In Search of the Culprit

Aspects of
Medieval Authorship

Edited by
Lukas Rösli
Stefanie Gropper

ÄSTHETIK

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IN SEARCH OF THE CULPRIT

ANDERE ÄSTHETIK

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Acknowledgements

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Lukas Rösli and Stefanie Gropper

In Search of the Culprit. Aspects of Medieval Authorship
Introduction

Over fifty years after Roland Barthes' essay *La mort de l'auteur* ('The Death of the Author') and Michel Foucault's *Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur* ('What Is an Author?') were first published, the concept of authorship is still central to literary studies, with medieval literary studies being no exception.[1] The last two decades have brought with them a huge number of publications about the concept of authorship in general, as well as more specifically about concepts of medieval authorship. Whilst Alastair Minnis based his great book about medieval theories of authorship on the scholastic perspectives on the subject that existed in the late Middle Ages themselves, thereby putting forward a predominantly *emic* analysis of the topic, other scholars – such as Rüdiger Schnell, Sonja Glauch, and Eva von Contzen, to name but a few – have taken more *etic* approaches, in that they have primarily sought to tease out medieval assumptions about authorship by interpreting case studies that do not so explicitly foreground such ideas.[2]

Despite their different approaches to the subject of authorship, all these scholars have demonstrated that the ideas of authorship, or of the special functions of authorship, that we bring to a text have a significant impact on our reading and interpretation of it. Indeed, the category of 'author' seems indispensable for the contextualisation of texts and the organisation of literature.[3] In many cases, the search for an author results in a vicious circle: the search for an actual historical person to whom authorship can be attributed relies on the texts themselves, while the information we have about such persons comes from other texts that are themselves equally unclear in terms of their authorship. At best, this search may provide us with an authorial character or an imaginative authorial subject constructed from a few anecdotes derived from other narrative sources. Yet even if we cannot find the empirical producers of medieval texts, we can still search for theoretical entities or authorial agencies that are all involved in the texts as aesthetic artefacts.

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1   Barthes 1968; Foucault 1969.
2   Minnis 2010; Schnell 1998; Glauch 2010; von Contzen 2018.
3   Spoerhase 2007, p. 7.

The editors of this volume both come from the field of Old Norse-Icelandic studies but are very much engaged in interdisciplinary collaborations. Both of us have been influenced by New Philology, and thus by the ideas of variance, *mouvance*, and the materiality and mediality of medieval texts. Such concepts posit specifically medieval texts as malleable, changeable works, comprised of many differing versions and transmitted in various medial and material forms, rather than as having the more unified or singular form that modern texts are often conceptualised as having by their readers. Nonetheless, we are aware that this does not mean that such texts are able to change or diverge without limits; each version of such a text may be different, but it is still always a version of *something*, and is therefore meant to be recognised *as* a version. In this framework, 'variance' thus means variance within certain margins or parameters, albeit within considerably wider and more diffuse parameters than we would expect to exist for a modern text.[4]

Whilst the variance and *mouvance* of a huge part of medieval texts in the vernacular have been widely acknowledged in scholarship, this has had little to no effect on how most scholars approach the concept of authorship in these texts. It seems that either the focus is still on the search for the one and only authorial agency thought to be responsible for a text, as mentioned above, or that the question of authorship goes entirely unaddressed. In addition to the well-known names that have long been treated in our field as referring to 'genuine' authors of medieval texts, in recent years a whole series of 'new' authorial figures have been brought forward, especially when it comes to Old Norse literature, as is discussed in this volume in the contribution of Sigurður Ingibergur Björnsson, Steingrímur Páll Kárason, and Jón Karl Helgason. Yet when it comes to these supposed 'new' authors, it seems that we still know little more than their names and their affiliation to the best-known Icelandic families.

In the course of the so-called material or new philological turn in medieval studies, however, it has been noted that the modern concept of 'the author' – meaning a subject who composed and wrote down a story at the same time – is hardly tangible in medieval literary texts. Indeed, the variance of medieval texts indicates the impossibility of tracing the author as the mythical source of the true and original text.[5] In this regard, it is notable that Old Norse-Icelandic texts show more variance during their transmission than do Latin or Middle High German texts.

Almost all Old Norse-Icelandic texts that have been preserved in multiple manuscripts exist in at least two versions, and even in the transmission of a single version there is (sometimes considerable) variance between the manuscripts. Whilst only a few unfragmented texts are preserved in medieval manuscripts, by far the greatest part of the surviving corpus exists only in post-medieval, early modern paper manuscripts. Thus, there is no single case in which we have what might be called an 'original' or

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4   See also Müller 1999, p. 153.
5   Müller 1999, p. 164.

even an 'autograph', in the sense of a manuscript in the author's own handwriting, of a medieval Icelandic text. Nonetheless, it was for a long time the aim of philologists and the editions they produced to present a text as close as possible to a lost original – or, rather, to an original that never existed in the first place – that was labelled as the text's 'archetype'. Only in the late 20th century have we become more aware that the transmission of these texts is best understood not as a strictly linear, chronological and hierarchical phenomenon – in which we would be able to approximate the 'original' text if only we could establish a rigorous enough chronology for its surviving versions – but rather as an ongoing process of adapting and reproducing texts that are by no means fixed, in which the dynamic interplay between textual reception and textual production is brought to the fore. Although they have already inspired a great deal of very fruitful scholarly work, the theoretical and methodological approaches introduced by the new philological turn are not yet widespread in Old Norse-Icelandic studies, at least in our view. Since the idea of an unfixed text is hard to bear if one wants to study the socio-historical conditions of literature at a certain time or to contextualise certain topics related to a text, it is often easier and more comfortable to neglect the debate over transmission and instead to return to viewing 'the text', or even 'the work', as the product of one (probably male) educated being at a specific time in a specific surrounding. Thus, Old Norse texts are treated primarily as products of a time that, in most cases, is determined by (sometimes rather obscure) intra-textual features. This results, for example, in the classification of early, classical and post-classical Icelandic sagas, even though no scholars appear able to give any clear criteria as to why a given saga should be thought of as belonging to one of these rather arbitrary classes of text.

If we take seriously the variance and *mouvance* of medieval texts, we must also consider that within medieval literature the boundaries of work and text are fluid; each work can exist in different versions at the same time, and whilst we might consider some versions as new works in their own right, this may not have been the case for a contemporary audience.[6] A work is constituted by different texts related by resemblance, i.e. relational aspects with different parameters depending on genre or text-type.[7] Yet it is important to note that these similarities and relationships are not necessarily captured accurately by a stemma leading back to a supposed archetype, of the kind constructed by many modern philologists.[8]

Of course, it is important to keep in mind that relationships between versions of a text – indeed, thinking of them as 'versions' at all – can only be possible if at least

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6   Müller 1999, p. 165.
7   Müller compares this relationship to resemblance within a family; see Müller 1999, p. 163. A similar idea is used in genre theory; see Bampi 2020, p. 22.
8   Müller 1991, p. 163. In this respect Müller differs from Wendt 2006, who considers the relationship between text and work to always be a stemmatic one.

some parts of a text are relatively stable. Variance must always be seen in relation to invariant parts of the text. This means both that there are different degrees of variance and that variance encompasses different phenomena.[9] Some variants might be errors or mistakes, although we should make such claims only in restricted cases and should be wary of viewing them as indications of deterioration: in some cases, errors can result in a productive change to a text. Some variants may be due to spontaneous variation during oral performance. Most interesting for editors and interpreters, not to say most challenging, are those variants that appear to be based on decisions concerning the content, structure, or theming of a text, as is often the case with, for example, additions or omissions, comments, changes to the order of episodes, different emphases in certain areas, and so on.

Which variants and which version of a work will last the longest depends on various factors, including the differing aesthetic preferences of editors, compilers, and scribes. As textual anecdotes about the quality of a given story prove, aesthetic criteria were important to medieval audiences. The Old Norse-Icelandic *Morkinskinna*, a collection of Kings' sagas from the 13th century but preserved in manuscripts from the 14th century, contains an anecdote about an Icelander coming to the court of the Norwegian King Haraldr Sigurðarson. The king asks the Icelander to tell a story in different parts, one part of it every evening, so that it would last for the eleven days of Christmas. The king also wants those present to listen carefully: 'Sumum þykkir hann vel segja, en sumir vinnask minna at' ('Some thought he was telling well, others praised him less').[10] When the Icelander finishes his story, the king himself gives the final judgement: 'Mér þykkir allvel ok hvergi verr en efni eru til, eða hverr kenndi þér sǫguna?' ('I think it is very good and in no way worse than the matter allows for; who taught you the story?')[11] The king judges not only the Icelander's performance of the story, but also its quality; clearly, to tell a story means, at least to some extent, to tell of a specific matter in one's own way. The story-teller does not only retell what he has learned, he also *creates* the story by retelling it.

The importance of retelling, rewriting, and the proliferation of medieval literature – which are also at the core of a number of projects within the Collaborative Research Centre 1391 *Different Aesthetics* – has been observed before,[12] but this observation has thus far had little impact on our reflections on the concept of authorship.[13] When it comes to medieval literature, we quite often see a naïve usage of the term 'author', where the term is in many cases used, without any further reflection, in our modern emphatic sense, namely of a distinct individual behind a text. This sense, however, was

9   Müller 1999, p. 164.
10   Morkinskinna I, p. 236.
11   Morkinskinna I, p. 236.
12   On the importance of rewriting, see Worstbrock 1999.
13   See Nichols 2007.

influenced by the development of new models of authorship in the 18th and 19th centuries when authors began to write for a living outside of courts, monasteries, or other patronage networks, and therefore needed to assert their individual rights to their works, a conceptual framework that cannot be accurately mapped on to the modes of textual production that characterised the medieval period.

The discussion about the 'death of the author' has thus had the consequence that we are now more aware of the complex nature of authorship. Or, as we might say: the dead author has returned as the idea of author-functions.[14] Whenever we speak about literature, we will be confronted with one or more of these functions.[15]

A large part of medieval literature in general, and the best part of medieval Old Norse-Icelandic literature in particular, is anonymous, but this does not mean that there was no concept of authorship at all in medieval Iceland and Scandinavia. Skaldic poetry, be it within the prosimetrum of Icelandic sagas or in treatises about poetry, is usually authored in texts, in the sense that it is often attributed to a specific named author. For skaldic poetry, it thus seems to have been important to associate poems and stanzas with a name to indicate that the stanzas 'belonged' to someone, regardless of whether such an association were historically accurate. For narrative texts or for epic verse, such as is more typically found in eddic poetry, this kind of attribution seems not to have been important. We cannot conclude from this of course, that a concept of authorship did not exist within this milieu, but we can certainly see that whatever concept of authorship did exist was different from our own modern conception.

As in the prosimetrical sagas, which present the anonymous narratorial voice of the prose alongside the voices of multiple authors of skaldic verse, the medieval author in general existed in the plural. Yet collaborative work undertaken at the same time on one text seems to have been the exception, with authorship usually reaching over several generations as texts continued to be altered, adapted, continued, and shortened – in other words, retold and rewritten.[16] In this process, we can clearly see that the concept of authorship in the Middle Ages was not the same as the emphatic present-day notion; rather, the role played by an 'author' was far less definite and had a comparatively marginal position in the text.

The variance of medieval texts also indicates that the different functions that we associate with a single authorial figure are more widely distributed across various scribes, compilers, and editors in medieval literature.[17] Nevertheless, within Old

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14 Foucault (1969) had already suggested in the 1960s that the author is a function of discourse. On Foucault's answer to Barthes, see Stougaard-Nielsen 2019, p. 279.

15 See Spoerhase 2007, pp. 12–18.

16 Müller 1999, p. 158. On retelling and rewriting in medieval literature, see Worstbrock 1999.

17 On distributed authorship see Ranković 2007; Ranković / Ranković 2012 and her contribution in this volume.

Norse-Icelandic literary studies there seems to be a renewed motivation to identify an actual person behind the anonymous authorship of a given saga, which indicates a continued interest in the biographical function of the author for hermeneutical reasons. In other words, knowing the author of a text is in such studies posited as necessary for its proper contextualisation – always presupposing, of course, that it is a single author who is responsible for that text.

Even though in most cases there is no remotely reliable evidence for attributing the authorship of a medieval Old Norse-Icelandic text to a specific named figure, and despite the recognition of variance and *mouvance* as basic principles of medieval literature, the notion of the author as a specific person responsible for a text is still very much alive. The anonymity of Icelandic literature has predominantly been thought of as a defect of the texts that should be mended. Without specific authors, it seems difficult to accept an authority, invariably conceived as a historical person, speaking through a text, as well as to relate that text to a specific historical context; in short, an anonymous text lacks what we perceive as important authorial functions and does not correspond to our presupposition of a literary work of art. But since the anonymity of most Old Norse-Icelandic texts, as well as many other medieval European texts, does not seem to result from a loss occurring during the transmission process but appears to be a generic feature, it is more productive for us not to seek to mend supposed defects that may be nothing of the sort, but rather to attempt to understand the concept of anonymous authorship as a symptom of the pluralistic and undetermined forms of medieval authorship. We should accept that for a long time those involved in textual production did not feel the need to see their names attached to their products and thus to lay claim to the ownership of the work or to an authority built on the idea of an author as a literary creator.

The contributors to this volume address the question of medieval and early modern authorship from different theoretical and methodological angles, as well as in various philological fields of research. We all concentrate on aspects of authorship in text-genesis, transmission, and the hermeneutics of a text, and deal in one way or another with questions of authority – the 'culprit' for which we are searching then being the agency or agencies responsible for the text, in the sense of the authority or authorities that functioned to approve a text and thus its meaning.

Jürg Glauser shows how the 'Icelandic school', which was heavily influenced by the concept of the modern author, attempted to eliminate traces of a pre-modern concept of authorship in the sagas in its editions and interpretations, thus influencing scholarship in the field of Scandinavian studies to this day.

In his case study of the highly canonised author-figure Ari Þorgilsson, Lukas Rösli explores the question of how authorship was discursively and intertextually produced in Old Norse-Icelandic literary history.

In Stefanie Gropper's chapter, *Sneglu-Halla þáttr* serves as a representative product of the pluralistic authorship reflected in the anonymous transmission of medieval Icelandic texts.

In their collaborative chapter, Sigurður Ingibergur Björnsson, Steingrímur Páll Kárason, and Jón Karl Helgason consider recent attempts to apply variations of the Burrows' Delta method to Old Norse-Icelandic sagas, and discuss the broader inferences of these findings regarding authorship and attribution to specific individuals.

Judy Quinn's contribution focuses on the ways in which anonymity participates in the textual construction of authority among the competing voices of prosimetrum.

Lena Rohrbach discusses in her chapter underlying concepts of authorship in studies of medieval compilations of the history of the Norwegian kings and unveils an intricate connection between notions of author and work in the wake of humanistic traditions that influence preconceptions of the relationship between manuscripts and works up to the present day.

Drawing on current studies into memory, agency, and artificial intelligence, Slavica Ranković revisits the concept of the 'distributed author' using *Fóstbrœðra saga* as a case study.

Gudrun Bamberger's chapter on 16th-century vernacular literature demonstrates how authorship in the early modern period was to some extent still characterised by the presence of degrees of authorship and how it made use of various concepts of anonymity. She shows, however, that the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* (1587) does attempt to frame itself as having its origins in a single author, namely the protagonist himself.

Matthias Bauer's and Angelika Zirker's collaborative chapter explores the presence of John Gower and Geoffrey Chaucer as medieval co-authors in Shakespeare's early modern plays.

In her study of the medieval *Ármanns rímur* and their early modern reworkings, Madita Knöpfle traces the rise of the author Eiríkur Laxdal in early modern Iceland against the background of contemporary discussions of the textual nature of prose and poetic literature and authorship.

Last but not least, Margrét Eggertsdóttir sheds light on ideas of medieval authors in early modern Iceland, when Icelandic scholars apparently found it necessary for the reputation of Icelandic literary history to identify 'real authors' comparable to the classical *scriptores*.

Despite the different angles and approaches that they take, all the contributions to this volume demonstrate how far-reaching the presuppositions of modern emphatic authorship have been in scholarship. Likewise, they all suggest that if we are to understand the concept of medieval authorship more accurately, we must move beyond such assumptions to accept the specifics of our texts, rather than attempting to efface or to distort those characteristics so that these texts fit our modern preconceptions of authorship.

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Jürg Glauser

"… who is the author of this book?"
Creating Literary Authorship in Medieval Iceland

Abstract

This essay on some aspects of authorship concepts in Old Norse-Icelandic saga literature and saga studies is divided into four sections. Section 1 begins with a definition of author as proposed by Bonaventure and shows how in the Middle Ages the 'author' was conceived of as being one of several persons involved in bookmaking. Section 2 discusses different author concepts with regard to Old Norse-Icelandic narratives with a focus on prose sagas, mainly *Íslendingasögur* (sagas of Icelanders), anonymous texts in which the problems of authorship have been a matter of discussion in saga scholarship for many decades. Short digressions on such issues as terminology, the emerging narrator figure in medieval romances, the role and function of translations, the concept of the 'poet' (*skáld*), and a quick look at the uses of the term 'author' in early modern writings are included here. Section 3 is a case study of some attitudes towards ideas about authors and authorship in saga studies, primarily those expressed by representatives of the so-called 'Icelandic school' of the 20th century and a few of its more formative critics. Section 4 concludes with some passages on textual models developed by recent cultural analysis that could offer inspiration for further studies into the complex of authorship in Viking Age, medieval, and early modern Icelandic literature.

1. The Medieval Author – the Efficient Cause of a Work or Simply a Craftsman?

In an often-quoted passage in his *Commentaries* on Petrus Lombardus' (c. 1100–1160) *Sentences*, Saint Bonaventure (1221–1274) asks the famous question: "… who is the author of this book?"[1] Bonaventure's seemingly plain question is actually much more complex, since it contains as a first part the intricate question "What is the efficient cause […]." In "Prœmium Sancti Bonaventuræ in primum librum Sententiarum", the complete Questio IV reads in the original *Quae sit causa efficiens sive auctor huius libri*, which trans-

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1 For recent studies, see e.g. Minnis 2010; Minnis et al. 1988, esp. pp. 228–230; Schnell 1998; Taylor 2015.

lates as "What is the efficient cause, or who is the author, of this book?"[2] The following answer to this question has a number of theological, philosophical, and literary implications. Accordingly, it is detailed, multi-layered, and has various narrative frames. It is also worthwhile to notice that the concept of *causa efficiens* has its origins in Aristotle's theory of the four causes (αἰτία): it is the agent (κινουν) that causes change. One of the many features of this passage is that "Bonaventure is the only one of his contemporaries to raise this question. He seems to have done so because in his literary prologue he had asked about the efficient cause of Scripture, namely, the Holy Spirit; so here he asks a parallel question about the efficient cause of theology."[3] In the present context of authorship in medieval literature, the last part of the answer, the *Respondeo* ('Response'), deserves special attention. It sketches book production in the Middle Ages as a process that includes up to four stages and functions, those of *scriptor*, *compilator*, *commentator*, and *auctor*, the decisive distinguishing factor being the degree of the use of others' and one's own intellectual material (*aliena* or *sua* respectively). In modern narratological terminology one would speak here of pre-texts.

> Postremo ad maiorem evidentiam potest quaeri de causa *efficiente*. [...] Sed quod non debeat dici *auctor* huius libri, videtur.
> 1. Ille solus dicendus est auctor libri, qui est doctor sive auctor doctrinae; sed, sicut dicit Augustinus in libro de Magistro: "Solus Christus est doctor": ergo solus debet dici huius libri auctor. [...]
> Contra: Constat quod Deus hoc opus non scripsit digito suo, ergo habuit alium, creatum auctorem [...]. Item, si auctoritas Magistri in hac causa recipitur, ipse dicit in littera: "In multo labore et sudore hoc volumen, Deo praestante, compegimus"; ergo videtur, quod ipse fuit auctor praesentis libri. [...]
> Respondeo: Ad intelligentiam dictorum notandum, quod quadruplex est modus faciendi librum. Aliquis enim scribit aliena, nihil addendo vel mutando; et iste mere dicitur *scriptor*. Aliquis scribit aliena, addendo, sed non de suo; et iste *compilator* dicitur. Aliquis scribit et aliena et sua, sed aliena tamquam principalia, et sua tamquam annexa ad evidentiam; et iste dicitur *commentator*, non auctor. Aliquis scribit et sua et aliena, sed sua tamquam principalia, aliena tamquam annexa ad confirmationem; et talis debet dici *auctor*.[4]

> Finally, to complete the point, one can ask about the efficient cause. [...] *Objections that he ought not be called the author of this book are seen in the following arguments*:
> 1. The only person who should be called the author of a book is the one who is the teacher or author of the doctrine. But Augustine says in *On the Teacher*: "Christ alone is teacher."[5] Therefore, he alone should be called the author of this book. [...]

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2 Bonaventura: Commentarius in primum librum sententiarum, p. 14; Bonaventure: Commentary on the Sentences, p. 13.
3 Bonaventura: Commentarius in primum librum sententiarum, p. 22, n. 44.
4 Bonaventura: Commentarius in primum librum sententiarum, pp. 14f.
5 "unus omnium magister in caelis sit" (Bonaventura: Commentarius in primum librum sententiarum, p. 22, n. 45).

To the contrary. a. God obviously did not write this work by his own hand. Therefore, it has another, created author [...]. b. Authorship is accepted by the Master in this case, for he himself says in the book: "We have composed this volume with much labor and effort, and with God's help." Therefore, it seems he is the author of the present book.

Response: To understand this point we should note there are four ways of producing a book. One who writes down the words of another [*aliena*], neither adding to them nor changing them, is called merely a *scribe* [*scriptor*]. One who writes down the words of another, adding to them but not adding his own words, is called a *compiler* [*compilator*]. One who writes down both the words of another and his own as well, but principally those of another, adding his own as corroboration, is called a *commentator* [*commentator*], not an author. One who writes down his own words and those of another, but principally his own, and those of others by way of corroboration, should be called an *author* [*auctor*].[6]

From a medial and literary point of view, one will first observe that Bonaventure stages a figure of a *created* author as the medium of God. At the same time, Bonaventure presents a kind of early 'theory' of manuscript intertextuality. Furthermore, also remarkable in the present context, the fact that so much attention is paid to the many material aspects of the writing process deserves to be underscored too. It is the tangible and concrete aspect of the making of a book (*facere, scribere, digitus, opus*) that stands in the foreground, and scribe, compiler, and commentator are all part of the definition of the role and work of an author. As Alastair J. Minnis observed, "[i]n the thirteenth century, a series of terms came to be employed in theological commentaries which indicates a wish to define more precisely the literary activity characteristic of an *auctor*".[7]

With regard to vernacular authorship, Andrew Taylor rightly emphasises the importance of manuscript transmission and textual variation: "[T]he surviving manuscripts testify to the fluidity of the categories of 'author' and 'work' during the late Middle Ages [...]."[8] It may be added that the borders between scribes, compilers, commentators, and authors are of course equally fluid. In light of the following considerations, it may also be reasonable to dispute whether the modern rendering of 'author' for the medieval Latin *auctor* is an adequate translation.

So, while the concrete topic of the lengthy answer to the concise question is whether or not Magister Petrus Lombardus can be called the author of the book in question – *Sentences*, or *Summa Sententiarum* (c. 1150) –, its general theme has a wider scope ranging across fundamental problems of theology and literature. The question at the beginning sets up the simple equation 'efficient cause' = 'author'. Only the person who primarily uses his own ideas and exclusively, so to speak, writes down his own

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6   Bonaventure: Commentary on the Sentences, pp. 13f. All translations are my own, unless stated otherwise.
7   Minnis 2010, p. 94.
8   Taylor 2015, p. 210. On the different categories of writing, see Müller 2020, pp. 37–45; on writing during the Middle Ages in general, see Ludwig 2005, pp. 77–209.

words (*sua*), using the words of others (*aliena*) only modestly (*ad confirmationem*) merits, in Bonaventure's strict taxonomy, being called the actual author of a work. This categorisation is important, given the fundamentally intertextual nature of theological and philosophical thinking and writing in the European Middle Ages.

As concerns the making of a literary work as a collective process, the medieval thinker Bonaventure is actually in many ways far more sophisticated and uses a much more refined and precise terminology than the majority of modern saga scholars. Telling examples of the approach to read medieval texts as if they were works written by modern authors can, for instance, be found in the writings of many followers of the theories of the 'Icelandic school', on which more below.[9] Another observation needs to be made already at this point. In recent years, adherents of traditional views of medieval literature that treat medieval and modern authors more or less as equivalents usually oppose new trends in philology and literary studies quite fiercely. It is no surprise that the factual results of such studies are more often than not rather disappointing.[10]

In contrast to restorative and anachronistic approaches of this kind, the French medievalist Pascale Bourgain finds, in a lucid overview of the Latin terminology that describes the activities of a medieval author, that not only the nouns for persons, but especially the verbs related to the notion of author ("Les verbes en rapport avec le concept d'auteur")[11] gather around the production of a work as a material entity. The author is then somebody who works with various sorts of pretexts and paratexts, in many ways quite comparable to Bonaventure's *quadruplex modus*. Bourgain writes:

> Que fait donc un auteur? Il compose, il traite, il assemble, il combine, il rédige, il met en ordre, il répartit, il forge, il tisse, il entrelace, il comprime. Mais surtout il dit et il écrit. Ou encore il met la main à la plume, il gribouille, il laboure la page. Il peut mentir, si c'est un auteur païen à qui tout est permis. Il invente fort peu, il ne crée jamais. Et évidemment, jamais non plus il n'autorise, ce type de concept étant à chercher plutôt dans la famille *doctor / docere*. Les verbes en rapport avec la notion d'auteur se concentrent sur la fabrication de l'œuvre, avec déploiement de métaphores artisanales qui rappellent au lettré que son acte est du domaine du labeur et du travail bien fait.[12]

> What, then, does an author do? He puts together, he copy-edits, he assembles, he combines, he drafts, he puts in order, he divides, he forges, he weaves, he interlaces, he compresses. But, above

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9 "My conclusion is that those Old Norse writers who were active in Iceland during the Middle Ages were well aware of their role in society. They worked for the most part in ways similar to those of their colleagues elsewhere in Europe, and they regarded their own role as a creative one" (Sverrir Tómasson 2012, p. 250).

10 See e.g. Schnell 1998, who in a long article fights against all the openings of the innovative turns in cultural analysis and proposes a backlash to a now obsolete double concept of 'author' and 'work', a sort of movement from 'text' to 'work', to turn the title of Roland Barthes' (1980) article round.

11 Bourgain 2001, p. 361.

12 Bourgain 2001, p. 374.

all, he speaks and he writes. Or he takes a feather in his hand, he scribbles, he ploughs the page. He can lie if he is a pagan author who is allowed to do everything. He invents very little, he never creates anything. And, obviously, he never authorises anything, this type of concept rather belonging to the family of *doctor / docere.* The verbs related to the notion of author focus on the manufacturing of the work, deploying metaphors from the field of craftsmanship which remind the learned that his activity is from the area of labor and well-done work.

Thus, the general medieval terminology in Latin conceives of the author as a manual workman, a craftsman, an artisan, but never as someone who actively creates anything new or unheard of. If one compares Bourgain's illuminating list to Bonaventure's four ways of producing a book, one observes that it comprises many of the activities attributed by the Doctor of the Church to scribes, compilers, and commentators rather than authors. What Bourgain convincingly demonstrates is that medieval writers rarely, if at all, consider an *auctor* to be the *causa efficiens* of a book. If that were the case, we would be dealing with a text belonging to the field of theology or philosophy, and it is of course no coincidence that Bonaventure exemplifies his four ways in the context of a work of precisely this genre.

