due to their lack of evidence (compared to classical antiquarians), northern scholars of the early modern period took 'the land itself as material evidence' (p. 98), whether that involved descriptions of topographical features or embedded popular narratives. Chief among the practitioners was draftsman Erik Dahlbergh, whose sketches provide entertaining illustration for the chapter. Jonas Nordin continues this theme in his chapter, asking to what extent historicism and Gothicism were at odds in Dahlbergh's antiquarian artworks. In particular, Nordin explores Dahlbergh's work *Sweden, Ancient and Modern*, wherein the artist grappled with depictions

of the Mora Stones, a coronation artefact for the Swedish kings, located outside Uppsala. Nordin argues that Gothicism could be a legitimate historical school rather than merely a political ruse, an interesting hypothesis that could have been explored further (p. 122).

Elena Dahlberg uses Magnus Rönnow's 1716 poem '*Scanicae Runae cum Ense Thorsjöensi*' to extend the scope of the volume to literary antiquarianism. Dahlberg provides a detailed close reading of the poem, which describes a selection of runestones in Skåne and a medieval sword from Torsjö, in order to defend poetry as a source for eighteenth-century antiquarianism. She argues convincingly that personal literary creation and antiquarian work could and did combine, with the past used to glorify the present (p. 131). Bernhard Schirg offers an international perspective on the same phenomenon, examining the interest in Rome from Swedish academia. Schirg does well to tie his chapter in with overall themes, whether he is examining the writings of Italian diplomats such as Lorenzo Magalotti or the peculiar positions of Olof Rudbeck, whose work fuelled antiquarian interest at home and abroad, even where it was disparaged. Far-travelling antiquarians are further analysed from a Danish perspective in Poul Grønder-Hansen's chapter, which follows draftsman Søren Abildgaard's eighteenth-century tour of the Baltic Sea littoral. Abildgaard's explorations provide a wealth of material, and Grønder-Hansen demonstrates that the logic of antiquarian artefacts—be it poetry, diaries or, in this case, art—was that everything 'hung together' (p. 200) in the interest of national identity.

Two chapters from Stefan Heinrich Bauhaus and Outi Merisalo endeavour to record the linguistic study of the north in eighteenth-century Finland. Bauhaus singles out Olof Rudbeck the Younger, who attempted to demonstrate that the Finns, Sami and Estonians were all descended from the Ten Lost Tribes. The chapter provides a good etymological reading of Rudbeck's work, and a useful commentary on the 'nordification' of Hebrew terminology in Nordic antiquity (p. 204). This nordification is further analysed by Merisalo, whose chapter takes the teachings of Carl Abraham Clewberg of Turku's Academia Aboensis as a sample. Merisalo points to the unexpected benefits of Clewberg's patriotic academic policies; he argued that students should study Hebrew in the vernacular Swedish, not Latin. Together, the two chapters demonstrate that, while flawed, early-modern attempts to understand Biblical material through Swedish, Finnish and Estonian stumbled upon linguistic connections which foreshadowed the nineteenth- and twentieth-century efforts behind a philological reconstruction of a Pre-Indo-European language.

Biblical material is under the microscope once more in Benjamin Hübbe's chapter 'Trapped and Lost in Translation', which entertainingly tracks the moose (British-English 'elk') as an 'academic whisper': a focus of antiquarian intrigue across Christian scripture and Scandinavian scholarship alike (p. 258). Hübbe's extensive study ranges from the translations of Luther and illustrations of Albrecht Dürer to the writings of Conrad Gesner (who tried to instate the Camelopard in the moose's place), Ulrich Heinsius and Pantaleon Lentner. Like other chapters, this is handsomely illustrated with colour prints from the manuscripts in question. Finally, Bernd Roling closes proceedings with a look at the antiquarian afterlife

of Olof Rudbeck's *Atlantica*, and the fantastic but ultimately fruitless search for human civilisation's first great metropolis at home in the far north. Particularly fitting is Roling's inclusion of the satirical writings of Osip Senkovsky, whose 1833 'The Scientific Journey to Bear Island' reveals the search for the Atlantean dream to be a laughable fallacy.

Conference proceedings can often be criticised for a lack of focus, but one of the strengths of this compilation is how well the separate papers fit together. With such a broad subject and range of disciplines, there is a danger of justifying Grinder-Hansen's notion of the Northern antiquarian as one 'with a taste for useless and unimportant studies, combined with a weakness for ill-founded theories' (p. 182), but happily there is ample common ground here and the chapters are well-ordered to provide an increasing familiarity with the material. Thus, the study of the topographical sketches of Erik Dahlbergh by Neville is followed by a study of Dahlbergh's depictions of the Northern antiquities from Nordin. Merisalo and Sarasti-Wilenius both provide insight into the interests and needs of Swedish-speaking students of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Roling, Schirg and Bauhaus all explore Rudbeckianism, or the scholarly repercussions of Olof Rudbeck's notorious *Atlantica*. If a criticism is to be made, it is that several of the chapters feel overly descriptive rather than argumentative, so that they function as effective catalogues of evidence but do little more than gather the material. There is a notable range of expertise on display here, and more in the way of critical response from some of the authors would have been productive. With 2022 seeing the International Saga Conference jointly hosted by Helsinki and Tallinn, with a thematic focus on the Baltic Sea region, this work feels particularly timely. It is to be recommended to any scholars in the field of Swedish Gothicism and its seventeenth- and eighteenth-century dependents, but those more generally interested in the international reception of medieval Scandinavia or the early modern history of the Baltic Sea littoral will also find useful information here.

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THE VIKINGS REIMAGINED: RECEPTION, RECOVERY, ENGAGEMENT. Edited by TOM BIRKETT and RODERICK DALE. *De Gruyter*. Boston and Berlin, 2019. x + 274 pp. ISBN 978-1-501518157.

This book's contributions are derived principally from presentations at the conference 'Rediscovering the Vikings: Reception, Recovery, Engagement', held at University College Cork (Republic of Ireland) on 25–26 November 2016. As Tom Birkett's introduction to the book emphasises, its papers deal principally with the 'reception of the Vikings' (p. 14) and the questions 'what does the term "Viking" mean today?' and 'what role do the Vikings play in contemporary culture?' (p. 1). These are no idle forays into pop-cultural studies but issues of genuine concern for academics engaged with the study of the early-medieval Scandinavian world. Given the simultaneous threats to humanities programmes from uninterested or

hostile administrators and appropriations of popular 'Viking' imagery by unsavoury political actors, academics need to understand the public with which they would engage if they are to assert both relevance and authority.

These concerns may be most obviously embodied in Neil Price's sympathetic assessment of the History Channel of Canada's television show *Vikings* (2013–20), which he concludes does much to portray 'Viking' characters in accessible human terms to a vast and diverse international audience. In discussing his role as a historical consultant with the documentary series *Real Vikings* (2016–), commissioned as a companion to *Vikings*, he emphasises that public enthusiasm, which academic specialists may sometimes see as crude and uninformed, is something to be appreciated and cultivated. Nevertheless, Price's own expression of 'grateful thanks' that his employing institution recognised that public outreach 'is just as important as the teaching and research' (p. 40) signals the very real challenges to be faced in doing so.

Accordingly, most contributions focus on popular reception and uses of the concept of 'Vikings'. The focus is usually contemporary, though Leszek Gardela surveys the past two centuries of Norse studies in Poland, highlighting shifting views about Scandinavian influences on Polish identity and thereby bringing fresh light to English-language scholarship often dominated by north-west European or North American perspectives. Heather O'Donoghue and Richard North focus on Norse echoes in specific nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English-language literary works—respectively, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), as well as the earlier twentieth-century works of Scots writer Hugh MacDiarmid, and Ernest Hemmingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940)—attempting to untangle a skein of often indirect influences that link Norse myth and saga with these creations.

From nineteenth-century romanticism stems an enduring conception of Vikings as strong, independent 'barbarians' who stand in opposition to decadent (or at least humdrum) 'civilisation'. This trope, of course, long pre-dates either the nineteenth century or even the Viking Age itself, offering the attractive combination of an appeal to the authority of the past and an identity recognisable as 'different but admirable (and thus perhaps misunderstood)'. Of course, realisations of this conception can play out in very different ways, and the book's papers identify a range of 'Viking imaginaries', from the typically masculine warrior stereotype—whether spun as a 'noble savage' or, more problematically (though still viewed positively by the spinners), as a savage aggressor—to emerging post-millennial concepts that include primaeval mysticism and cultural fusion. This latter value is perhaps most clearly evidenced in Kendra Willson's exploration of a Finnish adaptation in the style of Beijing opera of a nineteenth-century play about the legendary hero Sigurd Ring. This conscious cultural fusion connects modern Scandinavian and Chinese citizens' shared ambivalence towards the respective, often romanticised, honour-driven societies that preceded their own. Such ambivalence also appears in Thomas Spray's examination of satirical reflections on Old Norse–Icelandic literature from the nineteenth century to the present day, where he finds that contemporary reverence throughout the period considered for heroic and martial

ideals perceived within medieval Norse literature is a more frequent target for lampooning than the actual contents of medieval works.