2. The Author in Old Norse-Icelandic Saga Literature

Der Terminus [Autor] bezeichnete zunächst 'jemanden, der bestimmte Rechte hat', dann auch Rechtsgelehrte sowie Gelehrte, die ihr Wissen schriftlich weitergeben. [...] Etymologisch gesehen geht 'A.' zurück auf das lateinische 'auctor', wovon sich die *auctoritas* ableitet. Beide Begriffe haben ihre Wurzel in 'augeo' (etwas entstehen lassen). 'Auctor' ist typisch römisch und besitzt keine griechische Entsprechung. Ein *auctor* ist zunächst der eigentliche Inhaber eines Rechts (Imperiumsträger), dessen *auctoritas* auf der Eignung, 'maßgeblichen Einfluß auf die Entschließung der anderen kraft überlegener Einsicht auszuüben' [...], gründet. Solche 'Autoritäten' waren im politisch-juristischen, rhetorischen, sprachlichen und literarischen Raum angesiedelt. Nach Quintilian richtet sich die *auctoritas* eines A. nach der 'virtus', die sich in sprachliche, stilistische und höhere literarische *virtutes* aufteilt. Die von der literarischen Kritik ausgewählten A. waren 'optimi auctores', die mit ihren Werken zur *imitatio* dienten.[13]

The term [author] denoted originally someone who had certain rights, later also legal scholars and scholars who passed on their knowledge in writing. [...] Etymologically, 'author' goes back to Latin 'auctor', from which *auctoritas* is derived. Both terms have their roots in 'augeo' (to let something emerge). 'Auctor' is typically Roman and has no equivalence in Greek. An *auctor* is originally the actual owner of a right (bearer of imperium), whose *auctoritas* is based on the ability to exert essential influence on the resolutions of others by virtue of superior insight. [...] Such authorities were placed in the spheres of politics, jurisdiction, rhetoric, language, and literature. According to Quintilian, the *auctoritas* of an author is defined by 'virtus', which is divided into linguistic,

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13   Seng 1992, col. 1276.

stylistic, and higher literary *virtutes.* The authors chosen by the literary critics were 'optimi autores' whose works could be used for *imitatio.*

What Thomas Seng here writes about the use of 'author' in public speech in Roman antiquity demonstrates neatly how closely the influence and power of an *auctor*'s *auctoritas* were anchored in classical rhetoric, the typical space and domain of the *auctores. Auctor* etc. as a term for a professional writer of literary works is not attested in English ('author'), German ('Autor'/'Verfasser'), or any of the Scandinavian languages ('forfatter', 'författare') until the 18th century and is, as a medial phenomenon, closely connected to the modern book market. Usually, in German as well as in other languages, up to the 18th century *auctor* meant 'Machinator' (dated in German), 'Anstifter', 'Urheber'.[14]

Turning to the pertinent terminology in Old Norse-Icelandic texts, the lexicological situation is very similar to that of the Latin language area, so medieval Icelandic textual culture offers no substantial exception. The term equivalent to 'author' in modern Icelandic is 'höfundur'. As in the other medieval vernaculars, *hǫfundr* (the Old Norse-Icelandic form) was originally used to designate a 'judge', an 'authority', an 'originator', even a 'cause' (cf. Danish 'ophavsmand', 'autoritet'). In medieval texts *hǫfundr* (pl. *hǫfundar*) did not mean 'author' in the modern, post-1800 sense (i.e. either as an empirical, extradiegetic author, an implied, intradiegetic author, or an intradiegetic narrated author). The pertinent *locus classicus* in Old Icelandic literature for *hǫfundr* is a sentence in the so-called *First Grammatical Treatise* (dated to c. 1150, but extant earliest in the manuscript AM 242 folio, *Codex Wormianus* of *Prose Edda*, from c. 1350): "Skalld eru hofvndar allrar rynni eða málsgreinar sem smiðir smíðar eða logmenn laga." ("The scalds are authorities in all [matters touching the art] of writing or the distinctions [made in] discourse, just as craftsmen [are] [in their craft] or lawyers in the laws.")[15] Here and in other English translations of the First Grammatical Treatise, *hǫfundar* is rendered not as 'authors', as it would be in modern terms, but unanimously as 'authorities'.[16]

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14   It is also telling that two major studies of medieval textual culture from the 20th century did not treat the notion of the author to any degree. Neither Ernst Robert Curtius in *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (1948) nor Walter Haug (1997) in *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter. Von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts* – two seminal works on the importance of the Latin tradition for the European literature of the Middle Ages viz. on literary theory in the German Middle Ages – paid much attention to the concept of authorship. While Curtius does have several passages dealing with the closeness of philosophers and poets (cf. the Icelandic notions of *skáld* [poets] and *fræðimenn* [scholars, philosophers]), Haug focusses more generally on the question of fictionality, which was an important issue in medieval studies in the 1980s and 1990s.

15   The First Grammatical Treatise, pp. 224–227.

16   Sverrir Tómasson (2012, pp. 236f.) discusses other potential ways of translating this somewhat cryptical sentence into English. See also Gísli Sigurðsson 2012 and Mundal 2012.

In post-medieval texts, the terms 'høfund(u)r' or 'höfundur' also kept the old meaning of 'authority' for quite a while. In Jón Árnason's *Lexicon Latino-Islandicum Grammaticale Það er Glosna Kver a Latinu og Islendsku* [...] from 1734, the relevant entry is: "Auctor, -oris, Höfundur".[17] Two passages from the 18th century give 'höfundur' with the meaning of 'originator', 'cause': "Fyrir þennan rétt stefnist og Jón Jónsson sem höfundur þessa máls." ('Before this jury is also called Jón Jónsson as the originator of this legal case.');[18] "Hún sá hjer þann, sem var höfundur allrar hennar, og hennar ættingja ólukku." ('Here she saw the one who was the origin / cause of all her and her relatives' misery.')[19]

For the first time, an interesting little Icelandic document shows that by the mid-19th century 'höfundur', in a quite comparable way to Danish 'forfatter', has taken up the modern meaning of 'author of an original literary work'. A letter written by Þuríður Sveinbjörnsdóttir (1823–1899) to the librarian and collector of Icelandic folktales and fairy tales Jón Árnason (1818–1888), on May 15, 1854, illustrates that 'höfundur' was now being used exclusively to mean "one who writes the original". The exigency of artistic originality has here become part and parcel of the role and task of an author:

> Þér kallið yður "höfund" æfisögu Lúthers. Hvernig eruð þér "höfundur" að því, sem tekið er saman eftir 8 ritum? Eg er nú ekki betur að mér en svo, að eg held höfundur og forfatter sé sama, og að forfatter sé sá, sem frumritar. En þér segið sjálfur, að Lútherssaga sé ekki frumrit. Þér megið vara yður á því, að kvenfólkið tekur eftir.[20]

> You call yourself the 'author' of the biography of Luther. How can you be the 'author' of something that is compiled from eight writings? I do not know better but I think that 'author' and 'forfatter' are the same and that a 'forfatter' is the one who writes the original. But you say yourself that the story about Luther is not an original. Take care, women might notice.

Digression 1: master, meister, meistari

The first written instance of *auctor* as referring to the author of a literary piece in a German text dates from the second half of the 15th century. Heinrich Steinhöwel (1410/1411–1479) translated Rodericus Zamorensis' (1404–1470) *Speculum vitae humanae* (first print Rome 1468) into German as *Spiegel des menschlichen Lebens* (first print Augsburg c. 1476). In an addition to Book I, Chapter 32, on the art of medicine, which is not part of the Latin text, Steinhöwel refers to the Spanish philosopher as *stiffter* ('creator,

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17 Jón Árnason: Lexicon Latino-Islandicum, p. 28.
18 Alþingisbækur Íslands, 12, p. 553, for the year 1740.
19 Hannes Finnsson: Kvöldvökurnar, p. 201.
20 Úr fórum Jóns Árnasonar: Sendibréf, p. 40.

originator'), *auctor, meyster* ('master, magister'): *der stiffter dises lateinischen bůchlins* (folio 70v) ('the creator of this Latin booklet'), *mit vrlaub des meysters* [...] *der auctor dises bůchlins* (folio 71r) ('with the permission of the master [...] the auctor of this booklet'). This is an illuminating passage insofar as Steinhöwel seems to use the three terms more or less identically, *auctor* here being a kind of creator in a very material sense too. It is also worthwhile to place these terms in the context of the medial transgressions brought about by the emerging printing press. *Auctor* in this German book is characterised by existing between medieval and early modern concepts of the author.[21]

There are parallels also for this noun, the 15th-century German *meister*, in Old Icelandic. *Meistari*, for instance, is frequently used in *Alexanders saga*: *segir meistare Gualterus*[22] ('master Gualterus says'). According to the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* (ONP), *meistari* means "herre, leder, anfører, husbond; fosterfader; skolemester, læremester, lærer; vis mand, lærd person, forfatter – auctor" ('master, leader, chief, housefather; foster father; schoolmaster, master, teacher; wise man, learned person, author – auctor').[23] As a rule, *meistari* is used for ancient authors of classical texts, but barely at all for contemporary writers. A short sentence in the geographical section of the encyclopaedic *Alfræði Íslands* has the following passage: *Þeir heita magis met Kalldei, enn philosophi med Girkivm, magister med latinv monnum, meistarar met os.*[24] ('They are called magis by the Chaldeans, philosophi by the Greek, magister by the Latinists, meistarar by us.')

Evidence that the overwhelming desire to father a good anonymous story already existed in the late Icelandic Middle Ages is produced by *Vilhjálms saga sjóðs*, an original *riddarasaga*. In the manuscript AM 343 a 4to (15th century), the saga is attributed to a certain *meistari Humerus*: *þessi saga var tekin af steinuegginum j Babbilon hjnni miklu. og meistari Humerus hefer samsett hana.*[25] ('This story, which was compiled by Master Homer, was found on the stone wall in Babylon the Great.')

Digression 2: The Emergence of the Romance Narrator

This last example belongs, as mentioned above, to the genre of romance (usually called *riddarasögur*) and it is in the context of this group of sagas that scholars have discussed the problem of fictionality and authorship as part of the genre most intensely. This

21   Rodericus [Sancius de Arevalo]. See also Boccaccio, De claris mulieribus, p. 336. The references in Rabe / Schemme [n.d.] and Seng 1999, col. 1277, claiming that the two passages in Steinhöwel's book refer to his translation of Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus*, are wrong.
22   Manuscript AM 519 a 4to, end of the 13th century; Alexanders saga, p. 155 and passim.
23   Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog. ONP: Dictionary of Old Norse Prose, URL: https://onp.ku.dk (last accessed 1 March 2021).
24   GKS 812 4to (14th century), Alfræði íslenzk 3, p. 73.
25   Vilhjálms saga sjóðs, p. 3.

is of course very much in line with romance studies in general.[26] In the romances, a specific new type of text-internal figure emerges in the form of the narrator who explicitly refers to herself / himself as 'I', and who makes the status of a fictional text with an increasing amount of self-awareness a matter of discussion in the romances themselves.

In a famous phrasing in the prologue to *Erec et Enide*, Chrétien de Troyes (c. 1140 – c. 1190) writes that his accomplishment in composing the narrative which came to be considered the first proper romance was to create, on the basis of a diversity of existing sources, *une moult bele conjointure*.[27] Chrétien based his writings on existing oral Breton legends and written materials. It was this new artistic achievement of *conjointure* that, in the eyes of the French 12th century, made a piece of art, different and distinct from the earlier narratives that lacked this artistic joining-together of diverse materials and meanings. In the history of medieval European literature, scholars usually saw in Chrétien de Troyes the medieval writer who 'invented' the specific type of chivalric narrative, *romans courtois*, that was later to become the modern novel. Yet whether Chrétien's formula already points to an actual awareness and self-conception as author is not quite clear, all the more so since anonymity continued to be one of the decisive generic factors of romance; and whether Chrétien viewed himself in every instance as an innovative author, in what would correspond to a modern understanding of the concept, is equally undecided. In any case, the 'I' of the early romances must be understood as a narrator-figure and cannot immediately be identified with the 'author' as an empirical subject and extradiegetic phenomenon.

Digression 3: Translator

What neither Bonaventure nor the texts analysed by Bourgain treat, because of their corpora of Latin writings, are the various phenomena associated with the different acts

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26 See the articles in Krueger 2000. On the role of romance and the emerging discussion about fictionality in Old Norse-Icelandic literature, see, for example, Glauser 2010; Kalinke 2012; O'Connor 2017.

27 Chrétien de Troyes: Erec und Enide, p. 12. This crucial Old French phrase has been translated as "a beautiful conjoining" (Krueger 2000, p. 2), "a very beautiful joining" (Bruckner 2000, p. 15), "eine sehr schön geordnete Erzählung" (Chrétien de Troyes: Erec und Enide, p. 13), "sehr schöne Verbindung" (Greiner 1992, p. 300). On the importance of the narrative approaches and techniques that are behind the concept of *conjointure*, see e.g. Krueger 2000, pp. 2–6; Bruckner 2000, especially pp. 16–18; Greiner 1992.

Without making any direct reference to Chrétien de Troyes, Steblin-Kamenskij (1966, p. 32) sees in the Old Norse poet (*skáld*) an "'author of poetic form' [...] so to-say [a] 'form author'", a poet that much like the writer of the Old French *romans* used others' material (*aliena*) in order to create something novel; see also Steblin-Kamenskij 1973; Steblin-Kamenskij 1975a; Steblin-Kamenskij 1975b.

of translating and adapting, as well as the figure of the translator. The extremely wide and complex field of translation in the medieval North cannot be dealt with sufficiently here, but translation deserves a short mention because it is pertinent to the question of authorship. In quite a few instances, the role and function of the author is transferred by later scholars to the translator.[28] A prominent figure in the history of translations into Icelandic, for example, was Brandr Jónsson (1192–1264), to whom the compilations and translations of *Gyðinga saga* and *Alexanders saga* are ascribed. Due to the usually creative way of translating the border between compiler, translator, and author may in certain places be blurred. Later manuscripts may attribute translations to early writers whose names were known but who had nothing to do with the translations in question.[29]

A figure that must be mentioned in the present context, however, is a certain Brother Robert, the supposed translator of *Tristrams saga ok Ísǫndar*, who is probably also the Abbot Robert said to be the translator of *Elis saga ok Rósamundu*.[30] In an often quoted and almost equally often criticised article with the telling title *Den islandske Familieroman*, the Danish literary scholar Paul V. Rubow (1896–1972) writes the following about Brother Robert's translation: "Af dette Digterværk har vi netop en oldnordisk Bearbejdelse, som ved en vidunderlig Skæbnens Tilskikkelse er baade forfatter- og tidsbestemt."[31] ('Of this piece of poetry we have just one Old Norse rendering which, by a wondrous coincidence of fate, can be ascribed to both an author and a time.') To Rubow, in the case of the Old Norwegian *Tristrams saga*, translator and author ('forfatter') were the same person. Rubow familiarised himself so much with this man that he perceived him as a real, living human being, so much so that, in his opinion, Robert deserved to be remembered as a seminal figure in the emerging prose literature of the North. Rubow continues with a notorious suggestion: "Der burde et Sted oprejses ham en Statue, thi han er efter al Sandsynlighed Grundlægger af den oldnordiske Underholdningslitteratur i Prosa."[32] ('There ought to be erected a statue to him somewhere, for he is in all probability the founding father of Old Norse prose fiction.')[33]

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28   On translation in medieval Scandinavia in general see Johanterwage / Würth 2007; Glauser 2019, with further references.

29   On these and other sagas of antiquity, see Wolf 1988; Würth 1998.

30   See Sverrir Tómasson (1977) who gives an excellent overview of the studies by Paul Schach, Peter Hallberg, and Foster W. Blaisdell who discussed the existence of a so-called 'Tristram-group' of the *Riddarasögur*. Hallberg, e.g., considered it likely that the same man had translated *Tristrams saga, Strengleikar,* and *Duggals leizla*. See also Driscoll 2019.

31   Quoted from Mundal 1977, p. 196.

32   Quoted from Mundal 1977, p. 196.

33   Translated by Driscoll 2019. In Rubow's (1949, p. 50) own words: "A statue ought to be erected somewhere in commemoration of him, for, in all probability, he is the founder of Norse prose fiction."

It is crucial to note here that Rubow adheres to the same kind of literary aesthetics as his contemporary, the Icelandic scholar Sigurður Nordal (1886–1974), on whom more below, in that he sees in the sagas Icelandic equivalents of the novels ('Familieroman'). Two passages out of many such examples in his essay suffice to illustrate Rubow's main point: "det er den Omstændighed, som maa blive øjensynlig for enhver, der uden For- domme læser disse Tekster – det er Romaner."[34] ('it is this fact which must be obvious to anyone who reads these texts without a prejudice – they are novels.') "Sagaerne er Romaner, endog Intrigeromaner."[35] ('The sagas are novels, even novels with intrigues.') As a consequence of this generic categorisation of the sagas as novels, it was only natural that scholarship sought to provide them with an author (a 'father'). If there was no known author available (Rubow does not mention Thomas of Britain as a potential author), the translator whose name we should apparently be so happy to know had to take his place.

Digression 4: *skáld* (Poet)

In striking contrast to the prose literature, the poets of skaldic poetry (though not eddic poetry), the *skáld*, step forward as 'authors' of their poems and as 'individuals', at least as far as can be judged from the extant manuscript transmission. *Skáld* is the first element of the Old-Norse Icelandic word for 'poetry', *skáldskapr*, which denotes the activities and products of poets. The designation *skáld* is ubiquitous.[36]

Skáldskaparmál ('The Language of Poetry'), the part about poetics and rhetoric in the *Prose Edda*, naturally has a broad selection of relevant terms, for example: *En þetta er nú at segja ungum skáldum þeim er girnask at nema mál skáldskapar ok heyja sér orðfjǫlda með fornum heitum*[37] ('But these things have now to be told to young poets who desire to learn the language of poetry and to furnish themselves with a wide vocabulary using traditional terms').[38] A majority of the skaldic poems that have come down to us are in one way or another connected with poets explicitly mentioned by their names and often by the attribute *skáld*: *Bragi skáld* ('Bragi the poet'), *Arnórr jarlaskáld* ('Arnórr the earls' poet'), *Eyvindr skáldaspillir* (literally 'Eyvindr the skald who distorts the poetry of

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34 Quoted from Mundal 1977, p. 192.

35 Quoted from Mundal 1977, p. 194.

36 See, however, von See 1981, p. 347: "Wenn man einmal nachprüft, wie die Germanen ihre Dichter nannten, dann könnte man meinen, sie seien lange Zeit hindurch ein Volk ohne Dichter gewesen. Denn keines der Wörter, die im frühen Mittelalter auftauchen, hat gesamtgermanische Verbrei- tung." ('If one would check how the Germanic peoples called their poets, one would get the im- pression that they had been peoples without poets for a long time. Because none of the words for poets that emerged in the early Middle Ages had a common Germanic distribution.')

37 Snorri Sturluson: Edda. Skáldskaparmál, 1, p. 5.

38 Snorri Sturluson: Edda, p. 64.

others'), and innumerable others. Many terms exist for the activities of Norwegian and Icelandic poets and there is equally a wide spectrum of functions for poets, for example: *Enn skal láta heyra dœmin hvernig hǫfuðskáldin hafa látit sér sóma at yrkja eptir þessum heitum ok kenningum*[39] ('We shall present further examples of how major poets have found it fitting to compose using these kinds of terms and kennings').[40] The *hǫfuðskáld* in Old Norse poetry correspond to the prose texts' *meistarar*, the ancient *auctoritates.*

An intriguing, separate area of study concerns a few runic inscriptions where the runecarver signed his name and the attribute 'skald', or where a person is mentioned with his name and the attribute 'skald'. These are mostly Swedish inscriptions from the Viking Age. Because of the stereotypical and short formulations, it is not always possible to tell exactly what the precise role of these poets was in the process of the erection of the stone and the production of the inscription. Nor is it easy to decide whether 'skald' in these inscriptions refers to the fact that the runecarver cut the inscription or had the stone erected in his capacity as a poet. As in the case of manuscript bookmaking observed above, the material aspects of the making of a runic inscription are the focus of the runic terminology. The designation for a runecarver or runemaster (Swedish 'run-ristare') is that of a craftsman who executes – carves, cuts (*rista, hǫggva*) – the inscriptions. The relevant formulas on the five inscriptions in questions are:

> U [Uppsala runinskrifter] 29, Hillersjö:
> **þurbiurn skalt risti runar** ('Torbjörn skald carved the runes')
> U [Uppsala runinskrifter] 532, Roslag-Bro kyrka:
> **þurbiurn skalt hiuk runaʀ** ('Torbjörn skald cut the runes')
> U [Uppsala runinskrifter] 951, Säby, Danmarks socken:
> **kiʀimr skalt hiu** ('Grimr skald cut')
> Vg [Västergötlands runinskrifter] 4, Stora Ek:
> **utr skalt raisti stain þinsi** ('Uddr skald raised this stone')
> N [Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer] 239, Stangeland, Langeland:
> **þurbiurn skalt raisti stn þona** ('Torbjörn skald raised this stone')

In an instructive study on two runecarvers both named Torbjörn, only one of them bearing the attribute 'skald', the Swedish runologist Magnus Källström summarises his findings as follows:

> Det är mycket frestande att tänka sig att Torbjörn skald har ingått i en stormans följe, där en av hans uppgifter varit att hugfästa minnet av ättens avlidna. [...] Både Torbjörn skald och Torbjörn är ristare som trots sin ristarkompetens efterlämnat relativt få verk. [...] Det begränsade antalet ristningar utesluter också att runristandet varit huvuduppgiften för någon av dessa ristare. Torbjörn skald bör

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39 Snorri Sturluson: Edda. Skáldskaparmál, 1, p. 6.
40 Snorri Sturluson: Edda, p. 66. On the rich and varied technical vocabulary for skaldic poetry and activity, see Kreutzer 1977; on poetological self-conceptions of skalds, see Kyas 2009; von See 1981.

i stället, som binamnet visar, i huvudsak ha sysslat med diktning. Som både diktare och runkunnig bör han ha varit åtråvärd som medlem i en stormans följe. I Uppland finns ytterligare ett exempel på att en skald även ägnat sig åt runristande, nämligen *GrīmR skald* [U 951]. Denna har utfört ett mindre antal runstenar i trakten kring Uppsala […] och kan därför liksom Torbjörn skald ha varit knuten till en viss grupp av människor. På andra håll förekommer runstensresare med binamnet *skald*, men ingen av dessa påstår sig ha utfört ristningsarbetet själv (*UddR skald* Vg 4; *Þorbiorn skald* N 239). Märkligt är att Torbjörn skald inte har efterlämnat någon inskrift som är versifierad.[41]

It is very tempting to believe that Torbjörn the poet was part of a chieftain's retinue in which one of his duties was to secure the memory of the clan's dead. […] Both Torbjörn the poet and Torbjörn are carvers who, despite their ability as carvers, left behind relatively few works. […] The limited number of carvings also precludes that the carving of runes was the main occupation for either of these carvers. Torbjörn the poet would, as his epithet shows, primarily have occupied himself with poetry. As both poet and expert in runes, he would have been attractive as a member of a chieftain's retinue. In Uppland there is additionally an example that a poet has occupied himself with rune carving, namely *Grimr the poet* [U 951]. He has executed a smaller number of rune stones in the area around Uppsala […] and can therefore like Torbjörn the poet have been connected to a certain group of people. On the other hand, there are raisers of rune stones with the epithet *poet*, but none of these claims to have executed the carving himself (*Uddr skald* Vg 4; [Norwegian] *Torbjörn skald* N 239). It is remarkable that Torbjörn the poet did not leave behind any versified inscription.

One of the main reasons for the strikingly different status of authors of poetry and prose has usually been held to be the different medial forms and the role of literacy versus orality. While written narratives, such as the French romances or to some degree the Old Norwegian and Icelandic *Riddarasögur* (Chivalric sagas), introduce the new narrative level of the implied author, oral poetry is much less capable of keeping such distance between the narrative and the performer.[42] This is another vast area of study that requires more detailed analysis.

Digression 5: The 'Author' in Pre-Modern Literary Historiography

When, in the 18th century, learned Icelanders started the project of mapping the history of their country's literature, they could base their endeavours to quite some degree on the works of their predecessors from the 16th and 17th centuries.[43] Reformation and

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41 Källström 1999, pp. 134f.; see also Källström 2004, pp. 236f., 369, 393f.
42 See also Steblin-Kamenskij 1966 on this complex.
43 Relevant studies are Guðrún Ingólfsdóttir's and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir's introduction to their edition of Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík 2018; see esp. pp. X–XII on the origins of Icelandic literary historiography. See also Guðrún Ingólfsdóttir / Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2015; Matthías Viðar Sæmundsson 1991; Gottskálk Jensson 2000; Gottskálk Jensson 2001. – Guðrún Ingólfsdóttir 2009 presents an extensive evaluation of concepts of social authorship, manuscript textuality, and the simultaneity of handwritten and printed books in 18th-century Northwest Europe.

humanist writers such as Guðbrandur Þorláksson (1541–1627), Arngrímur Jónsson (1568–1648), and in the 17th century Þormóð"ur Torfason / Thormodus Torfæus (1636–1719), Árni Magnússon (1663–1730), and others had already written extensively on the medieval and contemporary literary traditions of Iceland. The picture that the medieval texts offered for questions of terminology and definitions of author and authorship is more or less confirmed and repeated by the post-medieval scholars' texts as written in Latin and Icelandic. *Auctor*, *author*, *autor* did not yet refer to writers of specifically literary texts but were still more or less equivalent to *scriptor* or sometimes *historicus*. It is only in the second half of the 18th century that *auctor*, *author*, *autor* gradually begins to be used for 'author' and equated with 'höfundur' as a producer of literary and explicitly fictitious texts. Thus, the first histories of Icelandic literature are excellent sources that describe the emergence of author-terminologies in a more modern sense. Among the most important and pertinent of these works are those by Páll Vídalín (1667–1727), Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík (1705–1779), Þorsteinn Pétursson (1710–1785), and Hálfdan Einarsson (1732–1785). These literary histories and general writings on literature are of course crucial for the study of concepts of textuality and authorship in a historical perspective, and they would deserve more attention than it is possible to provide in the present context. A few examples will have to suffice here.

That Latin *author* in the late 16th century denoted both the author / writer of a written text as well as an initiator or originator in a more general sense is attested in a passage by Guðbrandur Þorláksson, in which he names himself as the person responsible (*author esse*) for Arngrímur Jónsson's *Brevis commentarius de Islandia* (Copenhagen 1593), i.e. the person initiating someone else's writing of a work. In addressing the reader of this work, 'Benigno et pio Lectorem Salutem', he explains: *Quare hoc tempore author eram honesto studioso, Arngrimo Ionæ F., ut revoltis scriptorum monimentis, qui de Islandiâ aliquid scripserunt, errores et mendacia solidis rationibus detegeret.*[44] ('Therefore, at this time, I was the initiator for the honest student Arngrímr, son of Jón, to reveal the errors and lies in what [others] wrote about Iceland with sound reasons.')

When the Latin *author* is used for the one who 'writes', i.e. authors a book, such as Arngrímur Jónsson in his *Brevis commentarius*,[45] it is as a designation of oneself or others as an 'author' of scholarly, 'non-fictional' works: *Authoris ad Lectorem* ('From the author to the reader'); *Authoribus* [...] *maximis* ('major, outstanding authors whose works enjoy *auctoritas*'). Writers of other works are usually just called *scriptores* or, if their capacity as historians is highlighted, *historicus* (historian). In Arngrímur's writings, both Saxo Grammaticus and Snorri Sturluson are such *historici* whenever they are named as authors of historical works; see, for example, in *Specimen Islandiæ Historicvm* [...] (Amsterdam 1643), where Arngrímur calls Sæmundus (Sæmundr Sigfússon hinn fróði), Arrias

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44   [Guðbrandur Þorláksson] Gudbrandus Thorlacius: Benigno et pio Lectorem Salutem, 1, p. 7.
45   [Arngrímur Jónsson:] Brevis commentarius de Islandia, 1, p. 8.

(Ari Þorgilsson hinn fróði), Isleifus (Ísleifr Gissurarson), Snorro (Snorri Sturluson), and others *authores*: *Hos* [...] *Authores* [...] *Annales nostri et Norvegici* [...][46] ('These [...] authors [...] our annals and the Norwegian annals [...]').

In his polemical writings, especially *Crymogæa sive Rerum Islandicarvm Libri III* (Hamburg 1609), Arngrímur seems to adhere to a certain rhetorical pattern; *author* is mostly used as a self-definition, while terms like *scriptor*, *scribens*, *historicus*, and especially *literatus* ('learned man') or *idiota* ('layman, amateur, bungler') are reserved for his opponents: *apud Literatos* [...] *apud Idiotas*.[47] The well-read bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson called them *Zoili* (after the Greek Cynic philosopher Zoilos): *adversus Zoilorum proterviam*[48] ('against the impudence of the 'Zoili''). Arngrímur Jónsson makes another interesting terminological distinction, when he talks about *poëtæ* ('poets') and *prophani autores, prophani scriptores* ('worldly authors'), for example: *Ad prophanos scriptores transeo*[49] ('I will now proceed to the worldly writers').

A short note in *Crymogæa* [...] *Libri III* needs to be mentioned here, because it is one of the few instances where there is a certain possibility that Latin *author* could have been used in a slightly different way. In a list of Icelandic *nomophylaces* (lögsögumenn, 'lawspeakers'), Arngrímur inserts for the year 1215: *Snorro Sturlæ f. Autor Eddæ Lib.*[50] However, in the context of Arngrímur's other uses of *author*, it is unlikely that he wanted to portray Snorri as the actual *causa efficiens* in accordance with Bonaventure's definition of *auctor*. It is more probable that *Autor* Eddæ Lib. here refers to a writer who, like all historians, makes use of existing texts and puts them together in a new book, just as the famous rubric of the Uppsala version of the *Prose Edda* states: *Bók þessi heitir Edda. Hana hefir saman setta Snorri Sturluson eptir þeim hætti sem hér er skipat.*[51] ('This book is called Edda. Snorri Sturluson has compiled it in the manner in which it is arranged here.')

In the late 17th century, *scriptor* was still the prevalent term for author / writer. Árni Magnússon's unfinished attempt at gathering the names of medieval Icelandic authors / writers, in the form of a list in the manuscript AM 434 4to from c. 1690–1710, bears the title 'De Scriptoribus Islandicis vetustioribus' (which is incidentally translated as 'Um íslenska höfunda til forna' in Handrit.is).[52]

Páll Vídalín's unfinished *Recensus poetarum et scriptorum Islandorum* (before 1727), primarily an alphabetical list of Icelandic 'poets' and 'writers', displays the traditional

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46 [Arngrímur Jónsson:] Brevis commentarius de Islandia, 3, p. 262.
47 [Arngrímur Jónsson:] Brevis commentarius de Islandia, 2, p. 9.
48 [Arngrímur Jónsson:] Brevis commentarius de Islandia, 1, p. 8.
49 [Arngrímur Jónsson:] Brevis commentarius de Islandia, 2, p. 35.
50 [Arngrímur Jónsson:] Brevis commentarius de Islandia, 2, p. 73.
51 Snorri Sturluson: The Uppsala Edda, pp. 6f.
52 I am grateful to Lukas Rösli for drawing my attention to this manuscript.

dichotomy in its title. This early history of Icelandic literature was partly translated by Þorsteinn Pétursson, extant in JS 30 4to, *Lærdómssaga* ('History of Learning'), and in other manuscripts from the second half of the 18th century. Þorsteinn Pétursson translates *poetæ* and *scriptores* precicely as "Skrifarar & skáld". He stresses the erudition of the writer of *Recensus*: "siälfur Author, sä lærde Widalin"[53] ('the author himself, the learned Vídalín'). Later in his sketch – and this is important to emphasise at this point – Þorsteinn, in a longer discussion of Snorri's putative authorship of the *Edda*, uses both *author* and *höfundur*: "Nochrer lærdir og Jafnvel sialfur Arne Magnusson hafa Efast umm og Jafnvel neitad þvj ad Snorre Sturluson være Author þeirrar Eddu som honum er Eignud, Enn [...] til ad hrinda allre Efasemd umm þad, hvor ad sie Hófundur þeirrar bokar [...]."[54] ('Some learned men and even Árni Magnússon himself have doubted and even denied that Snorri Sturluson was the *author* of the Edda that is attributed to him [...] but to discard any doubt about who the *höfundur* of that book is [...].') This passage is interesting because, for the first time in an Icelandic text, *author* and *höfundur* are equated with regard to a medieval writer, notwithstanding the fact that Snorri's activities are described as those of a *compilator*: "Hann (Snorre) Jók þá Eddu, sem Sæmundur prestur hinn fröde, hafde ädur samsett; heraf ma Rada ad Snorre hafe biriad ad utleggia Sæmundar, og skrifa syna Eddu i sundurlausre rædu [...]."[55] ('Snorri augmented that Edda which Sæmundr the learned priest had compiled earlier, of which one can tell that Snorri had begun to interpret / translate Sæmundur's and write his own Edda in prose diction [...].') Þorsteinn Pétursson's "Viðauki" ('Supplement') to *Recensus* is in many respects a remarkable source, not least because of the fact that he is one of the first Icelanders to develop a literary terminology in the vernacular. Influences from contemporary international discussions about philosophy and aesthetics are also visible.

The same holds true of Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík. In his equally unfinished *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu* (main parts finished by 1738, continued until 1758), he defines the subject of his treatise as follows: "Þá kalla ég scriptores, sem bækur hafa skrifað, eður snúíð þeim úr öðrum tungum, meir en kveðið, þó kveðið hafi nokkuð."[56] ('I call those scriptores, who have written books or translated them from other languages more than they have composed in verse, even if they have composed somewhat.') In a fascinating preface to the third part of his presentation, Jón gives a number of reasons why it is favourable to know the names of the authors of books: "Að vita nöfn þeirra sem bækur hafa skrifað sýnist mér betra til en frá sökum þessara orsaka [...]."[57] ('It seems to me better to know the names of those who have written books because of these reasons

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53   Páll Vídalín: Recensus, p. 159.
54   Páll Vídalín: Recensus, p. 166.
55   Páll Vídalín: Recensus, p. 166.
56   Jón Ólafsson: Safn, p. 193.
57   Jón Ólafsson: Safn, p. 17.

[...].') Among these reasons are the following: If one knows the author, it is easier to judge a book, to locate a manuscript or edition, to remember the title and subject matter of a book, and to keep alive the good reputation of a known author.

Although Jón sticks to the common terminology of *poëtæ* versus *scriptores, auctores / aut(h)ores,* and *historici,* he introduces a term for a specific new type of author. While he considers Ari to be "scriptor accuratissmus et veritatis amantissimus" ('a very accurate writer and a great lover of truth'), the author of *Skjöldunga saga* seems to him to have been "credulus og inclineraður til fabulas" ('credulous and inclined to fictions'), in short a "fabulator".[58] In speaking of *Grettis saga*, Jón calls Sturla Þórðarson "auctorem heilu sögunnar" ('the author of the complete narrative [i.e. *Grettis saga*]').[59] Furthermore, in the Icelandic literary discourse of the 18th century, aspects of the non-historical and the fictional increased in importance, and the period of the novel with its modern author was about to emerge in Iceland as well.

Compared to Þorsteinn Pétursson's and Jón Ólafsson's Icelandic texts, Hálfdan Einarsson's *Sciagraphia historiæ literariæ Islandicæ* (Copenhagen 1777) does not offer much new with regard to terminology. It is worth noting, though, that Hálfdan also uses both *scriptor* and *auctor* to refer to the man or the men behind "Eddæ Snorronis".[60]

Bourgain's observations on the verbs for scribal and authorial activities in medieval Latin are consistent with the corresponding terminology in the Old Norse-Icelandic material. Medieval prose narratives seldom, if ever, use a noun unambiguously to refer to an author. There is, on the other hand, a multitude of expressions for activities such as *segja frá* ('to tell')*, setja saman* ('to compile, to put together'), *snara, snúa* ('to translate'), etc.[61] While verbs express the creating, writing, or telling of an epic narrative, few if any examples of designations for the persons behind these activities can be found in the medieval Icelandic texts. The term *sagnamaðr* (literally 'saga-man') is commonly used for a figure in a saga who orally performs a narrative but is not the same as a creative 'author' of the saga.[62]

So, when all the lexicological evidence speaks against the existence of an author-concept in the modern sense of the word, why is it that so many scholars insist on sticking to this notion, and when was such an entity as the 'author' of Icelandic literature actually 'invented'? The following section is a short and preliminary attempt at contextualising some of the issues that have been raised.

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58   Jón Ólafsson: Safn, pp. 7f.
59   Jón Ólafsson: Safn, p. 9.
60   Hálfdan Einarsson: Sciagraphia, pp. 21 and 24.
61   See Glauser 2010; Müller 2020.
62   Steblin-Kamenskij 1966 stated that this absence of a specific term for 'author' confirmed the fact that there existed no such concept (see below).

3. Between Deification and Nullification. When and Why Was the Author of the Icelandic Sagas Invented?

Undoubtedly the hitherto most influential contributions to the discussion of authorship in the Icelandic sagas from the Middle Ages were made by a relatively small group of mostly Icelandic and some related Scandinavian scholars in the first half and the middle of the 20th century, which came to be known as the 'Icelandic school', or 'Nordal's school'.[63]

3.1. The Author as God

Gustave Flaubert, in a letter to Louise Colet (December 9, 1852) in which he discussed the relationship of an author to his text, famously wrote: "L'auteur, dans son œuvre, doit être comme Dieu dans l'univers, présent partout et visible nulle part."[64] ('The author, in his work, must be like God in the Universe, present everywhere and visible nowhere.') In the conclusion of his influential work on Snorri Sturluson from 1920, Sigurður Nordal manages to surpass Flaubert's dictum in stating that the Icelandic sagas actually meet the Frenchman's requirement even better than Flaubert himself! Nordal says: "Flaubert gefur listamanninum það borðorð, að hann eigi að vera eins og guð í verki sínu: allsstaðar nálægur, en hvergi sýnilegur. En íslenzkar sögur fullnægja þessari kröfu betur en bækur hans sjálfs, sem eru fullar af samlíkingum og brotum úr ljóðamáli [...]."[65] ('Flaubert makes the commandment to the artist, that he should be like God in his work: present everywhere, but nowhere visible. But the Icelandic sagas fulfil this demand better than his own books, which are full of comparisons and fragments of poetry [...].') In his aesthetic assessments of literary texts, Sigurður Nordal orientates himself in relation to the poetics that had evolved with the emergence of the modern, psychological, realistic novel. The stylistic device of the objective narrative which evolved during the 19th century is elevated to the appraisal of good literature as such, which Nordal sees as realised in the Icelandic sagas. This allows him to make an anachronistic rollover backwards to compare the Icelandic medieval *höfundur* (NB: not *hǫfundr*) with the modern French *romancier*. It is no surprise that the comparison turns out in Snorri's favour, who, in his artistic foresight, turns out to have anticipated, fulfilled, and even improved on

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63   See Lie 1939, p. 97; Clover 2005, p. 241. Among the many discussions of the 'Icelandic school' itself are Óskar Halldórsson 1978, one of the earliest critical evaluations by an Icelander; Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1991, which describes its origins; Byock 1992, which stresses its political background; and Clover 2005, which contextualises it within saga studies. On Lie 1939, and Steblin-Kamenskij 1966, see below.

64   Flaubert: Correspondance, p. 204.

65   Sigurður Nordal 1973, p. 220.

the exigency of the Frenchman by some 650 years. The ideal style that the medieval audience expected from "íslenzk[…] sagnaritun" ('Icelandic saga writing'), according to Sigurður Nordal, consisted of an 'unbroken and moderate narrative': "bókmenntir þróuðust meðal manna, sem heimtuðu óbrotna og hófsama frásögn" – that is, 'a style shaped by dignity, objectivity, and nobility': "í samræmi við hina einföldu göfgi stíls og listar er óhlutdrægnin og kurteisin".[66]

Sigurður Nordal thus adapted an aesthetic norm that was formed in the late 18th and the 19th centuries and – in his 1920-monograph on Snorri and many later works – used it to interpret medieval texts in a way that was to define analyses of the sagas up to the 1980s, when structuralist narratology was slowly introduced to saga scholarship. As Viðar Pálsson shows, one of the decisive factors in this context was the influence exerted on Nordal by the Basel art historian Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897) and his specific aesthetics of individualism.[67] Another methodological mistake typical for his time was that Nordal, in the case of both Snorri and Flaubert, identified the author with the narrator – that is to say, he did not distinguish between the extradiegetic and the intradiegetic levels of literary texts. This biographical fallacy did not only characterise the writings of the adherents of the 'Icelandic school', of course, but was symptomatic of literary studies at the time on the whole.

Some of the many pertinent works, besides Sigurður Nordal's *Snorri Sturluson*, to tackle the problem of authorship in the same vein are his own 'Samhengið í íslenzkum bókmenntum', an introduction to the school-book anthology *Íslenzk lestrarbók*, originally published in 1924;[68] his seminal essay on *Hrafnkels saga*;[69] Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's equally influential book on the Age of the Sturlungs;[70] Nordal's overview of the cultural history of Iceland, *Íslenzk menning*;[71] and (not to forget) the introduction to his edition of *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*,[72] a model for the 'Formálar' ('introductions', 'prefaces') of the *Íslenzk fornrit* editions. As in many other ÍF-editions, "Höfundurinn"[73] gets his own section of 25 pages in Nordal's *Egils saga*.[74] The results of the editor's careful evaluations of the evidence concerning the possible authorship of the saga are summarised by him thus:

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66   Sigurður Nordal 1973, p. 201.
67   See Viðar Pálsson 2015.
68   Sigurður Nordal 1996.
69   Sigurður Nordal 1940.
70   Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1940.
71   Sigurður Nordal 1942.
72   Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar, pp. V–CV.
73   Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar, p. LXX.
74   Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar, pp. LXX–CXV.

Þetta mál verður aldrei útkljáð til fullrar hlítar með þeim gögnum, sem vér þekkjum nú. Eg er fús til þess að skiljast við það sem álitamál. En sjálfur hef eg sannfærzt um það því meir, sem eg hef kynnzt Egils sögu betur, að hún sé verk Snorra, og mun ég framvegis ekki hika við að telja söguna með ritum hans, nema ný rök komi fram, sem mér hefur sézt yfir.[75]

This case [the author of *Egils saga*] will never be finally solved with the evidence we have now. I am ready to look at it as a matter of opinion. But I myself have been more convinced as I have become better acquainted with Egils saga that it is the work of Snorri. And I will from here on not hesitate to count the saga among his writings unless new evidence which I have overlooked comes forth.

The ÍF-editions of the Icelandic sagas and especially the 'formálar' played an important role in the game of authoring. The concepts of author and authorship were considered essential when it came to creating and staging the sagas as novel-like works of art.[76] According to Roland Barthes,[77] a 'work' always needs an 'author', and since many of the sagas are held to be great works, they need great authors. In other words, for the Icelandic sagas, medieval texts as they are, to be conceived as great, timeless works of art, this thinking pattern presupposes, they must be deprived of their specific medieval aspects, especially their manuscript transmission, unstable textuality, and fluid generic borders, but also their anonymity. The final products of this operation are then works in books, which on the bookshelf look precisely like editions of (other) novels; as Barthes puts it, "the work is concrete, occupying a portion of book-space (in a library, for example)".[78]

It is quite remarkable in this context, too, that the concept of 'höfundur' as such, important as it was for the 'Icelandic school's' basic construction of the history of Icelandic literature in the Middle Ages, is nowhere in their writings discussed in a more systematic and theoretic way. Nordal's nonchalant remark in his essay on *Hrafnkels saga* is significant here: "af ritara sögunnar, höfundinum (eins og hér að framan hefur stundum verið að orði kveðið til hægðarauka)"[79] ('by the writer of the saga, the author [as he above has sometimes been called for the sake of convenience]'). Despite the insistence on the author as the creative person behind the work of art, this piece in the chain of the production of a saga, seemingly so important, is mentioned by the term 'höfundur' only for the sake of convenience, almost as an excuse. The comment exposes an

75   Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar, p. XCIII.
76   Sigurður Nordal 1940, p. 82, on the author of *Hrafnkels saga*, German summary: "der Verfasser [...] dachte nicht daran, eine wahre Saga zu schreiben, sondern einen wirkungsvollen Roman. Das ist ihm auch gelungen. Die Komposition der Saga ist meisterhaft, der Zusammenhang der Ereignisse ebenso natürlich und folgerecht wie in einem guten Roman." ('the author [...] did not intend to write a true saga, but an effective novel. And he was successful. The composition of the saga is masterful, the correlation of the events is as natural and consistent as in a good novel.')
77   See Barthes 1971; Barthes 1980.
78   Barthes 1980, p. 74.
79   Sigurður Nordal 1940, pp. 34f.

approach that completely lacks methodological awareness and explicitness, a feature the 'Icelandic school' shared with a great deal of saga scholarship at the time.[80]

In the search for the origin of the author and the date of a specific saga, an important approach was the study of potential *rittengsl* ('literary relations'). Yet, as Jonna Louis-Jensen writes in a paper about saga-dating, "[t]he *rittengsl* approach has, however, disappointed later scholars, since the direction of borrowing is often uncertain, even in cases where the interrelations seem to be likely or even obvious."[81] This correct and convincing observation is in a way ironic. If *rittengsl* are taken to be intertextual relations that, among other things, create memory in literary texts, the concept would actually be state of the art in literary analysis, although the 'Icelandic school' of course never intended *rittengsl* to be such an open concept.

Another tangent in the search for the saga author were the many attempts at author attributions by language statistics, made especially by Peter Hallberg in a series of books and articles on "språklig författarbestämning"[82] ('linguistic author attribution') in the 1960s. A case in point was the discussion of the identity of Snorri Sturluson as the alleged 'author' of *Heimskringla* and the 'author' of *Egils saga*. In his 1962 study, Hallberg determined, "the main result of the present study: that Snorri is the author of *Egla*".[83] Yet these studies have also yielded few new insights or lasting results. The main reason for the failure of this method was that the manuscript basis of the sagas was neglected, and normalised modern editions were taken as the basis for the statistical investigations. As Jonna Louis-Jensen, in the important paper mentioned above, notes with splendid philological perspicacity:

> Despite its late date, the Möðruvallabók text in Sigurður Nordal's edition of the saga (ÍF II, 1933) was to become the textual basis of Peter Hallberg's statistical research from the 1960s, especially his studies of 'pair words.' In the first of these studies Hallberg announced his findings in a tone of unmistakable triumph: 'If such an outcome cannot be accepted as proving beyond doubt that Snorri Sturluson dictated Egla, there seems to be little hope left that a linguistic study will ever lead to conclusive results in this or similar questions of authorship.' ([Hallberg,] 1962: 186) [...] One of the difficulties with Hallberg's theory is, however, that it is chiefly based on a comparison of *Egils saga* with the saga of St Olaf, the central section of Heimskringla, and not with the whole work. [...] The perfect accordance found by Peter Hallberg between the percentages of *hitta(sk)* and *til þess er* in *Egils saga* and ÓH are not, as Hallberg claims, yet another proof that both are works of Snorri Sturluson, but rather that both are works belonging to a slightly older period than his.

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80   See e.g. also Rubow 1928; Rubow 1949, passim; Clover 2005.

81   Louis-Jensen 2013, p. 134.

82   See for example Hallberg 1962; Hallberg 1965; Hallberg 1968.

83   Hallberg 1962, p. 191. Cf. also Hallberg 1963, p. 103: "An author's name may seem insignificant and add little to our knowledge of Knýtlinga and Laxdœla. However, if the name is that of Ólafr Þórðarson, it indisputably provides a fuller and more detailed insight into the history of Icelandic saga writing."

[...] Therefore, if it is true that Snorri Sturluson is the author of Hkr I+III, the linguistic evidence suggests that neither ÓH nor *Egils saga* was written or dictated by him. Nor do there seem to be any linguistic indications of ÓH and *Egils saga* sharing the same author. [...] based on the idea that Snorri Sturluson authored *Egils saga*, the absence of the same archaisms from the archetype(s) of Hkr I+III – or at least from the parts of Hkr I+III that have not demonstrably been copied from older works – speaks very strongly against that idea.[84]

3.2. Snorri a Teddy Bear, the Author a Nullity?

In a 1939 article in the Norwegian journal *Mål og minne* – in the form of a review of the newly published edition of *Grettis saga* in *Íslenzk fornrit* (1936)*,* but in essence a lengthy, fundamental contribution to understanding the complex of authorship in Icelandic medieval literature – Hallvard Lie raised for the first time a number of essential method-ological issues in the approach of the 'Icelandic school'.[85] Lie addressed many pertinent aspects of the approach and the results, among them the central point of authorship:

Man har vent sig til å tale om 'den islandske skole', eller kort og godt 'Nordals skole' [...] et eksister-ende grunnsynfellesskap innen den krets av videnskapsmenn som preger sagaforskningen på Island i dag [...] en noe usedvanlig sterk lyst til å opspore 'forfattere' til de forskjellige sagaverker.[86]

One has become used to talking about 'the Icelandic school', or, in a nutshell, 'Nordal's school' [...] a foundational assumption in the circle of scholars which characterise saga studies in Iceland today [...] [is] a somewhat unusually strong desire to track down 'authors' of various saga works.

At the start, Lie parodies the quest for the authors of anonymous sagas as a hunt for big and small game, which he calls a "forfatterjakt" ('hunt for the author').[87] He con-tinues:

Det er alene e n e l l e r s k j e n t f o r f a t t e r p e r s o n l i g h e t [emphasis in the original] som har evne til i noen nevneverdig grad å gi oss en verdifull øket innsikt i det før anonyme verk som blir knyttet til hans navn. Kommer man efter de grundigste og mest tidsødende granskninger til det resultat at en saga er forfattet av en mann hvis litterære meriter ellers er totalt ukjente og om hvis person forøvrig man f. eks. ikke vet synderlig ut over det at han var prest og hadde interesse for kirkebygninger og alt til gårdsbruk henhørende (eksemplet er ikke 'søkt'), da er dette selvsagt et resultat som nok kan fortjene å bli bokført; men finnes der noen mening i å kjøre op med hele

84   Louis-Jensen 2013, pp. 139f., 142, 145; see also Louis-Jensen 2006; Jakob Benediktsson 1955; Seelow 1998.
85   See also Clover 2005, p. 241.
86   Lie 1939, p. 97.
87   But see also his self-critical clarification at the end of the article: Lie 1939, p. 137.

det videnskapelige apparat som blev satt i gang for å nå dette resultat og derved beslaglegge side ved side som kunde ha vært brukt til andre drøftelser? Jeg for min del finner det meningsløst.[88]

It is only an otherwise known author-personality that has the ability to give us, to a degree worth mentioning, a valuable, increased insight into the previously anonymous work linked to his name. If after the most solid and time consuming studies one arrives at the result that a saga is written by a man whose literary merits are otherwise completely unknown and about whose person nothing special is otherwise known, besides that he was a priest and had an interest in church buildings and everything about farming (the example is not made up), then this is of course a result that deserves to be noticed; but is there any meaning in summoning up the whole scholarly apparatus that was put into motion to reach this result and thereby take up page after page which could have been used for other activities? I, for my part, think it is pointless.

"Er der virkelig utsikt til at man kan støte på en veritabel bamsefar (en Snorre Sturlason f. eks.)" ('is there a real chance that one will come across a genuine teddy bear, a Snorri Sturluson, for example'), Lie goes on.[89] He closes his review article with a witty polemical reflection on the value of the search for authorship in the sagas for literary studies, which in its elaborateness deserves to be quoted in full, since it incisively identifies some of the key problems (discussed in this chapter):

Sett at én kunde føre sannsynlighetsbevis for at Njála var forfattet av – la oss kalle ham Jón Jónsson, prest etsteds i Rangárvallasýsla i beg. av. 14. årh. Denne Jón Jónsson som således blev gjenkjent som forfatter til et av verdenslitteraturens store verker, måtte i all rimelighets navn kalles en s t o r forfatterpersonlighet. Men visste vi ellers om denne i sig selv store forfatter intet ut over en del spredte personalhistoriske data, samt kanskje at han f. eks. hadde interesser for hestekamper og hadde vært øienvidne til en mordbrand, og kunde vi således på grunn av denne kildenes karrighet m. h. t. oplysninger om hans åndelige personlighet praktisk talt intetsomhelst nytt resultat nå til ved hans hjelp vedr. Njála, – ja, da måtte vi sa at han – tross all sin 'storhet' som nakent litteraturhistorisk faktum – s o m l i t t e r a t u r v i d e n s k a p e l i g h j e l p e f a k t o r e r e n n u l l i t e t [emphasis in the original].[90]

Suppose that one could put forward a proof of probability that Njáls saga was written by – let us call him Jón Jónsson, a priest somewhere in Rangárvallasýsla in the early 14th century. This Jón Jónsson, who was thus recognised as author of one of the great works of the world's literature, should in all reasonableness be called a great author personality. But if we knew nothing else about this per se great author other than some scattered data of his personal history, as well as maybe that he, for example, was interested in horse fights and had been an eyewitness to an arson, and if we thus, due to the scantiness of the sources with regards to information about his

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88 Lie 1939, p. 107.
89 Lie 1939, p. 108.
90 Lie 1939, p. 138. Bruckner (2000, p. 15) addresses as similar problem in romance studies when she says about "named romancers", e.g. medieval French or German literature, that "we cannot do much more than attach them to the works in which they appear".

spiritual personality, so to speak, could not reach any new result about Njáls saga with his help – well, then we must say – despite his 'magnitude' as a bare fact of literary history – that, as an auxiliary factor for literary studies, he is a nullity.

It has to be stressed here that Lie himself, despite his determined polemic against the fruitless desire to track down the anonymous writers of the sagas, is very eager to apply the notion of an 'author' / 'forfatter'. There is no deconstruction whatsoever of the traditional concept of authorship as such in Lie's article.[91]

A general discussion of the paradigm of medieval authorship as something more or less identical with modern author-concepts did not appear in saga studies in the Western world until the writings of the Russian scholar M. I. Steblin-Kamenskij were first made accessible in a Western language in an article in 1966. This short contribution was followed up by English and Norwegian translations of his book *Mir sagi* ('Saga mind') in 1973 and 1975 respectively. In this work, Steblin-Kamenskij presented some ground-breaking reinterpretations and new approaches that focused on the fundamental differences between the cognitive framework of the (Icelandic) Middle Ages, as expressed in saga literature, and the post-medieval period, as written down in modern works of literature.[92] In Steblin-Kamenskij's seminal 1966 article, a substantial part is devoted to the "annoying anonymity" of the sagas, as he puts it ironically at the start of his essay.[93] Steblin-Kamenskij was one of the few scholars who stressed the historicity of the concepts of author and authorship in 'pre-performative' saga-studies, as well as one of the few scholars who stressed the importance of manuscript transmission, creative rewriting, and variance. Although it would certainly be an exaggeration to call him a New Philologist *avant la lettre*, Steblin-Kamenskij was the first to conceptualise authorship and variance together before the 'neo-philological, material turn'.[94] A central passage in this article addresses the problem under discussion here as follows:

> Since the notion 'author' did not exist at all, authorship must have been something quite different from what it has become in modern times. Indeed, authorship is obviously not only the fact of having produced a literary work, but also a certain attitude of the producer towards his

91 It should be mentioned here that the first systematic criticism of the theories and approaches of the 'Icelandic school', and in particular Sigurður Nordal's *Hrafnkatla*, by an Icelandic scholar were Óskar Halldórsson's (1976; 1978) works on *Hrafnkels saga*. In these, Óskar Halldórsson revitalised the discussion about the role of oral origins of the sagas and their closeness to folklore material.