Yet, as Spray notes, ‘no one writes a parody of an unknown genre’ (p. 115), and it is a romanticised heroic, martial and aggressively masculinised concept of ‘Vikings’ that seems to dominate the international consciousness. Roderick Dale examines the use of ‘Vikings’ in global marketing, where associations of ‘aspiration, adventure, and strength’ (p. 223) help brand a bewildering range of global goods. Similarly, Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough considers North Americans’ desires to see themselves mirrored in ‘Vikings’ as an ‘intrepid, independent-minded, physically powerful people’ (p. 261). Although Rebecca Boyd does note Irish associations of ‘Vikings’ with ‘mobility and international scope’, the image of the ‘big hairy Viking’ promoted by Ireland’s national tourism agency is nevertheless ‘troubling’ (p. 243). Likewise, Jessica Clare Hancock finds a common notion of ‘Vikings’ in children’s picture books as ‘big, scary, vicious, hairy, and [generally hyper-masculine] horned warriors who raided and invaded’ (p. 101).

The appeal of the ‘barbaric Viking’ also seems evident in Maja Backväll’s analysis of how ‘runes’ are portrayed in video games, implying associations with ‘a harsh and perhaps primitive warrior culture’ (p. 209). Nevertheless, she also notes that ‘runes’ in video games ‘convey a sense of magic power, arcane and hidden knowledge’ (p. 209) and that popular modern conceptions of ‘runes’ can also be associated with ‘healing and divinatory properties’ (p. 209). Thus, even if the appeal of ‘runes’ stems from a sense that they represent a glamorous and deep-rooted alternative to a disenchanting modern society, such uses transcend the toxic masculinity of the traditional ‘barbarian’. Similar notions arise in Klaudia Karpińska’s survey of female Polish ‘Viking’ re-enactors, who see their involvement in reenactment as contributing to an identity as ‘a modern, independent, and strong woman’ (p. 81). Some choose to portray female warriors, appropriating a traditionally masculinised role, though others choose to portray *völur* and thereby project the social importance of an archetypally feminine role associated with healing, revelatory knowledge and arcane power.

Carolyn Larrington finds similar contrasts expressed through the portrayal of the Ironborn ethnicity (strongly informed by popular conceptions of ‘Vikings’) of the HBO show *Game of Thrones* (2011–19) and the book series *Song of Ice and Fire* (1991–) by George R. R. Martin (on which the show was based). An older generation of the Ironborn, which celebrates conservative, isolationist and toxically masculine values, contrasts with a younger generation ‘determined to eschew the conservatism, adherence to tradition, madness, and tyranny of their parents’ generation . . . incarnated by young women who have set aside the imperatives of the patriarchy’ (p. 173). Larrington compares this fictional situation with historical Northern Europe’s transition ‘to a post-Viking existence and modernization of economic and cultural priorities’, and though one might quibble with the analogy’s details, as Larrington notes, ‘it is the function of medieval fantasy not only to recreate the medieval past, but also to reconfigure it—and thereby to signal ways in which our present may also be reconfigured’. This was, of course, also true for

much medieval literature—likewise seeking not so much to reproduce the past as to repurpose it for the present—and remains so, if often unconsciously, for the modern academic study of the past.

Although the global scope of ‘Viking-inspired’ popular phenomena has become so extensive that even greatly increasing the length of this book might still hardly scratch the surface, it offers valuable and varied contributions to the understanding of those phenomena, as well as opportunities to reflect on the challenges of connecting the academic and popular sectors more fruitfully.

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5. References should be given in the form illustrated by the following examples:

— Other death omens of ill-luck are shared by Scandinavian, Orcadian and Gaelic tradition (cf. Almqvist 1974–76, 24, 29–30, 32–33).

— Anne Holtsmark (1939, 78) and others have already drawn attention to this fact.

— Ninth-century Irish brooches have recently been the subject of two studies by the present author (1972; 1973–74), and the bossed penannular brooches have been fully catalogued by O. S. Johansen (1973).

— This is clear from the following sentence: *iðraðist Bolli þegar verksins ok lýsti vígi á hendi sér (Laxdæla saga 1934, 154).*

— It is stated quite plainly in *Flateyjarbok* (1860–68, I 419): *hann tok land j Syrlækjarosi.*

— There is every reason to think that this interpretation is correct (cf. *Heilagra manna sögur*, II 107–08).

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