92 The relevant writings are Steblin-Kamenskij 1966; Steblin-Kamenskij 1973; Steblin-Kamenskij 1975a; Steblin-Kamenskij 1975b; Hallberg 1974a; Hallberg 1974b: a very sharp reaction from the point of view of the 'Icelandic school'; also critical of the theories of Steblin-Kamenskij: Harris 2008.

93 Steblin-Kamenskij 1966, p. 24.

94 On the New Philology and Material Philology in Old Norse-Icelandic textual culture, see Driscoll 2010, an excellent introduction; see also Lethbridge / Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir 2018.

production. If the notion 'author' did not exist, an author could not be aware of being an 'author', or attach any importance to being one, or think that being one was better than being a copyist, or try to be an 'author' consistently, or try to be one at all, for that matter, distinguish between composing and copying. [...] those who are considered to have 'copied' a manuscript, in actual fact changed the style, added or abridged [...]. In fact when [the] pronoun *ek* appears in an Old Icelandic prosaic work we do not necessarily know who this *ek* is: someone we would call an 'author' or someone we would call a 'copyist' [...]. The anonymity of the Sagas of Icelanders is, of course, also a manifestation of this attitude of the authors.[95]

A crucial, but also vulnerable, point in Steblin-Kamenskij's reflections on semantics is of course the assumption that the absence of a term for 'author' automatically means that there was no such concept. Steblin-Kamenskij did not confine this reflection to authorship. Later in the same article, and even more elaborately in *The Saga Mind*, the scope of his observations included such equally important issues as historicity, factuality, truth, and eventually syncretism as a specific attitude towards history and narrative: "[...] although the notions of 'historical truth' and 'fiction' can be easily expressed in any modern European language [...], they could find no expression whatever in Old Icelandic and consequently did not exist at all."[96] Assertions like this one have been criticised with reference to language theory.[97] It was Steblin-Kamenskij's concept of a 'syncretic truth' that especially aroused the opposition of traditional scholars such as Peter Hallberg.

Interestingly, around the same time that Steblin-Kamenskij published his first article in 1966, some of the main principles of the 'Icelandic school', such as the ideas that there was a negligible influence on saga literature from foreign sources, that sagas were exclusively written sources, that 'authorship' was of central importance, and so on, were challenged by scholars like Lars Lönnroth and a group of Danish medievalists who stressed the international networks of the Icelandic church and the European and Latin parallels and models of many sagas and genres.[98] The challenge consisted in the questioning of the fundamental uniqueness of medieval Icelandic literature; it was also a substantial attack on one of the principal aims of the 'Icelandic school', which was to demonstrate that the great works of the 'Golden Age' of the 13th century were created by ingenious writers who could be considered as equivalent to authors of modern literature. Lönnroth's and others' studies had quite a few parallels with Steblin-Kamenskij's thinking. With a few exceptions, however, Steblin-Kamenskij's theories have been rather undervalued in saga scholarship for many years. Only recently has Anatoly Liberman taken up the thread in a new essay on the problem of saga origin

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95   Steblin-Kamenskij 1966, pp. 27f.
96   Steblin-Kamenskij 1966, p. 29.
97   See e.g. Clover 2005, pp. 259–262, on the controversy; see also Harris 2008, p. 227–229, for a substantial critical evaluation.
98   See Lönnroth 1965; Bekker-Nielsen et al. 1965.

in relation to the concept of saga mind.[99] Even if Liberman's focus is not largely on the problem of authorship as such, it is the most profound and insightful recent contribution to the tradition in which Steblin-Kamenskij was working.

In summing up the results of the first three sections tentatively, a short answer to the questions of when and why the notion of 'author' came into existence in saga literature and saga scholarship would be as follows: If we look at the medieval and early modern material, we seem to have an abstract concept without a term. While Old Norse-Icelandic, just like other medieval vernaculars, had a variety of expressions for activities of dictating, writing, bookmaking, and so on, and there were some narrators who referred to an 'I' or a 'you', there was no explicit noun that would designate author or authorship. These terms are thus inventions of modern times, phenomena of saga scholarship from the late 19th and the early 20th century. In the writings of Scandinavianists who were influenced by aesthetical perceptions of their time, the notion evolved that sagas could and should be read and interpreted as modern novels. Novels, however, were in the conceptions of these scholars *per definitionem* authored works. As a consequence of this, it was considered unthinkable that the often-anonymous Icelandic sagas, which were novels according to their understanding of them, would not have authors as well. The construction of authorship as a phenomenon of modern literature was thus transferred and applied to the sagas, and 20th-century scholarship spent a great deal of energy and time attempting to ascribe the sagas to certain (known or unknown) authors. During the late 1960s and particularly the 1970s and 1980s, when new theoretical models and conceptions slowly evolved even in saga studies, a notoriously under-theorised field, the search for saga authors lost its urgency.

4. The Authors' Readers: From Saga as Work to Saga as Text

One of the most provocative challenges of poststructuralist literary theory in a historical context was put into words in two articles by Michel Foucault (1926–1984) and Roland Barthes (1915–1980) in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It claimed that in contrast to previous literary scholarship, which operated with a biographical textual model of 'author – text (– reader)', a more adequate and plausible concept of literary (and other) texts would put the focus of attention on the dynamics of 'reader' and 'text':

> Certainly it would be worth examining how the author became individualized in a culture like ours, [...] at what moment studies of authenticity and attribution began, [...] at what point we began to recount the lives of authors rather than of heroes, and how this fundamental category of 'the-man-and-his-work criticism' began.[100]

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99   Liberman 2018; see also Lönnroth 2020 for a review.
100 Foucault 1980, p. 141.

While previously all authority over the production of meaning was conceived to lie with the author, this concept lost its importance and interest for the scholars who instead turned their attention to the text as something constructed by the audience.[101]

In his seminal essay 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?' ('What Is an Author?') from 1969, Foucault introduced the concept of 'fonction-auteur' ('author-function'). This category of 'author-function' was an attempt at placing the 'author' within the network of discourses that define it,[102] or as Marc Escola concisely summarised:

> Pour plus de clarté, donnons à la thèse de Foucault sa formulation la plus radicale: 'l'auteur' n'est rien d'autre qu'une fonction attachée à un certain type de textes, et définie par des usages, des pratiques institutionelles historicisables.[103]

> For the sake of clarity, let us give Foucault's theory its most radical expression: 'the author' is nothing but a function attached to a certain type of texts and defined by its use, institutional practices which can be historicised.

The discursivation of the author concept is thus a central operation, especially if it is linked to its historicisation.[104] It is easy to see that saga studies would benefit a great deal from applications of this concept; discourse analysis might be one of the options for saga analyses that focus on the authorship problem.

Another excellent contribution to the problem of author-concept was written by Barthes in 1971. Under the title 'De l'œuvre au texte' ('From Work to Text'), it signals a programmatic movement in literary studies from structuralism to post-structuralism.[105] In it, Barthes proposed a distinction between an entity he called 'l'œuvre' ('the work') and an entity he called 'le texte' ('the text'), indicating that there is a fundamental difference between these two. While a work is part of a hierarchical structure of genres and has an author who as an empirical figure owns and symbolically fathers it, a text is an open field of discourses that does not need the traditional elements of literary history and literary studies, such as genres or authors and their 'real lives'. What makes Barthes' reflections particularly appealing to saga studies is that they among other things enable approaches to literary texts that take into account and emphasise their openness. Texts, e.g. sagas, are in this definition no longer confined as generically closed entities (works), but can be understood as open, intertextual fields in connection with other similar

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101 See also Kittang 2012.
102 See Foucault 1980, esp. pp. 148–151; for the French original, see Foucault 1994. On the complicated origins and publication history of Foucault's 1966 essay 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?', see Ribard 2019.
103 Escola 2007.
104 On the possibilities of historicisations of the author-function, see Jacques-Lefèvre 2001; Bernadet 2001; Zimmermann 2001.
105 See Barthes 1971; Barthes 1980.

texts. Of particular interest in the present context is that this model of literary texts does not require such a text to have an author. Needless to say, anonymous sagas such as the *Íslendingasögur* correspond perfectly with this notion of text.

A third and final pertinent approach should be shortly mentioned here, the notion of rhizomatics, as proposed by Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) and Félix Guattari (1930–1992).[106] Deleuze and Guattari developed 'la pensée rhizomorphe' ('rhizomorphic thinking') as part of a larger research project called 'Capitalisme et schizophrénie' during the years 1972–1980. In the rhizome they saw a strong analytic metaphor which enabled them to analyse texts, as well as social phenomena, not as parts of genealogical trees, as had been the tradition for many centuries, but rather as invisible, hidden connections. Similarly to Barthes' redefinition of texts, the rhizomatic structure makes it possible to read texts differently and not only with regards to an author; for example, the rhizome opens up the possibility of reading sagas in terms of authorless intertextual relations and specific medieval medial transmission. While trees as a rule have one root, rhizomes are multifarious by nature; in a sense, their way of growing underground resembles the manuscript transmission of Icelandic saga literature a great deal. Instead of perpetuating thinking in terms of generic hierarchies and traditional forms of authorship, it would also undoubtedly be worthwhile to try to analyse the sagas with a perspective of applying the concept of their rhizomatic connections. An approach characterised by this metaphor and its implications would make it possible for saga scholars to highlight the specific aspects of their intertextual relationships and transmission, as well as to approach questions of origins, anonymity, and authorship from new angles and with innovative ideas.[107] As has been stressed several times in this paper, the study of Icelandic saga literature could certainly make progress by turning to some of the theories and methodological approaches outlined here. Saga scholarship could start simply by applying some of these new approaches to the many fascinating aspects of medieval texts.

A final example may illustrate this. The French writer Marie de France (c. 1135 – c. 1200) is typically taken to be the 'author' of a number of so-called *lais*. A collection of such *lais* was translated into Old Norwegian in the 13th century; since the 19th century, these narratives have been called *Strengleikar*. In the preface to them, the narrator says that traditional narratives which were told obscurely by the ancients – *i fyrnskonne, hinir fyrro, með myrkom orðom ok diupom skilnengom* – shall be provided with more and new meaning in lucid discourses – *lysa með liosom umræðom* – by readers or listeners in the future. In a way, this passage might be read as an early plea for giving the recipient of a

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106 See Deleuze / Guattari 2014.
107 On the concept of rhizome with regard to saga-literature intertextuality, see Viðar Hreinsson 2018, esp. pp. 79–82.

text a more prominent role than the person(s) who originally created, wrote, or made it. The passage reads in Old Norwegian:

> Ollvm þæim er guð hævir let vizsku ok kunnasto ok snilld at birta þa samer æigi at fela ne lœyna lan guðs i ser. hælldr fellr þæim at syna oðrom með goðvilia þat sem guði likaðe þæim at lia. […] Þa var siðr hygginna ok hœverskra manna i fyrnskonne at þæir mællto frœðe sin sua sem segi með myrkom orðom. ok diupom skilnengom. saker þæirra sem ukomner varo. at þæir skylldo lysa með liosom umrœðom þat sem hinir fyrro hofðo mællt. ok rannzaka af sinu viti þat sem til skyringar horfðe ok rettrar skilnengar. af þæim kænnengom er philosophi forner spekingar hofðu gort. Siðan sem alldren læið framm ok æve mannanna þa vox list ok athygli ok smasmygli mannkynsens. með margskonar hætte. sva at i ollom londum gærðuz hinir margfroðasto menn mælande sinna landa tungum.[108]

> It is not fitting that all those to whom God has given wisdom and knowledge and the eloquence to make these [*lais*] known should hide and conceal God's gift within themselves; rather, it is proper that they reveal to others with good will that which it pleased God to grant them. […] It was the custom of wise and well-mannered men in olden days that they should set forth their learning, so to speak, in dark words and deep meanings for the sake of those who had not yet come, that these should explicate in lucid discourse that which their forbears had said and probed with their intelligence whatever pertained to the elucidation and correct understanding of the teachings which philosophers, sages of long ago, had made. As time and the lives of men wore on, man's art and attentiveness and acumen increased in many kinds of ways, so that the most learned men in every country began expressing themselves in the language of their country.[109]

This highly complex passage is an adaptation of the famous corresponding text in Marie's prologue to the *lais*:

> Ki Deus ad aduné escïence
> E de parler bone eloquence
> Ne s'en deit taisir ne celer,
> Ainz se deit voluntiers mustrer,
> […]
> Custume fu as ancïens,
> Ceo testomoine Precïens,
> Es livres ke jadis feseient,
> Assez oscurement diseient
> Pur ceus ki a venir esteïent
> E ki aprendre les deveient,
> K'i peüssent gloser la lettre
> E de lur sen le surplus mettre.
> Li philesophe le saveient,
> Par eus meïsmes entendeient,

108 Strengleikar, p. 6.
109 Strengleikar, p. 7.

Cum plus trespassereit li tens,
Plus serreient sutil de sens
E plus se savreient garder
De ceo k'i ert a trespasser.[110]

Anyone who has received from God the gift of knowledge and true eloquence has a duty not to remain silent: rather should one be happy to reveal such talents. [...] It was customary for the ancients, in the books which they wrote (Priscian testifies to this), to express themselves very obscurely so that those in later generations, who had to learn them, could provide a gloss for the text and put the finishing touches to their meaning. Men of learning were aware of this and their experience had taught them that the more time they spent studying texts the more subtle would be their understanding of them and they would be better able to avoid future mistakes.[111]

Marie's Old French text, as well as the Old Norwegian translation, take up positions here that almost anticipate some essential elements of today's literary theory. The passage stresses the importance of the diffusion, reception, and transmission of texts, their creative rewriting, their openness, and multiplicity. There is also an early insight into the nature of unstable texts, as well as the fact that variability does not necessarily make the sagas mere products of decline – quite the contrary, transmission and change could improve narratives. The person who wrote the preface to *Strengleikar* would certainly not have subscribed to Sigurður Nordal's dictum: "Um Íslendingasögur gildir ekki nema ein regla: í upphafi var fullkomnunin, síðan fer öllu hnignandi."[112] ('There is only one rule with regard to the Icelandic sagas: In the beginning was perfection, thereafter everything declined.')

There can be no doubt that the most relevant methodological challenges of recent literary studies and cultural analysis – to mention but a few: new philology, material philology, new historicism, discourse theory, historical narratology, aesthetics of reception, intertextuality, memory studies, media studies – have already exerted healthy influence on saga studies.[113] The open, unstable, non-hierarchical texts of the Icelandic Middle Ages and early modern period seem to have been made precisely to be studied by these approaches. Likewise, studies of author- and authorship-concepts can only benefit from such methodological openings.

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110 Marie de France: Die Lais, pp. 68, 70, vv. 1–22.
111 Marie de France: The Lais, p. 41.
112 Sigurður Nordal 1940, p. 72.
113 One such result is the recent anthology curated by Slavica Ranković on modes of medieval authorship, a major contribution to the problem complex under discussion here with many promising papers. Especially useful are the differentiations, indicated already by the title's use of the plural, between various 'Modes of Authorship' (Ranković et al. 2012).

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Lukas Rösli

The Primal Scribe

The Old Norse *scriptogenesis* and Ari Þorgilsson inn fróði as Iceland's First Author

Abstract

This chapter explores the question of how authorship was discursively and intertextually produced in Old Norse-Icelandic literary history. This procedure is exemplified by the author-figure Ari Þorgilsson, who is highly canonised in literary history and to whom, as will be shown, is attributed not only the first Old Norse-Icelandic prose text, but also a role in the development of the Old Norse-Icelandic writing system. The fact that not a single artefact in the sense of an autograph manuscript from Ari's hand has survived raises the question of how this author-figure could become a literary focal point in cultural memory, uniting the most diverse 'initial settings' (*Anfangssetzungen*) in the sense of retroactively set starting points and of cultural foundational narratives. This chapter argues that Ari's existence as the primal scribe of Old Norse-Icelandic literature was on the one hand consolidated by a dense intra- and intertextual network of naming textual attributions, and that it on the other hand found its way into cultural memory and literary history through a long-lasting transmission and (re-)construction of these textual attributions over the centuries.

Keywords

Author-figure, *scriptogenesis*, Old Norse-Icelandic Literary History, Ari Þorgilsson inn fróði, *Íslendingabók*, *Grammatical Treatises*, *Landnámabók*, Cultural Memory

1. Introduction

In our everyday lives as readers, especially as academic readers, the question of who the source of a text is, and thus its author, is of central importance. When we quote from secondary source texts of scholarly research, we owe it to our scholarly integrity to state who developed the ideas we adopt and where they can be read in their original context. Although we always refer to a single manifestation of a monograph or to an essay bearing the name of one or more authors, we implicitly include both our own text and the idea referred to in a discourse on the history of ideas, which in its historical depth forms an almost inextricable intertextual network. Names of authors become representatives of the nodes of this network and recede as actual people, being represented predominantly by the views they have expressed in their texts. Each node in the network becomes an *auctoritas* in the classical sense, with the network producing an establishing validity, of discursive canonism. The situation is quite different in the case

of primary literature, where the author, as the creator of the fictional worlds he has put down on paper, becomes an independent genius. The name of the author becomes the fetish of the reader, who, with the texts overlaid by the author's name, also relates to the author as a human being. Of course, somewhere within us is the knowledge that an author is not completely responsible for their own text. Publishers, typesetters, graphic designers, lecturers, and, last but not least, intertextualities are jointly responsible for the text that is presented to us, but we are willing to overlook their involvement. Nevertheless, in this modern literary sense we regard the author as the creator of a text which, in the form in which it is presented to us, could have been conceived and then written only by the hand of said author. In an almost Lejeunian sense,[1] we assume that a literary text is based on the premise that there is a congruent unity between the named author as the intellectual source of the text, their genuine idea of the text, and the hand of the writer who put the text down on paper.[2] In our age of print and even online media, we accept such a direct connection between the author, as the origin of a narrative, and the medial consolidation of this narrative in the form of a text, even if we do not have an autograph from the author's hand. This may be due to the fact that, since the printing of books and the resulting mass media distribution of texts, we also accept a legally binding agreement between the author's name and the text creator. This legally binding agreement is today also supported in a book by the publisher and the *impressum* or printer's imprint, including the copyright for which the publisher is co-responsible.

Yet how do we approach texts whose transmission means that they are only available in copies, as is frequently the case for texts from the European, and especially from the Old Norse-Icelandic, Middle Ages? What is the relationship here between an author and a text that only becomes accessible to later or even modern readers as an artefact several decades, or even hundreds of years, after the supposed act of writing by the author's hand? These questions become even more relevant when asked in reference to Old Norse literary production, since the vernacular writing of fictional and quasi-historical literature in Scandinavia only began after Christianisation. There are, of course, artefacts in Scandinavia from the time before Christianisation, dated around the year 1000 in Iceland, that are inscribed with runes; however, these mostly short, formalised commemorative texts are usually not thought of as traditional narrative literature, unlike those texts that we now refer to as Old Norse literature. The Latin alphabet, which came to Iceland through Christian scholarly culture, was, however, adapted for Old Norse literary production for the writing of vernacular narratives, as was the case with other vernacular languages in the Middle Ages. Among others, Notker

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1   Lejeune 1989.
2   On the subject of the connection between an author's name and the establishing of the auctorial authority of (printed) texts since modern times, see also the chapter on "The Name of the Author" in Genette 1997, pp. 37–54.

Labeo, known as Notker the German, helped to create the first orthography of Old High German, and the English monk Orm, probably of Scandinavian descent, developed an independent spelling system of Middle English.[3] In these cases, however, an existing literary tradition has simply been more firmly codified. The history of Old Norse-Icelandic literature, by contrast, is often said by scholars to have involved not only the vernacularisation of the Latin script, but also the contributions of a primal scribe considered to be the first author of historical prose writing in Old Norse and the founder of Old Norse-Icelandic writing: Ari Þorgilsson inn fróði (Ari Þorgilsson the Wise). Ari Þorgilsson (ca. 1067/1068–1148) is said to have been trained at the school of the South Icelandic vicarage of Haukadalur and to have later worked as a priest at Staðastaður on the Snæfellsnes peninsula; two of the most important texts of early Icelandic historiography, *Íslendingabók* (Book of Icelanders) and *Landnámabók* (Book of Settlements), are completely and partly attributed to him respectively.[4] The assumption, discernible in the Middle Ages, that Ari was the (co-)developer of the Old Norse-Icelandic script, and the fact that the texts referred to as the first (historical) prose texts are attributed to him, combine to frame him as a catalyst-like author-figure, with enormous potential for national cultural memory. The aim of this essay is therefore not to evaluate Ari Þorgilsson's authorship in terms of historical truth, but rather to show how Ari Þorgilsson became a figure of cultural memory, linking the first instance of Old Norse-Icelandic authorship and what I will refer to in the following as *scriptogenesis*.

2. Old Norse-Icelandic Cultural Founding Narratives

The two narratives mentioned above, which today operate under the conventionalised titles *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*, are both founding narratives of Icelandic society. *Íslendingabók* is a rather short treatise on Iceland's early history, ranging from the settlement (approx. 874 CE) to the introduction of the first two Icelandic bishops (approx. 1118 CE), and gives great importance to both the legal-political and religious institutionalisation of the still young society.[5] Its oldest textual manifestation that we know of today is the manuscript AM 113 a fol. written by Jón Erlendsson in 1651,[6] but

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3   Haugen 1950, pp. 5 and 56.
4   For a brief outline of Ari's life and an overview of the traditional scholarly discussion on his authorship, see Grønlie 2006, pp. X–XIV. Sverrir Jakobsson 2017 even argues that some other historical texts could be attributed to Ari's authorship, but there is no material basis to argue stringently for this.
5   As one of the highly canonised texts of Old Norse literature, there are countless editions of *Íslendingabók*. An English translation can be found in Grønlie 2006.
6   On the life and work of Jón Erlendsson, who among other things produced the two oldest surviving manuscripts of *Íslendingabók* (AM 113 a fol. and AM 113 b fol.) and one manuscript each of two different redactions of *Landnámabók*, see Helgi Ívarsson 2007.

Íslendingabók is considered by scholars to be the first historical prose narrative in a Scandinavian language and is thought to have been written by Ari Þorgilsson between 1122 and 1133.[7] As a result, this narrative is not only thought of as a medieval, historical testimony, but at the same time is declared to be a literary-historical starting point.[8] Due to the scholarly consensus that the text known today from the 17th century is based on an authentic witness of the first Icelandic narrative written by Ari Þorgilsson in the early 12th century, and that this text is said to be the oldest known written narrative in a Scandinavian language, the author-figure Ari Þorgilsson is stylised by modern scholars as what I will call the primal scribe of the Old Norse-Icelandic literary history. Already in this context, Ari Þorgilsson can be seen as an author-figure in which two narratives of origin overlap and thus become more powerful, namely the first instance of authorship and the founding narrative of a society. Since these two narratives of origin coincide in *Íslendingabók*, the author-figure's functional power, in the sense of forming the cultural memory underpinning the self-image of Iceland as a literary nation, is increased: it was an Icelander who was the first author to write the quasi-historical original text on the origins of Icelandic society. The idea that these two narratives should be understood as cultural memories, which were created only at a later stage in order to explain the past, will be discussed in more detail below.

A similar principle of Ari Þorgilsson being staged as a primal scribe can be seen in the case of *Landnámabók*.[9] This text, which does not exist in any medieval version under the autograph of the author-figure Ari Þorgilsson, is also a fundamental narrative of the origins of Icelandic society. As the title in common use today suggests, it is a narrative that deals with the time of the Icelandic settlement (approx. 874 CE to 930 CE). In contrast to *Íslendingabók*, the narrative of *Landnámabók* is not structured as a sequence of quasi-historical events that serve to establish cultural memory of the founding of institutions in Iceland, but rather follows a genealogical and geographical structure to consolidate ownership. *Landnámabók* lists about 400 of the first settlers who settled in Iceland during the time of the settlement and adds their descendants to this list. The narrative tells anecdotally of the most important events relating to these settlers and their descendants up to the early 12th century, and is told within a geographically struc-

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7   "Its [Ari Þorgilsson's *Íslendingabók*'s, L. R.] great age gives it inestimable value as a source of history, and it is no less precious as a literary monument, for it is the oldest example of narrative prose in a Scandinavian language." (Turville-Petre 1967, p. 90). "[Ari Þorgilsson's, L. R.] *Íslendingabók* ('Buch von den Isländern') ist der älteste bekannte erzählende Prosatext in einer skand[inavischen] Sprache [...]." (Simek / Hermann Pálsson 2007, p. 208).

8   For a new-philological discussion of these problems posed by the previous scholarly opinion, see Rösli 2021.

9   *Landnámabók* is also a highly canonised text of Old Norse literature, so there are several editions available. An English translation of *Landnámabók* can be found in: The book of settlements: Landnámabók.

tured framework that encompasses Iceland from west to south. Whilst the genealogical approach in *Íslendingabók*, which mainly refers to the first two Icelandic bishops and to the author-figure Ari Þorgilsson himself, takes a back seat to the founding narrative of the institutions of Icelandic society, *Landnámabók* aims to consolidate the memory of ancestry, annexation, regional ownership, and power relations in Iceland by formally and functionally linking its founding narrative to the genealogies and territories of the first settlers. Both narratives can, however, be regarded as prototypical founding narratives for the construction and subsequent establishment of cultural memory.

Such cultural founding narratives are, in a sense, always mythologically underpinned stories that aim to construct a memory of the past that is suitable for the present.[10] They give a beginning to the collectively imagined and a form to a society's early days, thus creating a retrospectively conceived foundation that separates the own from the foreign and that gives a framework for the cultural-historical narrative of the future.[11] Such narratives were, of course, already known in purely oral societies,[12] but they were affected by writing in two ways: on the one hand, the process of writing down these narratives codified them and later led to their being canonised; on the other, their newfound relationship with other written texts exposed them to both intertextual usage and discursive criticism.[13] Memory thus solidified in texts overlaps with the memory passed on orally beforehand, and is transformed into a literary form through the writing of the text.[14]

With regard to the above-mentioned narratives about the early days of Icelandic society, we are thus always dealing with retrospective 'initial settings' (*Anfangssetzungen*) that are set as the starting point for the often-mythical founding narratives. That writing in the sense of a solidified, text-based record in Old Norse-Icelandic becomes accessible only several generations after the narrated events makes it clear that even in the earliest textual sources assumed by scholars, no history is conveyed that is based on actual everyday memories of communicative memory.[15] Rather, the content of these texts is a past (re-)constructed by cultural memory.[16]

The narrated events of such a past, which are to be inscribed into the Icelandic cultural memory by the diegeses of these founding narratives, are not only transferred into a literary form by means of writing but are also fictionalised. To emphasise the fictional

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10 For a discussion of funding narratives in Old Norse saga literature, see Hermann 2010, pp. 69–87. For a comparison of *Íslendingabók* with other mythological founding narratives in Old Norse literature, see Lindow 1997, pp. 454–464.

11 For the inherent logic of such 'initial settings' (*Anfangssetzungen*) and founding narratives, see Koschorke 2007, pp. 5–12.

12 Assmann 1995, pp. 126f.

13 Corti 1999, p. 17.

14 Assmann / Assmann 1993, p. 272.

15 Assmann 1995, p. 127.

16 Assmann 1995, pp. 130f.

character of the memories that are to be created by such literary founding narratives, Birgit Neumann also calls them "fictions of memories",

> because, more often than not, they turn out to be an imaginative (re)construction of the past in response to current needs. Such conceptual and ideological fictions of memory consist of predispositions, biases, and values, which provide agreed-upon codes for understanding the past and present and which find their most succinct expression in literary plot-lines and myths.[17]

The following will show that the above-mentioned Old Norse-Icelandic founding narratives not only serve to create a cultural memory of a past, but they also inaugurate an author-figure and primal scribe who intends to enhance this initial setting with regard to Iceland's status as a literary nation.

3. The Old Norse *scriptogenesis*

The notion of text and actual or retrospectively attributed authorship is today closely linked to the development of a sign-system that we call writing. Writing is intended to preserve and pass on knowledge – in the sense of information that previously could be conveyed only orally or in some other uncodified form, and which was therefore often rather ephemeral. As for other cultural phenomena, as has been shown above using the example of the early history of Icelandic society, founding narratives also exist for writing. In order to separate narratives of the origins of writing from other cultural or even national founding narratives, I will refer to them in the following as *scriptogenesis*. Every *scriptogenesis* shares with other text-based founding narratives the fact that it is an initial narrative that sets a narrative starting point retrospectively and aims to inscribe itself into cultural memory in a discourse-forming way. In contrast to other text-bound founding narratives, however, *scriptogenesis* is directly linked to its own mediality and thus, in its own form, always refers to itself, the written word. *Scriptogenesis* thus turns out to be *metafiction*[18]: It describes its own medial development through the medium that emerges during this development, thereby emphasising its own fabrication in the sense of textuality or even fictionality. In this sense, *scriptogenesis* thus offers up less a disturbance of the illusion underlying the authenticity of the diegesis created by its literary narrative, and more a space for poetological and especially medial reflection.

One of the best-known quasi-*scriptogeneses* is probably that of *Phaedrus*, ascribed to Plato, in which Socrates and Phaedrus discuss the possibilities and advantages of

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17 Neumann 2008, p. 334.
18 For a brief explanation of the concept of metafictionality, which goes far beyond the older and narrower concept of fictional irony and can certainly be found not only in postmodern texts, but also in medieval texts, see Wolf 2004, pp. 172–174.

writing and orality in relation to their memory capacity.[19] Socrates recounts the myth of the Egyptian god Theuth, who, having already invented number and calculation, metrology and astronomy, board and dice games, finally also invents the letters and tries to praise them to the Egyptian king Thamus; the latter, however, is critical of script, as he assumes that the possibility of holding on to knowledge will make people forget in principle. It is, of course, not without irony that a quasi-oral written dialogue criticises writing as a storage medium of knowledge.[20] Yet the criticism of writing as a medium of memory here is based on the assumption that individual knowledge can only be remembered and perpetuated in conversation, and that written knowledge can be seen as a support for collective memory.[21] The interesting thing about *Phaedrus*, however, is that the actual creative act of writing is not described and, moreover, the differences between the hieroglyphic image-writing system and the demotic letter-writing system are not discussed, which would have to be implicitly taken into account in this text from a historical perspective. This makes the narrative a quasi-*scriptogenesis*, since the actual self-referentiality is not addressed in its own writing.

By contrast, the Old Norse-Icelandic *scriptogenesis* is not particularly mythically charged in the sense of a transcendental reference to divinity. The mythical character of the Old Norse-Icelandic *scriptogenesis* can, however, be seen on the one hand in the context in which the *scriptogenesis* is handed down, and on the other hand in the way it is narrated. Probably the oldest written *scriptogenesis* in Old Norse-Icelandic literature is found in AM 242 fol., a manuscript from the middle of the 14th century, which is now known as *Codex Wormianus*. AM 242 fol. is, of course, principally known for being one of the four main editions of the *Prose Edda*. The mythographic, poetic, and language-theoretical text conglomerate of the *Prose Edda* is here, however, augmented by other texts, such as the four *Grammatical Treatises*. The four *Treatises* and a preceding prologue are found in AM 242 fol. on folios 42r–59v, thus dividing *Skáldskaparmál* ('The Language of Poetry'), being the so-called second or third part of the *Prose Edda* (depending on whether the prologue is counted as a separate unit or not), into two parts. The *Grammatical Treatises* thus become integrated into the poetic and language-theoretical section of the *Prose Edda*, which itself makes its statements on the basis of myths and mythologues, the latter being the smallest semantic constitutive unit of a myth. In the case of *Codex Wormianus*, in which the four *Grammatical Treatises* have been transmitted singularly in this unified manner, these narratives can thus be understood in the context of a decidedly theoretical discussion of language and myths.[22]

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19 Plato: Phaedrus, 274b–278b.
20 See also Wirth 2007, pp. 208f.
21 For a short memory-theory discussion of this section from *Phaedrus*, see Glauser 2014, p. VIII.
22 For the medial impact of the *Grammatical Treatises* and in particular the fourth *Grammatical Treatise* in the context of the *Codex Wormianus*, see Clunies Ross 2018.

Within the *Treatises* themselves, the mythical character of the Old Norse-Icelandic *scriptogenesis* can also be seen in how the development of writing is presented as a cycle of creation, in which the creators are named once and shortly afterwards merge into an unnamed first-person narrator. In addition, various writing systems, from which the newly developed Old Norse-Icelandic script is derived, are discussed in the narrative. The only constant in these not entirely consistent narratives of Old Norse-Icelandic *scriptogenesis* is Ari Þorgilsson:

> ſkal yðr ſyna hin*n* fyrſta letrſ hǽtt ſva ritin*n* ept*er* ſextan ſtafa ſtaf-rofí i danſkri tvngv, ept*er* þvi ſem þoroddr rvna meiſtarí *ok* ari p*reſtr* hin*n* froði hafa ſett i motí latinv *manna* ſtafrófi, er meiſtarí priſcian*us* hef*er* ſett.[23]

> You shall be shown the nature of the first letters, written according to the sixteen-letter alphabet in the Danish language, according to how Þóroddr Runemaster and the priest Ari the Wise have compared them against the Latin people's alphabet that Master Priscian has established.

This quotation from the prologue to the four *Grammatical Treatises* shows that in this form of *scriptogenesis*, two different writing systems are compared in order to make a selection from their totality to develop a writing system for the Old Norse-Icelandic language.[24] The term 'Danish language', which in Old Norse refers not only to the actual language of the Danes but also to the Scandinavian languages in their entirety or to Old Norse itself, in combination with the mention of a sixteen-letter alphabet can be interpreted as a reference to the younger *futhark*. This Scandinavian runic writing-system is now contrasted with that of the Latin people, which is directly associated in the text with Priscian, i.e. Priscianus Caesariensis, the Latin grammarian and author of the standard textbook *Institutiones Grammaticae*, which was part of Latin instruction in the Middle Ages. In the process of presenting this sequence of written culture, something quasi-indigenous, the runes of the younger *futhark*, is used together with something new, Latin writing and book culture, to create an independent beginning. This is not simply to discard a past cultural form to replace it with a new one, but rather to develop a new one specifically marked as Icelandic by the alleged mixing of the two. What is interesting, however, is that this union of the runic writing of the past with the new, Christian learned book culture of the Latin language, which results in the creation of the Old Norse-Icelandic written language, is according to this *scriptogenesis* developed not only by one figure of creation, but by two. The names of the two char-

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23   Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske afhandling i Snorres Edda, p. 154; for a digitised version of *Codex Wormianus* and the respective folio 42r, see: https://myndir.handrit.is/file/Handrit.is/AM%20 242%20fol./83/HIGH_QUALITY_DISPLAY (last accessed 1 March 2021). All translations are my own, unless stated otherwise.

24   See also Johansson 1997, pp. 43–46.

acters, Þóroddr as a 'Runemaster' and Ari Þorgilsson as a priest, refer to the Runic and Christian-Latin writing culture, respectively. This duplication, which is created by the naming of an old and a new writing system and by the correspondingly functionalised figures in the text, elevates this *scriptogenesis* to a self-chosen one. The creation of a new writing system is not staged here in the form of an initial setting, which starts out from a singular character and is self-determined, but rather arises in the negotiation of two characters who functionally belong to the new and old writing systems in the text. The *scriptogenesis* is thus presented here almost as a quasi-democratic, reason-based process, similar to the one we know in Old Norse-Icelandic literature from stories about the Christianisation of Iceland.[25]

Yet this first *scriptogenesis*, which is defined by two writing systems and two figures representing these systems, has already been rejected, or perhaps re-modulated, in *Codex Wormianus* on the following folio, 42v,[26] in the prologue to the first *Grammatical Treatise*. A very traditional explanation for this disjunction might rest on an assumption that the texts would come from different centuries,[27] although there is no material evidence of this in the form of manuscripts, since the *Codex Wormianus* is the oldest known manuscript that hands down the four *Grammatical Treatises* in the form in which we have them. The problem with such argumentations is that they at times do not take into account either the cultural-historical context or the material context of the texts' transmission. Thus, the *Grammatical Treatises* are analysed in a detached way by means of editions that exclude the fact that these treatises are incorporated into the *Prose Edda*. Such changes and adaptations to new narrative contexts are not uncommon, however, especially in the context of the *Prose Edda*, and are explicitly part of the storytelling of beginnings and initial settings and their narratological functionalisation in *Prose Edda*.[28] The preface to the first *Grammatical Treatise* as transmitted in *Codex Wormianus* on fol. 42v reads as follows:

> Í flestum lǫndum setja menn á bœkr annat tveggja þann fróðleik, er þar innanlands hefir gǫrzk, eða þann annan, er minnisamligstr þykkir, þó at annars sta[ðar hafi h]eldr gǫrzk, eða lǫg sín setja menn á bœkr, hver þjóð á sína tungu. En af því at tungurnar eru [ó]líkar hver annarri, þær þegar er ór einni ok inni sǫmu tungu hafa gengizk eða greinzk, þá þarf ólíka stafi í at hafa, en eigi ina sǫmu alla í ǫllum, sem eigi ríta grikkir látínustǫfum girzkuna ok eigi látinumenn girzkum stǫfum

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25   The myth of a quasi-democratic conversion of Icelanders to Christianity around the year 1000 is also one of the central themes of *Íslendingabók*. For a radically source-critical analysis of this myth, see Gustafsson 2011.

26   For a digitised version of the respective folio, see: https://myndir.handrit.is/file/Handrit.is/ AM%20242%20fol./84/HIGH_QUALITY_DISPLAY (last accessed 1 March 2021).

27   See, for example, Males 2016.

28   For a discussion of such initial repetitions and transformations in the mythographic part of *Prose Edda*, see Rösli 2015, pp. 75–95.

látínu, né enn heldr ebreskir menn ebreskuna hvár ki girzkum stǫfum né látínu, heldr rítr sínum stǫfum hver þjóð sína tungu.

Hveriga tungu er maðr skal ríta annarar tungu stǫfum, þá verðr sumra stafa vant, af því at eigi finnsk þat hljóð í tungunni, sem stafirnir hafa, þeir er af ganga. En þó ríta enskir menn ensku na látínustǫfum, ǫllum þeim er réttræðir verða í enskunni, en þar er þeir vinnask eigi til, þá hafa þeir við aðra stafi, svá marga ok þesskonar sem þarf, en hina taka þeir ór, er eigi eru réttræðir í máli þeira.

Nú eptir þeira dœmum, alls vér erum einnar tungu, þó at gǫrzk hafi mjǫk ǫnnur tveggja eða nǫkkut báðar, til þess at hœgra verði at ríta ok lesa, sem nú tíðisk ok á þessu landi, bæði lǫg ok áttvísi eða þýðingar helgar, eða svá þau in spakligu frœði, er Ari Þórgilsson hefir á bœkr sett af skynsamligu viti, þá hefi ek ok ritit oss íslendingum stafróf, bæði látínustǫfum ǫllum þeim er mér þótti gegna til várs máls vel, svá at rétt ræðir mætti verða, ok þeim ǫðrum, er mér þótti í þurfa at vera, en ór váru teknir þeir, er eigi gegna atkvæðum várrar tungu. Ór eru teknir samhljóðendr nǫkkurir ór látínustafrófi, en nǫkkurir í gǫrvir. Raddarstafir e[ru] engir ór teknir, en í gǫrvir mjǫk margir, því at vár tunga hefir flesta alla hljóðs eða raddar.[29]

In most countries men chronicle in books the great events that have come to pass within their country, or whatever seems most memorable from abroad, or they write their laws, each nation in its own tongue. But as languages are all unlike, ever since they parted and branched off from one and the same language, it is now needful to use different letters in writing them, and not the same for all, just as the Greeks do not write Greek with Latin letters, and the Latin writers do not write Latin with Greek letters, while the Hebrews do not write Hebrew with either Greek or Latin letters, but each nation writes its language with letters of its own.

Now when a man has to write one language with the letters of another, certain letters will be lacking because the sounds of the missing letters do not exist in the other tongue. Yet Englishmen write English with Latin letters, as many as can be rightly pronounced in English, but when these no longer suffice, they add other letters, as many and of such a nature as they need, rejecting those that cannot be rightly pronounced in their language.

Now to follow their example, since we are of one tongue with them, even though one of our languages has been greatly changed or both of them somewhat, I have composed an alphabet for us Icelanders as well, in order that it might be made easier to write and read, as is now customary in this country as well, the laws, the genealogies, the sacred writings, and also that historical lore which Ari Thorgilsson has recorded in his books with such understanding wit. I have used all the Latin letters that seemed to fit our language well and could retain their proper sound, as well as some other letters that seemed needful to me, while those were put aside that did not suit the sounds of our language. Some of the consonants of the Latin alphabet were rejected, and some new ones added. No vowels were rejected, but a good many were added, since our language has the greatest number of vowel sounds.[30]

In this second example from the text, it becomes apparent that writing is understood by the narrator from the very beginning as a means of storing memory (in the sense of past stories or history) or of consolidating conventions (laws), and that the medium in

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29   Haugen 1950, pp. 12f.
30   Haugen 1950, pp. 12f.

which this is recorded in writing is the book. Writing is understood as a semiotic system, which is different in terms of language and culture. Using the example of English, which is understood as being part of the same language family as Old Norse-Icelandic, the narrator shows that in Latin, which served as a model for the new English writing system, not all letters are suitable for converting the English language, in the sense of a spoken language, into a written form; however, where those characters in English that do not correspond to Latinate forms come from goes unmentioned. According to the narrator, he has applied this process to Icelandic to make it easier to write and read.[31] Hence, Icelandic is seen not only as a language in its own right, but also, in the sense of Icelandic writing, as having been developed by a unique *scriptogenitor*, which the narrator presents as themselves. Yet the implementation of writing as a semiotic system for preserving memories in Icelandic, on which the narrator's voice prides itself, seems already to be a thing of the past. This assumption is supported by the various types of texts that have been written in Iceland since then and by the statement that it has been common practice to read and write since then. As the only author-figure mentioned for Icelandic texts, Ari Þorgilsson is again mentioned, but in the prologue to the first *Grammatical Treatise* his function seems limited to being an outstanding user of the Icelandic writing developed by the narrative voice and not having any part in its creation. Although this is followed by a discussion of those consonants and vowels from the Latin alphabet that could be used in the development of an Icelandic writing system,[32] the origin of the additional characters used by the narrative voice during the *scriptogenesis* is not mentioned here either.

In contrast to the first, this second *scriptogenesis* is both more impersonal, as the first-person narrator cannot be linked to a name, and less transparent; whilst more information is provided from a linguistic point of view, the actual creation seems to remain obscure. This should not be understood as stemming from a lack of information, however, but rather from the transition to a narrative with a completely different function. While the foreword to the four *Grammatical Treatises* adopts the Christian frame of understanding, which is also given to the *Prose Edda* in which the *Treatises* are embedded, and in doing so stages the first *scriptogenesis* as a union between the pre-Christian and Christian cultures, the second *scriptogenesis* argues from a linguistic perspective and is

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31   For a comprehensive discussion of the subject of reading and writing in Old Norse-Icelandic, see Müller 2020.

32   In the further course of the *Grammatical Treatises* in the *Codex Wormianus*, in particular in the second *Grammatical Treatise*, the orality of the Old Norse-Icelandic (written) language, especially the tonal quality of the sounds to be represented by the graphemes, is intensively discussed. Yet this discussion of course also takes place solely in the scriptographic medium of writing, even if schematic representations help to symbolise the phonetic qualities of letters. For an analysis of the representability of sound in writing and in the diagrammatic illustrations used in the second *Grammatical Treatise*, see Schneeberger 2017, pp. 73–77; Gropper 2017, pp. 78–83.

in itself already embedded in a scholarly discourse on writing, which does not need to be explained further as it is already part of an established book culture. Ari himself is transformed from being a partial *scriptogenitor* to being only an author mentioned by name, yet his function as an outstanding writer remains constant. The unmarked second *scriptogenesis* is thus also shifted into a past which, although factually limited in terms of cultural history, seems to have shifted into mythical indeterminacy within the diegesis.

Overall, it can be said for these two *scriptogeneses* that, like all founding narratives, they could be told only after the actual act of creation. The cultural-historical change from an oral to a written culture narrated in a *scriptogenesis* is thus always afflicted with the paradox that this transition takes place, and can only take place, in the newly created medium of writing. Yet the fact that this cultural-historical transition is presented in the *scriptogenesis* as such not only in a linguistic sense, but also with regard to the resulting transition from oral narrative or communicative memory to a written narrative or cultural memory, is used in relation to the depiction of the primal scribe and his first texts, as will be discussed in the following.

4. The Connection Between Oral Culture and Book Culture

On the basis of the *scriptogeneses* discussed above, it has been shown that the figure of Ari Þorgilsson in the *Codex Wormianus* is invoked both as a partial *scriptogenitor*, to be associated with the transition from an oral to a written culture in the sense of a newly created semiotic system, and as an outstanding user of this new written culture. By combining the specific and singular mention of Ari Þorgilsson as a named scribe of historical lore and his preceding functionalisation as *scriptogenitor*, Ari is staged as a kind of primal scribe within Old Norse-Icelandic literary history. Not only does Ari, as depicted in *Codex Wormianus*, function on the one hand as a link between history / stories and textuality and as a link between orality and literacy on the other, he also assumes this function of mediator in *Íslendingabók*. Here, he is prominently presented as an author-figure, who as part of the narrative stages the transition from communicative to cultural memory in a text that is strongly formalised as a written book. It must again be pointed out, however, that this narrative and the scriptographic layout of the text, which is today called *Íslendingabók*, has only been handed down to us in manuscripts from the middle of the 17th century onwards. An artefact-related, new-philological argumentation about *Íslendingabók* can therefore be based only on the manuscripts from the middle of the 17th century and can make assertions only about them.[33] The two oldest manuscripts AM 113 a fol. and AM 113 b fol. were both written by Jón Erlendsson, the first of the two manu-

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33   For a relevant argument and discussion of *Íslendingabók*, see Rösli 2021.

scripts being dated to 1651 in the explicit written in Jón's hand and signed by him-self.[34] It is quite interesting that this text – which has been handed down to us only from the 17th century, along with the author-figure established in the diegesis of the narrative with it – is today regarded as an original medieval historical narrative written by an actual author named Ari Þorgilsson.[35]

The intradiegetic reference to a functionally fixed text in the form of a book is already established in the introductory sentence of *Íslendingabók*: "[J]ſlendinga boc gorþa ec fyrſt by·ſcopom ǫrum þorlaki oc katli"[36] ('The Book of Icelanders I wrote first for our bishops Þorlákr and Ketill'). Since the narrative itself mentions and stages a text that was once written by an author-figure who is marked as the first-person narrator and which is intradiegetically called *Íslendingabók*, the text that is present in manu-scripts today must be read as a memory of this alleged text. The first-person narra-tor, who appears here in the first sentence as the text-producing protagonist, reveals himself by name at the end of the narrative: "en*n* ec heiter are"[37] ('and I am called Ari'). By equating the first-person narrator with the text-creating instance, Ari Þorgilsson is established intradiegetically as a narratorial author-figure.

Seemingly just as important, however, is the fact that this intradiegetically men-tioned text is clearly marked out as a book ("[J]ſlendinga boc"). The rest of the nar-rative also refers several times to a text staged and fixed as a book, although it refers certainly not to the book mentioned in the first sentence, but rather to the present narrative, e.g. when a table of contents is preceded by a Latin heading that describes the text as a codex: "Iɴ hoc codice *con*tiɴeɴt*ur* capitvla"[38] ('In this codex are these chapters'). On folio 1v there is another book-medial statement, which is scriptograph-ically set as a heading: "Incipit Libellus Jſlandorum"[39] ('Here begins the booklet of Icelanders'). The end of the staging of the text as a book, which does not coincide with the end of the narrative, later postulates itself as follows: "Her lyxc sia boc"[40]

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34 For a digitised version of the respective manuscripts, see: AM 113 a fol.: https://handrit.is/is/manuscript/imaging/is/AM02-0113a#page/Fremra+spjald+(r)+(1+af+26)/mode/2up. AM 113 b fol.: https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/imaging/is/AM02-0113b#page/Front+(r)+(1+of+39)/mode/2up. Explicit in AM 113 a fol., 7v: https://myndir.handrit.is/file/Handrit.is/AM%20113%20a%20fol/17/HIGH_QUALITY_DISPLAY (last accessed 1 March 2021).

35 Since almost every handbook or encyclopedia on Old Norse-Icelandic literature has so far eval-uated Ari Þorgilsson and *Íslendingabók* in this way, a comprehensive collection of all these texts would go too far. As a brief example of this historicising and biographical view, see Jakob Bene-diktsson 1993.

36 AM 113 b fol., f. 1r. Quotes from *Íslendingabók* follow the diplomatic transcription (version 1.0.4, 15 March 2016) of AM 113 b fol. as edited by Matteo Tarsi for the *Medieval Nordic Text Archive*.

37 AM 113 b fol., f. 10v.

38 AM 113 b fol., f. 1r.

39 AM 113 b fol., f. 1v.

40 AM 113 b fol., f. 9v.

('Here ends this book'). Although these self-referential designations of the narrative with regard to the text as a book, booklet, or codex are semantically not stringently chosen, it can be suggested that the narrative wants to be understood in the medially consolidated appearance of a written, book-like text. The scriptographic layout, with a clearly separated table of contents and two marked appendices, also indicates that an attempt is made here to give the narrative a strongly fixed, textual, and thus already well-established book-cultural appearance. Furthermore, the beginning of the text is made recognisable as a prologue at the narrative level. This is achieved in particular through the use of the literary topos of modesty by the first-person narrator,[41] which is very common in medieval prologues. This topos of modesty obviously makes the opposite claim, in the sense of a *litotes*, to elevate the author-figure, or the first-person narrator, to an *auctor* authority whose statement is binding. In summary, *Íslendingabók* can therefore be recognised as a high literary product through its scriptographical layout and narrative.[42]

At first glance, this strongly book-cultural narrative staging of the author-figure and the equivalent first-person narrator in *Íslendingabók* is contrasted with a decidedly oral discourse on the origin of remembered past. At several points in the text, the narrator reports that his knowledge of the past comes from different people. In particular, he refers to Teitr Ísleifsson, Þorkell Gellisson, and Þuríðr Snorradóttir as guarantors of the statements about the past that he describes in *Íslendingabók*,[43] e.g. when he classifies the settlement of Iceland in terms of chronological order:

> [J]ſland bygþiſc fyrſt vr Norvegi a dogom Harallz enſ Harfagra Halfdan·ar ſonar enſ Svarta fyr þan tiþ at ętlon oc tolo þeira Teitz foſtra mins þes maɴz er ec kunna spacaſtan ſonar Jſleifs byſcops. oc þorkelſ fa/þor broþ·or mins Gelliſ ſonar er langt munþi fram oc þoriþar Snorra dottor Goþa eſ beþi vaſ marg ſpoc oc o·livgfroþ eſ Jvar ʀagnarſ ſonr Loþbrokar let drepa eadmund eɴ Helga Engla conung En þat vaſ dccc·lxx. epter burþ Criſtat at þvi eſ ritiþ eſ i ſo·go hanz[.][44]

> Iceland was first settled from Norway in the days of Haraldr the Fine-Haired, son of Hálfdan the Black, at the time – according to the estimate and reckoning of my foster-father Teitr, the man I know as the wisest, son of Bishop Ísleifr, and of my father's brother Þorkell Gellisson, who remembered a long way back, and of Þóríðr, daughter of Snorri goði, who was both wise in many things and reliably informed – when Ívarr, son of Ragnarr loðbrók, had Edmund the Holy, King of the Angles, killed. And that was 870 years after the birth of Christ, as it is written in his saga.

41 AM 113 b fol., f. 1r: "En hvatki eſ eſ i froþom þesom þa er cyllt at hava þat helldur er ſaɴ·ara reyniſc" ('But whatever is wrongly stated in these records, it is the duty to give preference to what proves to be more accurate').

42 See also Hermann 2005.

43 See *Íslendingabók* 'chapters' I, II, VII, VIII, and IX for statements on the oral transmitted memory in relation to Teitr Ísleifsson, I and VI for Þorkell Gellisson, and I for Þuríðr Snorradóttir.

44 AM 113 b fol., f. 1v.

Thus, two reference points are given here to date the settlement of Iceland: on the one hand the reign of Haraldr the Fine-Haired, and on the other hand the death of Saint Edmund. For the first reference point, the narrator refers to the oral memory of the three guarantors mentioned, while for the second reference point, he refers to a saga, which, in the context of Old Norse-Icelandic literature, most probably refers to a written narrative.[45] As already discussed on the basis of *Codex Wormianus*, the written-literary staging of a transition from oral mediation of memory to solidified cultural memory in the text is thus also evident here. The author-figure, who is equated with the narrator, identifies parts of the foundations of his alleged historical narrative as oral tradition. Through the positive markings that he affixes to his sources, it seems as if he has made a certain selection of sources according to objective criteria. This supposed objectivity, however, exists only within the diegesis in which the sources are presented, as the staging within the narrative of a transition from a communicative to a cultural memory calls this objectivity into question and introduces a subjective, fictionalised framework. The oral transmission of memory is presented as the hitherto existing norm, which is now reproduced in writing and put into a fixed form by the author-figure. The integration of the oral transmission of the past into the narrative not only literalises, but fictionalises it, so to speak. Just as the transition from a spoken language to the written language as *scriptogenesis* marked a retrospective beginning of the new culture of writing, here an intradiegetic collector of oral memory who then wrote down what he collected as the author-figure of the narrative is retrospectively declared the primal scribe.

It therefore seems to be important, especially for the creation of a literary-historical starting point, not to argue in a completely detached manner from the prescriptive memory performance if one wants to create a quasi-historical transition from communicative to cultural memory, which takes place at the outset of any literary culture and with any first instance of authorship. The production of the credibility of historically intangible oral sources, however, succeeds in a literary context only through intertextual references, yet such references only become possible when a literary network of different texts exists.[46] Assuming that *Íslendingabók* is really the first text in a Scandinavian language, this intertextual verification cannot possibly work. I will therefore look in the following at some examples of how Ari Þorgilsson was 'made' the original author of various texts in the Middle Ages, as well as in the early modern period.

45   For the strategies of historicisation used in *Íslendingabók*, see also Hermann 2005; Hermann 2007.
46   This may also be one of the reasons why *Íslendingabók* only appeared in the form we know today in the middle of the 17th century.

5. The Origin of the Primal Scribe

As demonstrated above, *Íslendingabók* stages Ari Þorgilsson as an author-figure who transferred the previous oral tradition of a remembered past into a text, thus transforming it into a quasi-publicly accessible collective memory. Yet in order for Ari to take on the real figure of the primal scribe, as was argued previously, there must be a network of literary texts in which he is associated with several primal scenes about literature. The mention of Ari in connection with the *scriptogenesis* in the foreword to the four *Grammatical Treatises* is of course an intertextual reference that makes him an ideal figure to serve as the original author for Old Norse-Icelandic literary history; and, as has been shown above, the substitution of Ari by an unknown *scriptogenitor* in the preface to the first *Grammatical Treatise* does not make him less likely to be connected to the birth of writing in Iceland, since he is functionalised in that text as an exemplary reference for the use of the newly developed written language. It is interesting to note, however, that not a single textual passage from the Middle Ages has been preserved that would bring Ari Þorgilsson and *Íslendingabók* into a direct connection with each other; this connection is made only in the aforementioned manuscripts from the middle of the 17th century. Although there are intertextual allusions to Ari's writing of historical lore, there is not a single title-related mention of a text that could be associated with him.[47]

Nevertheless, there are several intertextual references that mention Ari. In the process of writing a past, he is often used as a cipher to mark the narrative as being highly credible or as confirmed in the sense of a cultural memory to be generated. One such reference is a rubricated *incipit* on folio 1v in *Fríssbók* (AM 45 fol.), dated to the first quarter of the 14th century, which mentions Ari prestr inn fróði. The beginning of the incipit reads: "Her hefr vpp kon[vn]ga bok / ept[ir] savgn ara prestz froða [...]."[48] ('Here begins the Book of Kings, according to the account of Prester Ari the Wise'). This rubric is interesting in several respects – for one thing, because Ari is directly connected with an account or a story in a medieval manuscript, which is here presented to some extent as a fixed narrative, in the sense of the term "kon[vn]ga bok" ('Book of Kings') mentioned in the rubric. AM 45 fol. thus not only conveys the medial character of the narrative contained in the book, but also gives it a name. It remains unclear, however, how the mediation of the narratives contained in this 'Book of Kings' is related to Ari.

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47   To date, the only textual passage from a medieval manuscript known to me that mentions *Íslendingabók* is found in *Olaf saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (Holm. Perg. 18 4to, fol. 45v), which is dated to the first quarter of the 14th century; however, Ari is not mentioned in this passage. For a digitised version of the manuscript and the respective folio, see: https://image.landsbokasafn.is/source/Holm_Perg_18_4to/Holm._Perg._18_4to,_0045v_-_91-hq.pdf (last accessed 1 March 2021).

48   For a digitised version of the manuscript and the respective folio, see: https://myndir.handrit.is/file/Handrit.is/AM%2045%20fol./2/HIGH_QUALITY_DISPLAY (last accessed 1 March 2021).

A direct authorship in the sense of an autograph has to be excluded for chronological reasons, but here at least the impression should be that Ari had a share in the compilation of these stories, as they are now written in the 'Book of Kings'. In this context, it is also interesting to note that the narrative following the rubric is not known today as the "kon[vn]ga bok", but as the "Heimskringla". The name *Heimskringla* ('The Disc / Orb of the World') is based on the first two words of the continuous text, which follow directly after the rubric on folio 1v in AM 45 fol.: "KRINGLA heímsíns". During the transmission of *Heimskringla*, however, not only this change of name took place, but also a change of attribution in terms of the connection of the narrative with a personified authorship or an authoritative involvement in the narrative. While in AM 45 fol. Ari is functionalised at least as a mediating authority for the "Book of Kings", today Snorri Sturluson is considered to be the author of *Heimskringla*.[49] What we call *Heimskringla* today is thus a perfect example of how permeable medieval authorship seems to be to Old Norse-Icelandic literary historiography.

The prologue in AM 45 fol., which can be found on folio 1r,[50] deals with Ari in great detail,[51] so that only a few passages on his function as the original writer can be considered here:

> Ari prestr inn fróði Þorgilsson Gellissonar ritaði fyrstr manna hér á landi at norrœnu máli frœði bæði forna ok nýja; ritaði hann mest í upphafi sinnar bókar frá Íslandz byggð ok lagasetning, siðan frá lǫgsǫgumǫnnum, hversu lengi hverr hafði sagt, ok hafði þat áratal fyrst til þess, er kristni kom á Ísland, en síðan alt til sinna daga; hann tók þar ok við mǫrg ǫnnur dœmi bæði konungaæfi í Nóregi ok Danmǫrk ok svá í Englandi, eða enn stórtíðendi, er gǫrzk hǫfðu hér í landi, ok þykki mér hans sǫgn ǫll merkiligust; var hann forvitri ok svá gamall, at hann var fœddr næsta vetr eptir fall Haraldz Sigurðarsonar. Hann ritaði, sem hann sjálfr segir, æfi Nóregs-konunga eptir sǫgu Oddz Kolssonar, Hallzsonar af Síðu, en Oddr nam at Þorgeiri afráðskoll, þeim manni, er vitr var ok svá gamall, at hann bjó þá í Niðarnesi, er Hákon jarl inn ríki var drepinn.[52]

> The priest Ari inn fróði (the Learned), son of Þorgils, son of Gellir, was the first person in this country to write down history, both ancient and recent, in the Norse language. He wrote in the beginning of his book mostly about the settlement of Iceland and the establishment of the laws, then about the law-speakers, how long each had served, and he used that reckoning of years first

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49 On the subject of the authorship of *Heimskringla* and (rather implicitly) on how Snorri Sturluson was subsequently made the author of this narrative so important for Norway's cultural memory, see for example Snorri Sturluson: Heimskringla 2016, pp. VII–XIII.
For a more critical evaluation of the alleged authorship of Snorri Sturluson, see Boulhosa 2005, pp. 5–42.

50 https://myndir.handrit.is/file/Handrit.is/AM%2045%20fol./1/HIGH_QUALITY_DISPLAY (last accessed 1 March 2021).

51 For the edited Old Norse text, see Snorri Sturluson: Heimskringla 1911, pp. 2f. For an English translation, see Snorri Sturluson: Heimskringla 2016, pp. 4f.

52 Snorri Sturluson: Heimskringla 1911, p. 2.

to the point when Christianity came to Iceland, and then all the way down to his own time. He also included much other material, both the lives of kings in Norway and Denmark and also in England, and further the important events that had taken place in this country, and all his account seems to me most noteworthy. He was very wise, and so old that he was born in the year after the death of King Haraldr Sigurðarson. He wrote, as he himself says, lives of kings of Norway according to the account of Oddr son of Kolr, son of Hallr on Síða, and Oddr learned them from Þorgeirr afráðskollr (Payment-Chap), a wise man and so aged that he was living in Niðarnes when Jarl Hákon inn ríki was killed. (tr. by Finlay / Faulkes 2016)[53]

That passage thus not only states that Ari was the first to write in the Old Norse language "in this country", that is to say Iceland, but also indicates the approximate content of the texts he wrote. That especially the first mentioned book is said to begin with the settlement of Iceland of course makes it tempting to interpret it as a reference to *Íslendingabók*, as some present-day scholars have[54] – even if not a single piece of material or textual evidence from the Middle Ages can be found to support this assumption, which is thus unanimously based on a similarity of content with the previously discussed manuscripts from the middle of the 17th century. The thematic range that Ari is attributed here for his (non-existent) texts, the historical depth that he is said to have dealt with in the texts, and, again, the reference to his oral sources stage him as an exceptional phenomenon within early Old Norse-Icelandic literary production; this impression is further supported by the wisdom and wealth of knowledge attributed to him.

It is here that the above-mentioned intertextual network of allegedly existing texts emerges, which frames Ari as an active literary figure who decisively influenced the transition from communicative to cultural memory. This retrospective attribution thus refers to a historical literary past, which at the same time is generated performatively in the text. The character of Ari is therefore established as the starting point of this cultural memory, as well as a model of truth, an idea that is to be consolidated by the cultural memory generated in the given texts or in the intertextual network staged by references to these alleged texts. Because of these intertextual references, the resulting canonisation of this literature and of Ari as its primal scribe no longer requires an extratextual point of reference, since new nodes within the intertextual network are constantly being created during the transmission and literary or scholarly discursification of these texts being mentioned in narratives.

A further description of Ari as the primal scribe can be found in the epilogue to the so-called *Hauksbók* redaction of *Landnámabók*; however, the actual *Landnámabók* part of the medieval *Hauksbók*, AM 371 4to,[55] which was written at the beginning of the

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53   Snorri Sturluson: Heimskringla 2016, p. 4.
54   Snorri Sturluson: Heimskringla 2016, p. 4, n. 1.
55   Landnámabók 1974, pp. 155–184.

14th century, is highly fragmented today and does not itself provide the epilogue with the reference to Ari:

> Nú er yfir farit um landnámu þau, er verit hafa á Íslandi, eptir því sem fróðir menn hafa skrifat, fyrst Ari prestr hinn fróði Þorgilsson ok Kolskeggr hinn vitri. En þessa bók ritaða [ek], Haukr Erlendsson, eptir þeiri bók, sem ritat hafði herra Sturla lǫgmaðr, hinn fróðasti maðr, ok eptir bók annarri, er ritat hafði Styrmir hinn fróði [...]. [56]

> Now the account of the settlements of Iceland is completed, according to what wise men have written, the first one of these being Priest Ari Thorgilsson the Learned, and Kolskegg the Wise. But I, Haukr Erlendsson, wrote this book, following the one written by Sturla the Lawman, a most learned man, and also that other book, written by Stymir the Learned [...]. (tr. by Hermann Pálsson 2006)[57]

This reference to Ari as co-author of an earlier version of *Landnámabók* is among others mentioned in the manuscript AM 105 fol.,[58] which is thought to be a copy of *Hauksbók*, made at a time in the 17th century when the relevant folios of the *Hauksbók* were still present and legible. It is interesting to note that the scribe of AM 105 fol. was none other than Jón Erlendsson, the same scribe from the middle of the 17th century who is also responsible for the first two manuscripts of *Íslendingabók*. What is remarkable here is that once again a literary chronology is staged in which Ari, here together with Kolskeggr, seems to be placed at the beginning, taking on the function of the primal scribe. The narrative voice assigned to Haukr Erlendsson not only describes these first two authors as learned and wise, which is intended to reaffirm the truth of this constructed past in the sense of a cultural memory, but also, in the sense of the author-figure, integrates the present narrative into the transmission history of the *Landnámabók* narrative when it reveals the intertextual references of its own version. Once again, in the transmission of the text through a 17th century manuscript, an intertextual network is created in which Ari is placed at the beginning of a narrative belonging to the founding narratives of the Icelandic nation, and thus to one of the main pillars of Iceland's cultural memory.

6. Conclusion

This chapter discussed how Ari Þorgilsson, of whom not a single autograph has survived, came to be seen as the primal scribe of Old Norse-Icelandic literary history. However, no material evidence is required for the function of the primal scribe within the Old

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56 Íslendingabók, Landnámabók 1968, p. 395 and p. 397.
57 The book of settlements: Landnámabók, p. 4.
58 For a digitised version of the epilogue in AM 105 fol. on f. 82r, see https://myndir.handrit.is/file/Handrit.is/AM%20105%20fol/200/HIGH_QUALITY_DISPLAY (last accessed 1 March 2021).

Norse-Icelandic literary culture, since such an initial setting always has a mythological impetus, as could be shown by several examples. In Ari's case, this function is reinforced not only by his being credited with a share in the *scriptogenesis* of Old Norse-Icelandic writing, but also by the fact that the two quasi-historical main narratives of the foundation of Icelandic society are attributed to him in whole or in part. Furthermore, in one of the two narratives, *Íslendingabók*, Ari is staged as an author-figure who is supposed to have been responsible for a highly literary and scriptographically formalised text, as it were, and who at the same time describes in this narrative the transition from an oral to a literary society. This intradiegetic staging serves to describe a transition from a communicative to a cultural memory on a literary-fictional level, although the existence of the text as the basis of a literary-historical discourse already anticipates the inscription of a constructed past in the sense of cultural memory. Instead of extratextual evidence, the position of Ari as primal scribe is created via a network of intertextual references; likewise, Ari's status as an original author is also created through this network, which updates its authorship through repetition and thereby confirms it as part of cultural memory. These are all clear signs of an aspiring canonisation, which attempts to frame the text and the author-figure established in its narrative as the formative and normative basis of culture,[59] and thus ultimately as the starting point of a culture of interpretation.[60] Ari therefore becomes a figure of memory to which mnemonic energy can be attached in order to shape the cultural memory of the Old Norse-Icelandic literary history.[61] Ultimately, the question cannot even be whether Ari Þorgilsson really was the primal scribe of Old Norse-Icelandic literature, since every founding narrative's beginning can only be made out in retrospect, thus creating in hindsight a past that is worth recording as a cultural memory.

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59   Assmann 2013, p. 80.
60   Assmann 2013 [1992], pp. 93–97.
61   For a discussion of mnemonic energy as it relates to cultural memory, see Assmann 1995, p. 129.

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Stefanie Gropper

The 'Heteronomous Authorship' of Icelandic Saga Literature
The Example of *Sneglu-Halla þáttr*

Abstract

Despite the fact that all Icelandic family sagas are anonymous and, in most cases, preserved in more than one version, the idea of tracing each saga to a specific author is still strong in contemporary scholarship. The author is thought to be necessary as a reference point for the interpretation of a text within a certain historical context, as well as the creative agency behind the text as a literary artwork. The sagas' anonymity is thus considered to be a deficit of the corpus, since from our modern perspective it is difficult to regard a text without an identified author as a truly literary artwork. Tracing texts back to a specific historical person could remove the blemish of anonymity and allow us to use extratextual information for interpretation, but this process works against the qualities of *mouvance* and variance that are characteristic of the sagas' long process of transmission and dissemination. This chapter will first present various approaches to medieval authorship, before discussing the related concepts of 'weak' and 'heteronomous authorship' and the rhizomatic character of medieval literature. *Sneglu-Halla þáttr* will serve as a representative product of heteronomous authorship; it will be shown that the application of these concepts to that text neither results in a neglection of its aesthetics nor in the disintegration of its 'identity' as a literary work. It is the objective of this chapter to demonstrate that anonymity and an idea of heteronomous authorship are generic features of the Icelandic sagas.[1]

1. Authorship in Icelandic Family Sagas

Compared to other medieval European literatures, the medieval Icelandic sagas may appear suspicious to modern scholars in terms of their artistic value, given that they are all anonymous works. There are only a few names of people from the Icelandic Middle Ages who are known to be authors of texts, most of them historians; this is the case with, for instance, Ari Þorgilsson inn fróði, the presumed author of *Íslendingabók*, who is mentioned as an author of learned material in the First Grammatical Treatise, dated to the 12th century and preserved in the *Codex Wormianus* from the middle of the

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1   I want to thank Alexander Wilson for the critical lecture of this article and his most valuable comments.

14th century.[2] The most famous medieval Icelandic author, however, was Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241), a politician, historian, poet, and above all a fascinating, rather dazzling person. He is considered to be responsible for the version of *Ólafs saga helga*, the saga about the Norwegian king St. Ólafr, preserved in *Heimskringla*, the large compilation of kings' sagas, and for the *Prose Edda*, also called *Snorra Edda*.[3] Other members of Snorri's family are also known as authors, most prominently his nephew Sturla Þórðarson (1214–1284) who is credited with having written *Íslendinga saga*, part of the *Sturlunga saga* compilation that is an important source for Snorri's and Sturla's family, as well as for the 13th century in general – the same period considered to be the principal time in which the *Íslendingasögur* (sagas of Icelanders) were written.[4] The 13th century has long been taken to provide the historical context for most of the *Íslendingasögur*, with *Sturlunga saga* representing a mirror to the reality of the period, in reference to which the fictional and realistic modes used in the *Íslendingasögur* can be distinguished from one another.[5]

In addition to these examples, several scholars have tried to identify certain other historical individuals as saga authors.[6] These different attempts seem intended less to identify the specific aesthetic of a text as the creative production of an individual artist than to remove the stigma of anonymity, which has been considered a deficit of the *Íslendingasögur* in comparison to other medieval European literatures. Identified and named authors appear to have been thought of as necessary as the moral centres of a text, as those that can be made responsible for a saga's ideology, as well as for the contexualisation of a saga not only historically, but also regionally. Up to now, the authorship of *Íslendingasögur* has been suggested to have been limited to a very small group of people, most of them related to the family of the Sturlungs; however, this assumption is contradicted by the fact that the *Íslendingasögur* are stylistically divergent, and that

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2   *þau hin spakligu fræði er Ari Þorgilsson hefir á bækur sett af skynsamlegu viti* ('that sagacious [historical] lore that Ari Þorgilsson has recorded in books with such reasonable understanding'; The First Grammatical Treatise, p. 208 [text] and 209 [translation]. I have normalised the spelling). For information about the transmission of the text, see pp. 16–19 in the introduction of the edition.

3   Although in literary histories all these works are generally attributed to Snorri, the evidence for him being the author is rather thin, because all attributions are made retrospectively, and no contemporary source mentions him as the author of these works. He is mentioned as the author of the *Prose Edda* only in *Codex Upsaliensis*; the attribution of *Heimskringla* to Snorri Sturluson is also based on a late manuscript. See Ármann Jakobsson 2005, p. 396.

4   Sturla Þórðarson is mentioned in the prologue to *Sturlunga saga* in *Króksfjarðarbók*, a vellum manuscript from the second half of the 14th century. From this prologue, scholars have concluded that he was the author of *Íslendinga saga*; see Úlfar Bragason 2005, pp. 429f.

5   See, for example, Sørensen 1992; Vésteinn Ólason 1998.

6   For more recent examples, see Torfi Tulinius 2014; Elín Bára Magnúsdóttir 2015.

there are only a few indications that multiple sagas were written by the same author.[7] We thus have to assume instead a rather large number of different authors, or even some form of collaborative authorship.

Perhaps we should then wonder whether the anonymity of the *Íslendingasögur* is less an artistic deficit than it is a generic feature. Whilst today we usually relate the artistic quality of a text to a specific individual who is seen as being responsible for all the decisions leading up to the finished work of art, this seems not to have been the case in the Middle Ages.[8] Instead, supra-individual authorities were seen as more important in medieval literature than individual authors.[9] Anonymity is characteristic for texts belonging to medieval genres with an affinity to oral tradition, such as heroic poetry, chronicles, homilies, or law texts.[10] Some authors in Middle High German texts from the 11th and 12th centuries identify themselves, but there are also texts that are attributed to certain authors only by later scribes. This is also the case for the Icelandic texts, all of which have been attributed to their presumed authors by later scribes. According to Ernst Hellgardt, a text with such an external attribution to an author should still be considered anonymous, because the author's name is then primarily a paratextual feature, often replacing the title of the text.[11] The attribution to authors seems to have become increasingly important in written, and thus asynchronic, communication, where the author becomes an abstract feature separated from the text.[12] This may be comparable to the situation in Iceland, where anonymous texts were probably read to a listening audience and were similarly attributed to authors only by later scribes.

Our desire to identify an author for a medieval text seems to be caused not only by our desire to find a creator whose presence justifies the artistic and aesthetic qualities we see in the text, but also by our fear of losing the text as a distinct entity and becoming lost in the variance of its preservation. If we cannot posit an original version created by a historically identifiable author, how many texts are we then dealing with? One text in several versions going back to an 'original' text, or as many texts as there are versions or even witnesses? We have learned to distinguish between *textverk* ('text-work') and *textvittne* ('text-witness').[13] We have also learned to acknowledge this difference when it comes to the contextualisation of certain features of content. Yet, we have not yet

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7   Jón Karl Helgason et al. 2017. See also the contribution of Sigurður Ingibergur Björnsson / Steingrímur Páll Kárason / Jón Karl Helgason in this present volume.

8   It may be worth noting that even applying this approach to modern texts is somewhat reductive, as it also ignores the collaborative elements of modern forms of textual production, e.g. the role of editors.

9   Jannidis et al. 1999, p. 5.

10   Hellgardt 1998, p. 61.

11   Hellgardt 1998, p. 61.

12   Hellgardt 1998, p. 72.

13   Wendt 2006, p. 257.

accepted these terms, used mainly in philological analyses, in dealing with the authorship of the sagas. It is the thesis of my chapter that we have to consider 'text-witnesses' not just as different representations of a 'text-work', but as integral parts of it, if we are to understand the concept of authorship in a literary culture characterised by variance and *mouvance*.

2. Alternative Concepts of Authorship

Dealing with saga literature also means dealing with the origin of the sagas, and thus with the relationship between orality and literacy: "Every critical statement about the sagas – every statement, that is, beyond the purely descriptive – implies a theory of origins, whether it is acknowledged or not."[14] Even if we regard the sagas as products of literacy, the sagas themselves constantly remind us of the fact that they have their roots in oral tradition, at least in some respects; we find remarks about telling stories, references to tradition and to different versions of tradition, and stories about historical persons and events that must have been passed from one generation to the other in oral tradition. The most famous examples of such references to storytelling are, of course, the famous passages of the wedding at Reykjahólar[15] or of a story-wise Icelander telling a story at the Norwegian court.[16] Yet remarks about storytelling in the sagas usually call less attention to themselves, referring in a more general way to some kind of tradition, as in the constructions 'sem sagt er' ('as it is told') or 'svá segja menn' ('men tell this'). Although most of these references must be considered to be literary conventions,[17] and although the verb 'segja' can refer to written text as well as to oral tradition,[18] oral communication itself seems to be an omnipresent feature in the sagas, which are not only famous for their scenic presentation and copious use of direct speech, but which also feature characters constantly involved in debates and in the sending and receiving of messages, with public opinion being an important factor in the plots.

Whatever our specific interests may be, as literary scholars we cannot avoid taking a stand about the sagas' relationship to oral tradition: "There is […] no way around the

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14   Clover 1986, p. 37.
15   According to *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, one of the sagas belonging to the *Sturlunga saga* compilation, different stories were told at a wedding at Reykjahólar in 1119.
16   *Íslendings þáttr sögufróða* ('The Tale of the Story-Wise Icelander') is a very short *þáttr* about a young Icelandic storyteller at the court of the Norwegian king Haraldr Sigurðarson; it is preserved in *Morkinskinna*, vol. 1, pp. 235–237.
17   Sørensen 1992, p. 54. Sørensen especially emphasises the extended scholarly debate about the more than one hundred references to tradition in *Reykdæla saga*, which had not yet ended when Sørensen's book was published. See also Andersson 2006, passim; and Andersson 2012, passim.
18   Cleasby / Vigfusson 1874, pp. 518f.

need to discuss and adopt a position of origins of medieval texts like the Icelandic sagas, since the position we adopt on origins will influence all our attempts to interpret the texts. All research is led in light of a theory of origins, if only the choice of subjects that the researcher chooses to deal with."[19] Although Gísli Sigurðsson is here referring to the decision as to whether we consider a text as having originated in oral tradition or as a written artefact, his words also apply to one's position on authorship. Our interpretation of a text depends on whether we think of a text as being the product of autonomous authorship, i.e. an artefact written by one person who produced the 'original' from which all later manuscripts are derived, or whether we consider it to be the product of a different, and (for us) maybe even outlandish, form of authorship, a text spreading out across time and space according to its own rules, with different agencies participating in its production and transmission and without a clear hierarchy between its text-witnesses. Our perspective on authorship will thus influence all aspects of our evaluation of a text and its representatives; if we adopt the notion that a 'good' text is one that hews closest to a supposed original version, for instance, we are committed to regarding its later text-witnesses as being only of secondary value.

3. Distributed Authorship

When we look for alternative concepts of authorship in the *Íslendingasögur*, we have to keep in mind that their anonymous, non-linear, and scattered transmission is characteristically reflective of medieval concepts of authorship. Even long after the invention of printing, authorship "was often a *collaborative and collective*, rather than solitary and individualistic, activity."[20] Although Christine Haynes here seems to see such collaborative authorship mainly as a synchronic phenomenon occuring at the point of a singular text's initial production, with the author as an 'intertextual construction', as a 'product of discourses',[21] or as a collaboration between playwright, companies, printers, and audience,[22] it may be useful to extend the idea of collaborative or collective authorship diachronically to include the rewriting, continuation, abbreviation, expansion, and embedding of texts.

A few years ago, Slavica Ranković introduced the concept of the 'distributed author'.[23] Originally, the terms 'distributed authorship' and 'distributed narratives' were applied to 'stories across networks', to stories 'that aren't self-contained' and that are 'told by several different narrators'.[24] As Ranković has shown through the examples of

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19   Gísli Sigurðsson 2004, p. 34.
20   Haynes 2005, p. 310, emphasis added.
21   This idea as well as the terminology is based on Haynes 2005, p. 290.
22   Haynes 2005, p. 298.
23   Ranković 2007; Ranković / Ranković 2012.
24   All quotes from Walker Rettberg 2004.

Serbian epics and the Icelandic *Grettis saga*, the concept of 'distributed authorship' also proves useful as a critical term for 'the process of distributed representation' in medieval texts,[25] with each representation 'becoming an instance of its distributed self'.[26] Although we might be able to identify single agencies for certain variants of a text, none of them in particular is responsible for the whole text-work: "The creativity irreducibly occurs at a level beyond the individual, the level I propose to call the distributed author."[27] The concept of 'distributed authorship' contains the possibility of a synchronically as well as diachronically indefinite variety of different manifestations of a text, whether oral or written, each with its specific elements. It also enables us to evaluate the sagas' anonymity, as well as their *mouvance* and variance, less as an artistic deficit than as a component of their generic characteristics.

4. 'Strong' and 'Weak' or 'Autonomous' and 'Heteronomous' Authorship

Even if we accept the collaborative nature of authorship along with the anonymity of the sagas, however, we must still tackle the presuppositions of the possible lack of artistry in this kind of literature. Anonymity and collaborative authorship have been regarded as signs of 'weak authorship', a form of authorship that is suggested to prevail in times when tradition is dominant.[28] While 'strong authorship' is connected to autonomous agency, original creativity, and intellectual ownership, 'weak authorship' is heteronomous, the product of cultural networks and their acts of authorisation.[29] Although 'weak authorship' seems to be historically more prevalent, scholars of medieval literature may want to 'emancipate' their objects of research by seeking out a form of 'strong authorship' for the texts they study, in order to frame them as having a similar aesthetic value as modern literature. As Christine Haynes points out, many approaches to 'weak authorship' are, in fact, camouflaged attempts at selecting and disentangling historical actors from the cultural networks of their authorship in order to be able to treat them as strong auctorial agencies.[30] Many of us seem not to be able to let go of the idea of the unified author – that is, the authored 'one-text-unity' of the beginning, of an 'original' version of a text, the starting point for the versions that are preserved in the manuscripts or the text-witnesses. We want to disentangle the web of distributed authorship in order to separate out and identify different authorial agencies and their individual

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25   Ranković 2007, p. 301.
26   Ranković 2007, p. 297.
27   Ranković 2007, p. 300.
28   Assmann 2012, p. 67.
29   Berensmeyer et al. 2012, p. 8.
30   Haynes 2005, p. 291.

contributions to the text. We seem to be able to understand the 'evolving networks'[31] of distributed authorship only as hierarchical structures, with some nodes being closer than others to the beginning and thus the imagined 'original' of the text. Yet if we want to take the concept of 'distributed authorship' seriously, we must get rid of the notion that a singular author is the creative starting point for a literary artefact.[32]

The problematic nature of this concept of authorship is present in the terminology behind the opposition of 'weak' and 'strong' authorship, which implies an evaluation of these two forms of authorship in which 'strong' authorship is superior. These terms thus remind us of the older dichotomy between 'traditional' art, that is seen as primarily communal and conservative, and 'high' art, that is seen as personal and innovative, in which the artistic value of the latter is clearly prioritised over the former.[33] As long as we characterise heteronomous or distributed authorship as 'weak' – that is, as somehow inferior – we will not make any progress in understanding the underlying rules and the aesthetics of these texts: there will always be the desire among some scholars of medieval texts to find 'strong' or emphatic authors to justify the aesthetic qualities of otherwise 'weak' texts, rather than treating them as valuable in themselves. Perhaps one way of changing our point of view in this regard is to concentrate on how such heteronomous authorship works synchronically and diachronically as a productive force, capable of creating a diversity of artistic and aesthetic versions of what we now perceive as 'one text'.

5. Heteronomous Authorship in Icelandic Saga Literature

Heteronomous authorship is not a new idea in saga scholarship, although it usually appears implicitly rather than being explicitly formulated, as is the case with the '*þáttr* theory'. This theory, originally coined by Albert Ulrich Bååth,[34] had been discarded by later scholars, but was taken up again much later, first by Wolfgang Lange,[35] then again by Herbert Joseph,[36] Joseph Harris,[37] and others.[38] Despite the quite different approaches these scholars present, they all suppose that smaller narrative units (*þættir*)

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31 Ranković / Ranković 2012, p. 53.
32 Even Slavica Ranković becomes trapped at the end of her article: "If a singer or a saga author is talented, like Filip Višnjić or the writer of *Njáls saga*, their particular renderings stand a better chance of 'survival' or replication, [...]" (Ranković 2007, p. 303). Here, despite her focus on distributed authorship, Ranković implies one specific writer as the starting point for the distribution of *Njáls saga*, and thus as the implied creator of the text.
33 On the distinction between 'traditional' art and 'high' art, see Kellogg 1979, pp. 120 and 122.
34 Bååth 1885.
35 Lange 1957.
36 Joseph 1970; Joseph 1972.
37 Harris 1972; Harris 1976.
38 For a detailed discussion of the earlier *þáttr* theory, see Würth 1991, pp. 2–11.

were circulating in oral tradition, and were then put together or expanded upon by medieval authors and combined with written sources to compose the written sagas. Taking up this idea, Carol Clover suggested the concept of the 'immanent whole', which proposes that 'a whole saga existed at the preliterary stage not as a performed but as an immanent or potential entity, a collectively envisaged 'whole' to which performed parts of *þættir* of various size and shapes were understood to belong, no matter what the sequence or frequency of their presentation.'[39] Rather than one saga being composed from a number of smaller units, Clover instead claims that the 'whole saga' always existed during oral transmission, but was performed primarily in smaller narratives, the *þættir.* Each narrator of an episode or a *þáttr,* as well as the audience, would have known the larger framework of this small narrative unit, the 'whole' to which the episode belonged. Whilst the 'immanent whole' always existed, it was only realised as a narrative after the introduction of writing. Since the 'immanent whole' was too long to be performed orally, and since the preserved sagas are with regards to their structure and complexity typically medieval, they cannot be representatives of longer orally performed texts.[40]

Clover developed the concept of the 'immanent whole' as a solution for the questions about the origin of the sagas, as a mediation between the free-prose and book-prose theories,[41] by claiming that at the preliterary stage the sagas existed both as (performed) parts and as (immanent) wholes. Their present shape, however, was produced by literary authors after the introduction of writing. This concept was meant to offer "the most precise answer so far to the basic question of saga studies: where 'oral' ends and 'literary' begins [...]: at the level of composition."[42] In Clover's view, authorship is confined to the written sagas, which are "clearly the products of literary authors with medieval narrative tastes."[43] Clover had already stated four years earlier that the complex structure of the sagas, characterised by *entrelacement* or *stranding*, "is prima facie evidence of self-conscious literary authorship".[44] In this view, sagas are thus the products of a strong and autonomous form of authorship that begins in Iceland with the introduction of Latin writing and foreign literary models.

Clover is mainly interested in explaining why the *Íslendingasögur* can be thought of both as being rooted in oral tradition and as literary products. She therefore does

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39   Clover 1986, p. 34.

40   Clover 1986, pp. 35f.

41   The free-prose theory claims that the sagas are products of oral transmission which have been written down in the 13th century; the book-prose theory, however, claims that the sagas are the products of an emphatic authorship in the 13th century. For further discussion see for example Callow 2017.

42   Clover 1986, p. 39.

43   Clover 1986, p. 36.

44   Clover 1982, p. 182.

not explain in greater detail how we should envisage the 'immanent whole' and how it relates to the 'immanent sagas'. From her explanations about the relationship between *þættir* and the 'immanent whole', it seems that Carol Clover imagines a number of 'immanent wholes' in the preliterary period, containing the possibility of various *þættir* and leading to larger written sagas, although it remains unclear how these 'immanent wholes' relate to each other, especially as the written sagas often refer or respond to one another. Clover therefore states that "the immanent sagas may not have been entirely distinct from one another or from the tradition as a whole. Also to the literary author, we may guess, fell the decision of just where to draw the line."[45] The lines become blurry as to whether the 'immanent whole' is to be thought of as the "vast context of story",[46] or whether it refers to the whole of oral tradition in the sense of cultural memory.[47]

6. The Rhizomatic Nature of Heteronomous Authorship

As Carol Clover has observed, there are many overlaps between the written sagas, be they characters appearing in different texts, genealogies connecting the families of different sagas, or events and actions being narrated from different points of view in different texts. These overlaps suggest a singular grand 'immanent saga' as the contextual background for narratives about the Icelandic past. If we consider this 'immanent saga' as an invisible whole, the written sagas themselves are the visible realisations of narrative possibilities offered by the 'immanent saga'. We could compare this 'immanent saga' to the concept of the rhizome as described by Deleuze and Guattari – that is, as a texture expanding in all directions, with nodes and knots emerging at certain points.[48] Whilst the concept of the rhizome is characterised by its lack of rigid structural organisation and hierarchy, there may arise contingent hierarchical structures at certain nodes or knots. These structures are not predictable, but they are enabled by the rhizome and its uncountable options of growth. All these structures emerging from the rhizome are connected, but each of them is something new.

If we were to imagine Clover's 'immanent whole' or the 'immanent saga' as a rhizome, we could understand it as an expansive narrative texture, out of which distinct nodes and knots – that is, the distinct texts preserved in the (extant) manuscript tradition – emerge at certain points, all with their contingent hierarchical relations in their specific instances, yet all still connected to the rest of the rhizomatic structure. The texts are anonymous because each version of a text is a momentary realisation of a narrative possibility prompted by circumstances specific to exactly that version. This

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45   Clover 1986, p. 36.
46   Clover 1986, p. 36.
47   On oral tradition and cultural memory see Hermann 2013.
48   Deleuze / Guattari 1977, p. 11.

means that the 'author' of one version is part of the heteronomous authorial agencies producing the rhizome. When viewed through the lens of the rhizome, 'weak' or heteronomous authorship can therefore be seen as a strength of Icelandic saga literature: it both constitutes the foundation of each text and secures the longevity and adaptability of the texts. Thinking about sagas in terms of rhizomatic structures also incorporates oral, as well as written, realisations of a given text, which may emerge at any geographical or temporal point of the rhizome.

Carol Clover positions her 'immanent saga' in the preliterary period prior to any authorial activity leading to the texts we have today. The idea of the rhizome, however, does not force us to make this kind of clear-cut division between oral tradition and the sagas as written products produced by literary authors. It also offers us the possibility to accept different versions of one saga as equal representations of it: within a rhizomatic framework, the oral transmission and written manifestation of longer or shorter parts of the 'immanent whole' or the 'immanent saga(s)' can co-exist simultaneously. The rhizomatic concept allows for changes, variance, rewriting, and the re-composition of texts, whether written or within an oral transmission. Oral tradition and literary composition need not be considered as oppositions, but as complementary to one another. According to the framework of the rhizome, everybody interested in narration can take part in literary production; thus, the names of individual authors are not necessary.

Within the extant sagas, we find a number of signs indicating their rhizomatic nature, such as their shared storyworld,[49] which leads to many overlaps between individual sagas, and their common chronotope – that is, the distinctive way that sagas have of organising narrative time and space in line with certain formal conventions.[50] The sagas also demonstrate an awareness of this storyworld being part of their shared narrative rhizome, as references to other sagas or to different or more detailed versions prove.

What do we gain by talking about the rhizomatic nature of saga literature instead of a common cultural tradition? For one thing, if we use a rhizomatic model of saga literature, we are able to acknowledge the fact that oral and literary traditions can exist at the same time and do not have to exclude one another. According to Carol Clover's argument, in pre-literary times there was no need to tell longer or 'whole sagas' in full, because the audience knew the context of the stories and could fill in the information necessary to understand the parts.[51] Yet this information still existed in the periods in which the sagas were written down: "At many places in the extant texts characters are

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49   On the concept of the storyworld, see Ryan 2015. I want to thank Rebecca Merkelbach for introducing me to this interesting concept.

50   Bampi 2017, p. 8.

51   Clover 1986, p. 34.

referred to in ways that suggest that the writer took for granted that his audience was already familiar with them and thus able to interpret correctly the events that were being described [...]."[52] Compared to other sagas, for example, *Reykdæla saga* and *Ljósvetninga saga* offer only very short genealogical or other biographical information about their characters, seemingly relying on their audience to supplement this knowledge themselves. The scholarly debate about the *Íslendingasögur* has been hampered by oral and literary tradition having been conceived either as oppositions or as different traditions following one another, the idea being that once the writing of the sagas started, oral tradition came to an end. Yet oral and literary tradition need not be perceived as opposition; rather, they may well have interacted.[53] If we assume the rhizomatic character of saga literature and thus the heteronomous authorship of the sagas, orality and literacy no longer need to be thought of as a dichotomy, with folklore on the one hand and literary art on the other, but can be understood as co-existing performances of narration, even though today we have access only to the written nodes of the underlying Icelandic narrative rhizome. Even if we acknowledge the simultaneity of oral and written tradition, though, we must bear in mind that the written sagas we have today are for us the only accessible nodes of the very large and complex rhizome of medieval Icelandic literature, and that these nodes are not necessarily linked by direct lines that can be represented by a traditional stemma. Stemmas usually imply a clear hierarchy of versions and their preserved manuscripts, but this is mainly due to the often few extant manuscripts of a text. The picture looks quite different if there are many manuscripts of a single saga, as the example of *Njáls saga* proves; this saga's complicated stemma tells its own story of a very complex and non-linear transmission.[54] The more text-witnesses we have – and the more nodes of the underlying rhizome that are therefore visible – the more the apparent stemmatic hierarchy dissolves.

If we accept saga literature as having a rhizomatic character, our notions of saga authorship must also be affected, because we can no longer look confidently for an archetypal version – perhaps even with an identifiable and datable author – as the origin of all extant text-witnesses, a search that Örnólfur Thorsson has called "leitin að landinu fagra" ('the search for the promised land').[55] Whilst we may be able to identify the last authorial agency of a textual representative in a manuscript, this agency is itself part of a much larger authorial agency consisting of different agents taking part

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52 Gísli Sigurðsson 2004, p. 248.

53 This has been repeatedly claimed in scholarship about oral tradition. Regarding Icelandic saga literature, see for example Gísli Sigurðsson 2004. Slavica Ranković (2010, p. 67) has suggested to substitute the idea of a linear timeline of the oral-written continuum with a three-dimensional model, thus "allowing for any degree of complexity" of interactions between the oral and the written.

54 Lethbridge / Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir 2018, plate 12.

55 Örnólfur Thorsson 1990.

in creating the rhizome: the heterogeneous authorship of saga literature. Proposing that sagas have a rhizomatic character is therefore different from looking at them as the products of cultural memory, with each text being an individual, authorised offspring of that memory. If we regard the sagas as visual nodes of an extended literary rhizome, we can realise that the alleged 'weakness' of heteronomous authorship can actually be seen as a strength of Icelandic saga literature, in that it enables us to view these texts as part of an interwoven and strong literary texture produced by a multitude of synchronically and diachronically productive authorial agencies.

7. *Mouvance* and Variance in Saga Literature

The diachronic aspect of this model becomes clearer if we relate it to the notion of *mouvance* in medieval texts, a term coined by Paul Zumthor to describe the intertextuality of medieval texts, represented by the aspects of 'model' and 'variance'.[56] 'Model' refers to the vertical axis of the pre-existing possibilities or virtual actualisations of a text.[57] The horizontal axis refers to 'variance', the essential characteristic of medieval literature which excludes the notion of the authenticity of a single text.[58] In the space defined by the two axes, medieval literature unfolds as an "enchevêtrement de textes, dont chacun revendique à peine son autonomie" ('entanglement of texts, of which each one barely claims its autonomy').[59] Within this entanglement, the notion of retelling is one of the main principles, as a form of translating a text into a new context.[60]

    Since we have access only to a limited number of preserved texts, we can barely imagine what this entanglement must have been like in the Middle Ages, with a multitude of authorial agencies taking part in producing and weaving this textual network of oral and written literary traditions. We can get a glimpse of these different authorial agencies, however, when we look at the voices within our texts as a dimension of the 'poetic' text – which, as Zumthor puts it, is a "dimension that is socioculturally determined", meaning that the voices within it do not possess 'an inscrutable otherness'.[61] In the sagas we find not only the narratorial voice, but a multitude of voices in the characters' dialogues and the stanzas they speak. Like other medieval texts, the sagas thus "encompass a whole range of positions between the internally and the externally dialogic."[62] Whereas in the sagas we rarely find an 'I' recounting the events, there are

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56   Zumthor 1981, p. 9.
57   Zumthor 1981, p. 10.
58   Zumthor 1981, p. 14.
59   Zumthor 1981, p. 15.
60   For retelling as one of the main principles in medieval literature, see Worstbrock 1999.
61   Zumthor 1984, p. 67.
62   Butterfield 1990, p. 192.

usually a number of 'I's present within these dialogues, sometimes quoting stanzas, sometimes even as the narrators of small stories. Thus, in the sagas we have the paradoxical situation of the narration itself being anonymous, whilst all direct speech within the saga is authored by that anonymous narratorial voice.

From our modern perspective, the 'narrator' is as close as we can get to the author of an anonymous text. Yet can there be 'a narrator', in the sense of a unique voice, in a literary product characterised by *mouvance* and variance? Perhaps this voice is anonymous because it is not the voice of one narrator, but the result of a heterogenous authorial act, following the implicit rules that enable different agencies to retell, rewrite, reorganise, or to continue a story contained in the literary rhizome. More important than the identity of the narrator is *that* something is narrated and *how* it is narrated. The act of narration comes before the act of identifying and monopolises the act of narrating.[63]

With their multitude of voices, sagas should be considered a participatory form of storytelling and thus a form of heterogenous authorship. This multiple participation is mirrored in the diegesis when characters tell each other stories, correct others, or refer to public opinion. The prosimetric form of many of the *Íslendingasögur* can also be regarded as a reflection of participatory story-stelling: although many stanzas are part of a dialogue, other stanzas are spoken that do not clearly address either the intradiegetic or the extradiegetic audience. This is also mirrored on the level of discourse when the narratorial voices refer to tradition ('svá er sagt' / 'it is told') as a source or a witness for the authenticity of their story. When we look at these references to tradition, we see that the line between intradiegetic public opinion and extradiegetic tradition is quite often blurred, as is the border between the sagas themselves.[64] The sagas tend to overlap in matter and quite often share a common cast of characters, so it is more reasonable to see the works not as self-contained entities, but as interlocking parts of a larger whole.[65] Yet it is not only the borders between different sagas that are blurred, but also the borders of what we could consider as one saga.[66] Sagas can be expanded, continued, shortened, and interwoven with other texts; each narratorial voice has to decide where to draw the line between where one saga ends and another begins. The *Íslendingasögur* as a genre are held together not only by their storyworld and by a shared chronotope, but also by their synchronically and diachronically intertextual entanglement as a result of their heteronomous authorship. Unlike with collaborative author-

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63 I have here altered a sentence in Eva von Contzen's article by substituting my reference to narration for the original reference to experience: "The act of experiencing comes before the act of identifying and monopolises the act of narrating" (von Contzen 2018, p. 77). Although I find Eva von Contzen's article stimulating in many ways, I hesitate to agree with her that narration involves less communication than experience.

64 Gropper 2021.

65 Clover 1982, p. 20.

66 Clover 1982, p. 26.

ship, the participants in heteronomous authorship do not necessarily work together in a group; whilst some individuals in this framework may work collaboratively, most work independently, synchronically, and diachronically, but nevertheless seem to follow the underlying rules of the genre in general and of a text in particular.

8. A Case-Study: Heteronomous Authorship in *Sneglu-Halla þáttr*

As a tale about an obstreperous Icelandic poet (*skáld*) at the court of the Norwegian king Haraldr Sigurðarson (1015–1066), the short narrative (*þáttr*) about Sneglu-Halli fits best to the chronotope of the *Íslendingasögur*. The text is preserved in two medieval manuscripts, *Flateyjarbók* and *Morkinskinna*,[67] with both differing from each other. In *Flateyjarbók*, a large manuscript from the first half of the 14th century containing sagas about the Norwegian kings, the *þáttr* is a later addition, written in the 15th century and starting without a heading; the beginning of the *þáttr* was meant to be marked with a large initial, but the space reserved for it was never filled. In *Morkinskinna*, a fragmentary manuscript from the second half of the 13th century that also contains kings' sagas, *Sneglu-Halla þáttr* is integrated into the section about King Haraldr Sigurðarson, marked by an initial as a new chapter but without a special heading. In addition to these two manuscripts, there are later manuscripts in which the *þáttr* is preserved as a separate text with its own heading.

As with all medieval Icelandic texts that have been preserved in more than one medieval manuscript, there has been a debate about the dating of the tale and about which version is older and closer to the presumed 'original'.[68] This question is complicated further by the fact that the *þáttr* contains stanzas that may have been composed by the historical *skálds* Halli and Þjóðólfr in the 11th century.[69] The main plot is very similar in both versions, which also share a number of narratological characteristics, including a heterodiegetic narrative voice with changing focalisation, few but clear judgements about the characters, a considerable portion of direct speech, skaldic stanzas, and a linear sequence of events.

There are, however, considerable differences in the way in which each version tells the story, the most obvious being at the beginning and the end of the tale. Whereas *Flateyjarbók* begins with a longer introduction about the historical context of the events, *Morkinskinna* immediately introduces Halli and tells of his first encounter with the king. In *Morkinskinna*, the *þáttr* ends after Halli returns from England to Norway, whilst in

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67   [Sneglu-Halla þáttr, Flateyjarbók], pp. 261–295; the text of the *Flateyjarbók*-version is printed below the text of the *Morkinskinna*-version [Sneglu-Halla þáttr, Morkinskinna].

68   See Jónas Kristjánsson 1956, pp. CIX–CXII.

69   Gade 2009.

Flateyjarbók another episode involving the king and the *skáld*, which includes some rather sordid stanzas about the Norwegian queen, follows after Halli's return.

Furthermore, the narratorial voices also differ significantly between the two versions. In *Flateyjarbók*, the narrative voice marks clearly the beginning of the narrative: "Þat er upphaf þessar frásagnir, at Haraldr konungr Sigurðarson réð fyrir Nóregi" ('This is the beginning of this tale, that King Haraldr Sigurðarson ruled Norway').[70] At the same time, this voice emphasises the time and place of the narrated events; *Sneglu-Halla þáttr* is here not meant to be a general exemplum for the Icelandic-Norwegian relationship but is presented as a historical anecdote at King Haraldr Sigurðarson's court. The Norwegian king receives a great deal of praise and attention from the narrative voice, which not only begins by referencing the king and his importance, but also gives the king the last word before the narrative voice itself concludes the tale. Throughout the *þáttr*, Haraldr is as much the main character as the Icelandic *skáld*; his importance is indicated at the very beginning, with the narrative voice revealing the identity of the unknown man that Halli encounters as Haraldr even before we are told that Halli himself had recognised the king: *Þessi maðr spurði, er reyndar var Haraldr konungr Sigurðarson:* [...] *Halli vissi gjǫrla, við hvern hann talaði.*[71] ('This man, who was actually King Haraldr Sigurðarson, asked: [...] Halli knew exactly whom he was speaking to.') The king's authority is here implied to be more important than plot suspense. Halli, by contrast, is only the fifth character to be introduced into the narrative – that is, he is only one of several characters meeting the king. All encounters between these characters and the king are about questions of power and hierarchy, of obeying the rules of the court and the king's orders. This perspective of the king's power provides the frame for each episode, as for example in the competition to compose the best stanza about the dwarf Túta:

> Konungrinn kvaddi sér hljóðs ok mælti: "Sá maðr, er kveðr um dverginn vísu, svá at mér þykki vel kveðin, þiggi af mér kníf þenna ok belti," – ok lagði fram á borðit fyrir sik gripina. "En vitið þat víst, ef mér þykkir eigi vel kveðinn, at hann skal hafa óþǫkk mína, en miss gripina beggja."[72]

> The king asked for silence and said, "That man who composes such a stanza about the dwarf that seems to me well composed may get this knife and belt from me," – and he put the precious objects in front of himself. "But you may know that for sure, if I don't think it is well composed, you will have my ingratitude, but be without both precious things."

The king's words imply that the stanza's quality depends solely on his personal judgement, that is, whether he likes the stanza or not. He is less interested in good skaldic

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70   [Sneglu-Halla þáttr, Flateyjarbók], p. 270. All translations are my own.
71   [Sneglu-Halla þáttr, Flateyjarbók], p. 265.
72   [Sneglu-Halla þáttr, Flateyjarbók], p. 270.

poetry than in the skalds' competition and in his power to decide over the victory. When Halli wants to recite a praise poem about the king, the king does not answer him directly, but turns this request into a competition between Halli and his fellow *skáld* Þjóðólfr by encouraging Þjóðólfr to tell details of Halli's past: *Konungr brosti at, ok þótti honum gaman at etja þeim saman*[73] ('The king smiled and he had fun to make them fight'). The king's superior position and his power to make others do whatever he wants is emphasised by the phrase 'etja saman' ('to make fight'), which in other sagas is used primarily for horse-fights. For the king, the praise-poem itself seems less important than a chance to manipulate his inferiors.

In *Flateyjarbók*, it is Halli's narrative function to resist this manipulation, to challenge the king and to prove himself equal to him. Although Halli uses his poetic talent, the narrative focuses on his wit and his trickeries, characterising him less as a skaldic competitor than as a trickster and a rogue. He invents a dead brother and manages to make Einarr pay penance for this fictitious brother; this is commented upon by one of the other men at court: *Engum manni ertu líkr at prettum*[74] ('Nobody is like you when it comes to tricks'). Halli's encounters with the king are also presented as a discourse of power within the political and social hierarchy. In the last episode of the *þáttr*, the king challenges Halli to compose an ambiguous stanza about the queen; although the queen herself is offended by the subsequent sexual allusions put forward by Halli, the king enjoys these kinds of ambiguities and finally makes Halli an official member of his court. Yet the king's final judgement of Halli, when he comments on his death, is not exactly flattering: *Á grauti mun greyið sprungit hafa*[75] ('The poor fellow may have burst on gruel'). In referring to Halli as a 'grey' ('coward', 'bitch'), the king himself uses words with a (female) sexual connotation and emphasises his (male) superiority over Halli. The very last word in the *þáttr*, however, belongs to the narrative voice: *Lýk ek þar sǫgu frá Sneglu-Halli*[76] (Here I end the tale of Sneglu-Halli'). Thus, the narratorial voice marks clearly the end of the story just as it had marked the beginning. In *Flateyjarbók*, the narrative voice – which in the end even manifests in the first person singular – displays its strength and claims authority over the narrative; it is the narrative voice that decides over what will happen within the discourse of power narrated in the *þáttr*. The *Flateyjarbók* version of *Sneglu-Halla þáttr* is therefore at the same time a narrative about hierarchy in society and a demonstration of verbal and narrative power.

In *Morkinskinna*, however, the narrative voice seems to be more inconspicuous. The beginning of the story is marked only indirectly, with the narrative voice framing itself

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73   [Sneglu-Halla þáttr, Flateyjarbók], p. 277.
74   [Sneglu-Halla þáttr, Flateyjarbók], p. 287.
75   [Sneglu-Halla þáttr, Flateyjarbók], p. 295.
76   [Sneglu-Halla þáttr, Flateyjarbók], p. 295.

as temporarily interrupting the previous strand of *Haralds saga*: *Ok lýkr nú hér at sinni frá Hákoni jarli ok Haraldi konungi*[77] ('And for the time being here it ends about Jarl Hákon and King Haraldr'). The temporal relation of the following *þáttr* to this previous episode is also unclear: *Eitt sumar kom skip af Íslandi, ok var þar á Sneglu-Halli*[78] ('One summer a ship came from Iceland, and Sneglu-Halli was on it'). After a short characterisation of Halli, the plot begins with the verbal exchange between Halli and the unknown man mentioned above, whose identity here remains unknown to the audience until the end of the scene when he turns out to be King Haraldr. Subsequently, in the scene after Halli's arrival at the king's court, the king asks his *skáld* Þjóðólfr to compose a stanza about the quarrel between a tanner and a blacksmith. When Þjóðólfr posits that the quarrel between two craftsmen is not a worthy subject for a court-poet, the king explains the task: *"Gør sem ek mæli,"* segir konungr, *"ok er nǫkkveri meiri vandinn á en þú ætlar. Þú skalt gøra af þeim nǫkkvat aðra men en þeir eru; lát annan vera Geirrøð jǫtun en annan Þórr"*[79] ('"Do as I say," said the king, "it is a bit more difficult than you think. You shall make them other persons than they are, let one be the giant Geirrøðr, but the other Þórr"').

This episode sets the *þáttr*'s main topic in the *Morkinskinna*-version: the quality of skaldic poetry which can be produced, judged, and appreciated only by specialists. The king proves himself a specialist because he is able to explain in very few but precise words what skaldic poetry is about: the correct use of metaphorical language and of the different semantic layers of a skaldic stanza. This discussion about the quality of stanzas and poems continues as a skaldic competition between the two poets Þjóðólfr and Halli. In judging the quality of the skaldic stanzas, the king also explains the aesthetic criteria of skaldic poetry: that one should establish a certain stylistic level by using *kenningar*, i.e. poetic figures of speech, based on different myths, and that the art of a stanza is related at least as much to its form and verbal expression as to its content. As in the *Flateyjarbók* version, the king is said to be fond of ambiguities, but in *Morkinskinna*, these ambiguities are a means of intellectual power: to be able to understand these ambiguities means to be intellectually superior, and this superiority leads itself to intellectual satisfaction. This mechanism becomes clear when Halli visits first the Danish and then the English kings; neither of them understands his kind of poetry or can compete with Halli's quick-wittedness. Although Halli is socially inferior, he is certainly intellectually superior to these kings.

The theme of verbal power on the level of the *histoire* is mirrored on the level of *discourse*. Large sections of the *Morkinskinna* version are presented almost like scenes in a film, in that the narrative voice introduces the setting and then zooms in to the char-

77 [Sneglu-Halla þáttr, Morkinskinna], p. 269.
78 [Sneglu-Halla þáttr, Morkinskinna], p. 270.
79 [Sneglu-Halla þáttr, Morkinskinna], p. 271.

acters talking to each other, as, for example, in the argument between Halli and Þjóðólfr. Here the narrative voice explains the setting: on Christmas Eve, Halli wants to present a poem to the king, but, as in the *Flateyjarbók* version, the king first asks his court-poet Þjóðólfr for his opinion. What then follows in *Morkinskinna* is a very lively conversation between the two skalds and the king, without any interference from the narrative voice except for short inquit-formulae.[80] In this passage, the narrative voice leaves the verbal power completely up to its characters; like the king, who treats his socially inferior court-poets as intellectual equals, the narrative voice treats the characters as narratological equals. Whereas the *Flateyjarbók*-version of *Sneglu-Halla þáttr* is about social hierarchy, both on the level of *histoire* as well as on the level of *discours*, the *Morkinskinna* version is on both narrative levels about intellectual hierarchy, represented through the lens of the complex art of skaldic poetry.

Sneglu-Halla þáttr is in many respects a typical representative of heteronomous authorship. It is anonymous, preserved in different versions; it is integrated in larger textual unities without clearly defined borders; it refers to tradition; and it contains a considerable portion of direct speech, as well as stanzas attributed to named authors. As with other prosimetrical *Íslendingasögur*, the *þáttr* highlights the difference between the stories told in the prose as heteronomous, and thus anonymous, products based on the rhizome of Icelandic literary tradition, and skaldic poetry as an individually crafted, and therefore authorised, non-narrative literary product that is less open to variance and *mouvance* than prose.

Neither of the two versions of the *þáttr* is 'better' or 'worse', even if some scholars may prefer one version depending on their personal literary interest and their area of research. Jeffrey Turco, for example, concentrates on the *Flateyjarbók* version of the tale because "it exhibits a preoccupation with class stratification and social identities that may indeed be reflexive of later developments in medieval society."[81] Somebody who is more interested in medieval literary or aesthetic discourse, however, may well prefer the *Morkinskinna* version. Each of the two versions makes sense – within its specific manuscript and as a separate text. Each version is only one realisation of the many narrative possibilities contained in the 'model' of *Sneglu-Halla þáttr*, with each version having been made possible by a number of authorial agencies, synchronically as well as diachronically. Within medieval Icelandic literature, the example of *Sneglu-Halla þáttr* is the norm rather than the exception: whenever there are several manuscripts of one story, there must also be different versions.

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80   [Sneglu-Halla þáttr, Morkinskinna], pp. 276–278.
81   Turco 2015, p. 195.

9. Conclusion

What consequences does this discussion about authorship have for our reading of the sagas? For one thing, considering each saga as a 'text-work' based on the rhizomatic 'immanent whole' allows us to understand the creative avenues that this approach to authorship opened up for rewriting, retelling, continuation, abbreviation, and other kinds of changes. Each 'text-witness' of a saga is in some way related to one 'text-work', sometime several 'text-works'; whilst Bo-A. Wendt focuses on the hierarchical structure of this relationship,[82] I prefer to emphasise the rhizomatic relationship of the text-witnesses of one saga, as well as of saga literature in general. In the Middle Ages, telling a story meant composing a story in a particular format, using well-known models, finding material, and adapting it to one's own needs. This did not necessarily mean that the storytellers had to invent a story, but rather that they could retell a story and adapt it into a new context, whether social or literary. This kind of storytelling was taught in schools, where various modes of amplification of the selected material were systematised and reinforced.

An awareness of these creative opportunities enables us also to characterise accurately not only text-production, but also text-reception. Within the rhizomatic framework of heterogenous authorship, an audience would have recognised a text in different versions or 'text-witnesses' as the 'same', i.e. as a different realisation of the same 'text-work', but would have been able at the same time to appreciate each version's peculiarities: "A medieval reader / hearer, then, would not only be alert to the ways in which a text was actually developed, but would also be sensitive to the writer's mastery of options from which he made his final choices."[83] The audience of a saga probably knew other versions, whether oral ones or written ones; thus, the audience of *Sneglu-Halla þáttr* would have perceived the potential of the story for being realised in different ways, and would have been able to appreciate how it was adapted and inserted differently into *Flateyjarbók* and *Morkinskinna*.

Perhaps it was precisely this knowledge of different versions that made both audiences and narrators sensitive to the *mouvance* of these texts; it was not a question of which text-witness contained the correct version of a story or which narrator produced the best version, but in what ways the heteronomous authorship of the 'text-work' could bring out the best of its aesthetic and artistic potential. It is in acknowledging the anonymity of the *Íslendingasögur* as a key feature of the genre, then, rather than as a failing to be corrected by scholars, that we see clearly how focusing on their characteristics of *mouvance* and of the heteronomous authorship that (re-)wrote and (re-)told these stories need not disqualify them as literary art, but can instead open up possibilities for

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82   Wendt 2006, p. 262.
83   Murphy 2008, p. 66.

us to develop a more accurate understanding of how interactions between the various agencies within medieval Icelandic society worked to produce literary art of a different, but by no means inferior, character.

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Stylometry and the Faded Fingerprints of Saga Authors

Abstract

Over the past two decades, Burrows' Delta and its descendants have been prominent methods of authorship attribution. In this chapter, we consider recent attempts to apply variations of this method to the study of Old Norse sagas, and discuss the broader inferences of these findings. Earlier stylometric measures suggest, for instance, that *Egils saga*, *Ólafs saga helga*, and *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* were composed by the same author, and that *Íslendinga saga* and *Þórðar saga kakala* were composed by the same author. A Rolling Delta analysis, in which the works under observation are divided into equal-sized segments and then measured against each other, implies a more intricate relationship between these and other Old Norse sagas.

Over the last few decades researchers have applied mathematical formulas to digitised corpuses of texts in order to identify stylistic characteristics of individual authors. An effective stylometric measure, originally developed by the Australian literary scholar John Burrows, is the Burrows' Delta statistic.[1] Researchers using this method begin by identifying the most frequently occurring words in a substantial corpus of texts. Focus is then placed on the most common words of each text within the corpus to calculate to what degree the text deviates from the general standard. If the deviation of two or more texts exposes a similar pattern, these texts are likely to have been written by the same author. The principle here is not so much that our vocabulary is personal, but rather how frequently we use individual expressions in our vocabulary.[2]

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1   Burrows 2002; Burrows 2003. We would like to thank Kelsey Paige Hopkins, Alexander Wilson, and the editors of this volume for their valuable editorial assistance while we were preparing this chapter for publication.
2   It has been suggested that a prose text must consist of more than 2500 words to be measured with any certainty in this way, cf. Eder 2015. Nouns, proper nouns, and toponyms are at times omitted from the corpus before it is measured, to reduce the effects of narrative modes and topics upon the outcome.

In recent years, the authors of this chapter, as well as Haukur Þorgeirsson, have applied variants of the Burrows' Delta Method to a limited corpus of Old Norse sagas.[3] These inquiries indicated that *Egils saga* and some kings' sagas from *Heimskringla*, in particular *Ólafs saga helga* and *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*, may have been written by the same author. Furthermore, our research suggested that several sagas in the *Sturlunga saga* collection, in particular *Íslendinga saga* and *Þórðar saga kakala*, were written by the same author. In this chapter we will discuss some of the premises and implications of this research. We will also introduce new assessments provided by the Overlapping Rolling Delta analysis to an extended corpus of sagas, in which the texts under examination are divided into numerous equal-sized segments which are all measured against each other. The aim here is to detect different styles within the same text which may, for instance, have been co-authored by two or more individuals.[4]

1.

"Never trust to general impressions, my boy, but concentrate yourself upon details", exclaims Sherlock Holmes to his friend and associate, Dr. John H. Watson, in *A Case of Identity*, one of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's many short stories and novels about the dynamic duo in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[5] In most of these narratives, the detective follows his own advice. In *A Case of Identity*, for instance, Holmes discovers that a woman who visits him is wearing on her right hand a glove that is torn at the forefinger, and that "both the glove and the finger are stained with violet ink". Holmes suggests to Dr. Watson that the visitor had penned a letter shortly before leaving her home: "She had written in a hurry and dipped her pen too deep. It must have been this morning, or the mark would not remain clear upon the finger."[6] As the example refers both to writing and the method traditionally used to collect fingerprints, it can serve as a prelude to the following discussion of author attribution studies, which are based on identifying stylistic features of a particular writer.

Scholars in this field sometimes refer to the Morellian method, developed by the 19th-century art historian Giovanni Morelli. Like Doyle, Morelli was trained as a physician, although he is primarily remembered for changing people's ideas about painters' stylistic characteristics, which he said could be detected in "details, especially those least significant in the style typical of the painter's own school; earlobes, fingernails,

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3   Steingrímur Kárason et al. 2017; Haukur Þorgeirsson 2018.
4   At the outset, there is an overlap between this article and our earlier article, Steingrímur Kárason et al. 2017, published in Icelandic.
5   Doyle 1891, p. 248.
6   Doyle 1891, p. 254.

shapes of fingers and toes".[7] Some fifty years ago, Enrico Castelnuovo emphasised that the Morellian method was similar to Sherlock Holmes' approach to crime.[8] Later, Carlo Ginzburg explained that both Doyle and Morelli had been influenced by "medical semiotics or symptomatology – the discipline which permits diagnosis, though the disease cannot be directly observed, on the basis of superficial symptoms or signs, often irrelevant to the eye of the layman, or even of Dr. Watson".[9] Ginzburg added that during the second half of the 19th century, a semiotic interpretation of reality became a standard approach in the field of humanities. During the same period, literary scholars began to identify likely authors of the anonymous Old Norse sagas by examining minor details in these texts.

In his work *Attributing Authorship*, Harald Love underlines that the cases scholars have made in regard to identifying authors of anonymous works can be classified into external and internal arguments. External arguments utilise contemporary information in documents connected to particular authors, e.g. personal letters, diaries, and public records, whereas internal arguments make use of information found within the work in question.[10] Love also points out that it is useful to make a distinction between whether the researcher is working toward a conclusion regarding uncertain authorship from a general context or from details in the text. This division is parallel to the proposed difference between deductive and inductive reasoning.[11] In the second half of the 19th century, Charles Sanders Peirce memorably explained this difference with an example involving a handful of beans, a bag of beans, and the relationship between the two.

      Deduction 1
Rule   All the beans from this bag are white.
Case   These beans are from this bag.
∴ Result These beans are white.

      Induction 1
Case   These beans are from this bag.
Result   These beans are white.
∴ Rule   All the beans from this bag are white.[12]

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7   Ginzburg 1983, p. 82.
8   Castelnuovo 1968, p. 782.
9   Ginzburg 1983, p. 87.
10   Love 2002, p. 51.
11   Cf. Sebeok / Umiker-Sebeok 1983.
12   Peirce 1878, p. 471.

Reliable knowledge is usually based on deduction; it seems impossible to doubt an outcome based on this kind of reasoning. However, we frequently apply induction in our scholarly research (as well as in detective work), i.e. predicting an outcome on what seems to be quite likely. Yet Peirce also discussed the valuable insights based on what he called either *abduction* or *hypothesis.* In such a case, the researcher makes a prediction on the basis of rather limited knowledge.[13] Peirce explained this method with a third model relating to a handful of beans and a bag of beans:

> Abduction 1
> Rule   All the beans from this bag are white.
> Result These beans are white.
> ∴ Case These beans are from this bag.[14]

Although it can be tricky to verify the outcome (∴) of abductive reasoning, this is a method that often leads to new and startling discoveries. Scholars have pointed out that Sherlock Holmes repeatedly uses abduction in his work as a detective, but his success is by and large attributable to the ways in which he connects two or more hypotheses that support each other.[15]

In this context, it is worth recalling how the Danish philologist Kristian Kålund explained the toponym Fiskivötn ('Fish-lakes'), which appears in the second half of *Njáls saga.* Kålund's analysis, published in 1879, testifies to the early influence of symptomatology in Old Norse studies. According to *Njáls saga*, Flosi Þórðarson and his men passed Fiskivötn on their way from Flosi's farm Svínafell in the south-eastern part of Iceland to Njáll's farm Bergþórshvoll – more precisely, as they rode through the mountain pass north of Mýrdalsjökull and Eyjafjallajökull glaciers. Kålund correctly pointed out that there were no Fiskivötn located near this route, at least not during the late 19th century; however, lakes named Fiskivötn could be found considerably farther north of this area. This suggested to Kålund that the author of the saga had a general geographical knowledge of the region but had never travelled into the mountains on his own. In other words, Kålund saw a limited knowledge of the exact location of Fiskivötn as a 'symptom' of a learned individual, possibly Bishop Brandur Jónsson, who served for some time as an abbot in the Augustinian monastery of Þykkvibær, which is on the lowland southeast of the mountains.[16] Kålund's tentative hypothesis can be presented as an example of abduction:

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13   Cf. Harrowitz 1983, pp. 181–183.
14   Peirce 1878, p. 472.
15   Cf. Bonfantini / Proni 1983.
16   Kålund 1979, p. 328.

Abduction 2

Rule   The author of *Njáls saga* had inadequate knowledge of the location of Fiskivötn.

Result   Brandur Jónsson had inadequate knowledge of the location of Fiskivötn.

∴ Case   Brandur Jónsson was the author of *Njáls saga*.

A few years later, Sigurður Vigfússon rejected Kålund's hypothesis or, more precisely, its logical basis. Vigfússon said it was "obvious that the Fiskivötn, which the author of Njáls saga refers to, must have been north-east of Eyjafjallajökull, and that is where one should look for them".[17] He subsequently suggested that sand or volcanic eruption had possibly eliminated the lakes, or that toponyms in the area had changed since the Middle Ages.

This example implies how problematic it can be to identify the authors of the sagas of Icelanders (*Íslendingasögur*) with reference to their supposed geographical knowledge. The fact that most extant manuscripts of medieval Icelandic sagas are copies, or multiple copies of copies, poses a similar challenge. Consequently, the most reliable methods of author attribution studies, including those of traditional document analysis (in which the focus is, for example, placed on the scribe's hand and the ink used), are of limited use in Old Norse studies. The method most commonly applied in the field is author profiling, whereby the text is interpreted as a testament to the author's gender, education, profession, character, and age. Scholars try to map the author's knowledge of other literary texts, history, laws, and topography, as well as his or her aesthetic and political aims with writing the text in question.[18] Examples of this are the monographs *Uppruni Njálu og hugmyndir* ('The Origins of Njáls saga and Ideas') by Hermann Pálsson, who maintains that Bishop Árni Þorláksson (educated at the monastery of Þykkvabær) may have written *Njáls saga*, and *The Enigma of Egill* by Torfi Tulinius, in which *Egils saga* is interpreted as the work of Snorri Sturluson.[19]

A more concentrated area of research is based on the principles of forensic stylistics, in which spelling, unusual words, sentence structures, and dialectal features characteristic of a particular author are scrutinised.[20] At least three things make this kind of research difficult to apply to Old Norse sagas. Firstly, many of the sagas may be the products of an oral tradition or rewritings of earlier written narratives. Secondly, it can be tricky to obtain for comparison a written text that is verifiably written by a known author. And finally, it is quite likely that the grammatical and stylistic characteristics of a particular text are erased or changed when a manuscript is copied and recopied. The fundamental question is to what degree a saga can be regarded as having been written

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17   Sigurður Vigfússon 1883, p. 115.

18   Cf. Love 2002, pp. 119–131.

19   Hermann Pálsson 1984, pp. 97–111; Torfi Tulinius 2014, pp. 167–228.

20   Cf. Olsson 2008.

by one particular author. In this context, it is worth noting that scholars in the Middle Ages were already conscious of different classifications of authorship. For instance, in a 13th-century prologue to his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Libri Quatuor Sententiarum*, the Italian theologian and philosopher St. Bonaventure made a distinction between the roles of the scribe (*scriptor*), compiler (*compilator*), commentator (*commentator*), and author (*auctor*) in textual production:

> The method of making a book is fourfold. For someone writes the materials of others, adding or changing nothing, and this person is said to be merely the scribe. Someone else writes the materials of others, adding, but nothing of his own, and this person is said to be the compiler. Someone else writes both the material of other men, and of his own, but the materials of others as the principal materials, and his own annexed for the purpose of clarifying them, and this person is said to be the commentator, not the author. Someone else writes both his own materials and those of others, but his own as the principal materials, and the materials of others annexed for the purpose of confirming his own, and such must be called the author.[21]

It is interesting to see here how St. Bonaventure describes texts, even those composed by authors, as being inspired by (or being rewritings of) one or more earlier texts.

The problematic nature of the Old Norse research material can be further explained with reference to Peter Hallberg's extensive stylistic research of the saga corpus carried out in the 1960s. By comparing the ratio of rare words and certain unusual stylistic features of the sagas, Hallberg argued that *Heimskringla* and *Egils saga* had most likely been written by the same author. He examined, for example, the internal ratio division of the word-pairs "en er" ('but when') and "og er" ('and when') in 69 different sagas at the opening of sentences like "En / Og er sendimenn konungs komu til Kveldúlfs [...]" ('But / And when the king's messengers came to Kveldulf [...]'). Hallberg's manual counting revealed that "en er" was most commonly used in *Heimskringla* (in 93.5 % of the cases). *Víglundar saga* (82.5 %) and three sagas from the *Sturlunga*-collection – *Sturlu þáttur*, *Þórðar saga kakala*, and *Þorgils saga skarða* (with "en er" in 79 % of the cases) – were most analogous to *Heimskringla* in this respect.[22] In *Egils saga*, by comparison, "en er" was used only in 58 % of the cases. Interestingly, however, the ratio of "en er" reached 97 % in the first part of *Egils saga*, while in the second part it fell to 23 %. Hallberg suggested that this difference could be attributed to changes made by an unknown scribe who, at one point or another, had only copied the second half of the saga.[23] This argument can be presented as an example of abductive reasoning:

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21   Quoted from Minnis 1984, p. 94.
22   Hallberg 1968, pp. 200–202.
23   Hallberg 1963, pp. 10f.

Abduction 3

Rule   In the first half of *Egils saga* the ratio of "en er" is 97 %

Result   In the second half of *Egils saga* ratio of "en er" is 23 %

∴ Case Someone copying only the second half of *Egils saga* frequently changed "en er" to "og er"

The fault with this hypothesis is that it can work both ways; the frequent use of "en er" in the first half of *Egils saga* and *Heimskringla* could likewise be seen as the stylistic trademark of a particular scribe (or even scribes) rather than of a particular author.[24]

Yet Hallberg's argument was admittedly not quite so simple. In his research, he used Sigurður Nordal's edition of *Egils saga*, which is based on the 14th-century manuscript *Möðruvallabók*. Furthermore, he examined the ratio between "en er" and "og er" in the oldest preserved manuscript of *Egils saga*, the so-called 'theta-fragment' from around 1250, which contains a short section from the second part of the saga. Nordal's edition contains eight instances of "og er" in this section, all of which are "en er" in the same section of the theta-fragment. This was the essential premise that enabled Hallberg to regard "en er" rather than "og er" as an original stylistic feature of *Egils saga*. Haukur Þorgeirsson recently expanded this approach by calculating the internal ratio division between "en er" and "og er" in fourteen different digitalised manuscripts and fragments of *Egils saga*, including *Möðruvallabók* and the theta-fragment. He discovered that in the first half of *Möðruvallabók* (ch. 1–54), the ratio of "en er" in fact reaches 99 %, but in the second half (ch. 55-87), it drops to 15 % (Hallberg's counting was not fully accurate). In all the other manuscripts and fragments the average ratio of 'en er' is 89 %; in fact, this ratio reaches 100 % in the latter section of those manuscripts that contain this section of the saga in the first place (excluding *Möðruvallabók*).[25] With this additional material, Þorgeirsson was able to change Hallberg's abduction into a rather convincing case of induction:

Induction 2

Case   In all the manuscript pages of *Egils saga*, except *Möðruvallabók*, the ratio of "en er" is 89 %

Result   In the second half of *Egils saga* in *Möðruvallabók* the ratio of "en er" is 15 %

∴ Rule Someone copying only the second half of *Egils saga*, as it is preserved in *Möðruvallarbók*, frequently changed "en er" to "og er"

For his research, Hallberg used Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson's edition of *Heimskringla*, based on copies of the lost *Kringla* manuscript. It is indeed possible that the author of *Egils saga*

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24   Cf. Haukur Þorgeirsson 2014, p. 65.

25   Haukur Þorgeirsson 2014, pp. 65–70.

(or someone else who preferred the phrase "en er" to "og er") copied *Heimskringla* at some stage, eliminating from it most of the instances of "og er". A limited comparison between Aðalbjarnarson's edition and sections of *Heimskringla* from the *Codex Frisianus* manuscript suggests, however, that "en er" is the standard phrasing in the *Heimskringla* manuscript tradition.[26] Hence, we may concede that "en er" is a stylistic trademark of both the author of *Heimskringla* and the author of *Egils saga*. Still, we cannot spontaneously conclude that these two texts were written by the same author. That assumption is still only a hypothesis, similar to Kålund's suggestion that Bishop Brandur Jónsson wrote *Njáls saga* (Abduction 2).

	Abduction 4
Rule	The ratio of "en er" in the manuscript of *Heimskringla* is around 90 % or more
Result	The ratio of "en er" in the manuscript of *Egils saga* is around 90 % or more
∴ Case	The same author composed *Heimskringla* and *Egils saga*

It should be emphasised that Hallberg's stylistic research was both extensive and diverse, and based on more than simply the internal ratio division of "en er" and "og er". For example, he also identified so-called "pair words" that were found in *Heimskringla* and only one other saga – focusing on *Egils saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Njáls saga*, and *Grettis saga* – to reveal that *Egils saga* had more pair words in common with *Heimskringla* (38 %) than any of the other four sagas (9.5–19.5 %).[27] In this way and others, Hallberg's different abductions regarding a common authorship of *Heimskringla* and *Egils saga* generally supported each other. Various other stylistic studies devoted to these two works have pointed in the same direction.[28] The ongoing digitisation of the Old Norse saga corpus has been opening up new and exciting avenues in textual comparisons of this kind. However, most scholars dealing with this topic so far have focused on limited and often unusual stylistic traits that could possibly be created (or eliminated) by individual scribes.

2.

The Burrows' Delta Method, mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, is comparable to the Morellian method insofar as it focuses on details that are usually not regarded as a part of the personal style or vocabulary of the writer in question. As already stated,

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26   Haukur Þorgeirsson 2014, pp. 70f.

27   Hallberg 1962, pp. 26–28.

28   See i.e. West 1980. Louis-Jensen (2009) has a more critical view on these matters and also doubts about Snorri Sturluson's assumed authorship of *Heimskringla* (Louis-Jensen 1977; 2004). See also Jakob Benediktsson 1955 and Elín Bára Magnúsdóttir 2015, pp. 267–279.

researchers generally concentrate on the most frequently occurring words in a given text. These are quite often short and apparently insignificant expressions that may have more to do with how an author structures sentences than with the verbosity or elegance of his or her style. Ten of the most frequently occurring words and word forms in the corpus consisting of *Sturlunga saga*, *Heimskringla*, and *Íslendingasögur*, for example, are as follows: "og" ('and'), "hann" ('he'), "að" ('to'), "er" ('is'), "en" ('but'), "var" ('was'), "þá" ('then'), "til" ('to'), "í" ('in'), and "þeir" ('they'). One of the benefits of applying Burrows' Delta Method to the Old Norse corpus is that the internal ratio division of the most frequently occurring words in a relatively long text is unlikely to change significantly even if the text is copied frequently or published with diplomatic spelling. In fact, Burrows' Delta Method has even yielded rather good results when applied to translated texts.[29]

The logic of Burrows' Delta Method can be explained to some extent by looking first only at the most frequent word in *Sturlunga*, *Heimskringla*, and *Íslendingasögur*. In the control corpus, the frequency of "og" ('and') is 5.87 % (the standard deviation is 0.70 %). In Sturla Þórðarson's *Íslendinga saga*, by comparison, the frequency of "og" is 6.16 % (higher than the average of the control corpus) and in *Njáls saga* it is 5.52 % (lower than the average of the control corpus). Furthermore, in *Egils saga* the frequency of "og" is 5.26 % and in *Ólafs saga helga* it is 5.10 % (in both cases lower than the average of the control corpus). Rather than working with these percentages, we prefer to calculate 'how far' the frequency of "og" in these four sagas deviates from the frequency of "og" in the control corpus ('+' refers to a higher frequency and '–' refers to a lower frequency). According to our calculations, the *distance from the average* (DFA) of these four sagas from the control corpus is as follows: *Íslendinga saga* +0.30 %, *Njáls saga* –0.34 %, *Egils saga* –0.61 %, and *Ólafs saga helga* –0.77 %. These measurements are significant in the sense that they are on the same order of magnitude as the standard deviation and can be used to produce two different abductions:

Abduction 5

Rule	The DFA of "og" in *Njáls saga* is –0.34 %
Result	The DFA of "og" in *Íslendinga saga* is +0.30 %
∴ Case	*Njáls saga* and *Íslendinga saga* were not composed by the same author.

Abduction 6

Rule	The DFA of "og" in *Egils saga* is –0.61 %
Result	The DFA of "og" in *Ólafs saga helga* is –0.77 %,
∴ Case	*Heimskringla* and *Egils saga* were composed by the same author.

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29   Rybicki 2012.

The primary advantage of this approach is that it bypasses a major problem inherent in the manuscript tradition, at least as far as the influence of scribes (and even compilers) is concerned. Even if a text is copied again and again, it seems unlikely that any one scribe, or even a series of scribes, could drastically change the DFA of the most common word in a relatively long text. And yet Abductions 5 and 6 are both rather weak. The real power of Burrows' Delta Method, though, lies in its ability to link together numerous abductions of this sort. Researchers are, in short, able to calculate the *mutual* stylistic 'distance' of thousands of words in one saga from the pattern of the control corpus. With reference to Peirce's bean-bag examples, it can be argued that the digitalisation of these texts and the mathematical capabilities of computers have enabled researchers to increase substantially the number of beans from the bag that they have at their disposal.

During its development phase, Burrows' Delta Method was tested on a corpus of works that were all written by identified authors. Once its utility had been established, scholars began applying it in author attribution studies and expanding it by varying both the scaling method of the word frequencies (Burrows used z-scores) and the distance measure (Burrows used the Manhattan distance, otherwise known as the L_1 norm).[30] Based on results from researchers in the field, we decided to use z-scores but to employ the cosine distance measure variant of Burrows' Delta Method (cosine-delta distance).[31] We tested our own measurement tools by examining at the outset a corpus of forty-eight 19th-century novels published in English by sixteen known authors. First,

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30   Word frequency z-scores are calculated by first calculating the relative frequency of the words, then normalising that result by subtracting the mean and dividing the difference with the standard deviation for each word across the texts. In the example above, presented with Abductions 5 and 6, the z-score could have been used instead of the DFA with the same results, as all the numbers would be scaled with the same number, i.e. the standard deviation.

31   Our approach is especially inspired by Jannidis et al. 2015. The cosine similarity is a measure for the distance between two vectors in a multi-dimensional space and is based on the cosine of the angle, θ, between the vectors $\vec{x}_1$ and $\vec{x}_2$, where the arrow on top indicates a vector and the i subscript in the sums indicates the ith component of the vector:

$$\cos\theta = \frac{\vec{x}_1 \cdot \vec{x}_2}{\|\vec{x}_1\|_2 \|\vec{x}_2\|_2} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} x_{1i} x_{2i}}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{n} x_{1i}^2} \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{n} x_{2i}^2}}$$

The cosine distance measure is traditionally expressed as $1 - \cos\theta$ so that the measure is equal to zero when the vectors are identical and equal to one when the vectors are uncorrelated. (Note: If $n = 1$, i.e. only one word is being compared as in the example above [Abductions 5 and 6], $\cos\theta = +1$ if the DFAs have the same sign and $\cos\theta = -1$ if they have different signs. The cosine distance measure is therefore 2 for Abduction 5 and 0 for Abduction 6, i.e. at the extremes of the scale.) The strength of the cosine distance measure beyond the Euclidean distance measure (which is normally used for distance in lower dimensions) is manifested in multi-dimensional vector spaces where if the number of dimensions is high, then two randomly, independently chosen vectors will almost certainly be perpendicular, $\cos\theta = 0$ and cosine distance = 1, while Euclidean distance measure is less likely to distinguish between random vectors and correlated vectors. See Cho 2013, pp. 63–68 and Aggarwal et al. 2001, pp. 420–434.

all nouns (including proper nouns and toponyms) were eliminated from the original corpus, then focus was placed on the [1000] most frequent remaining words and the stylometric distance between each pair of texts calculated by applying the cosine distance measure on the vectors of z-scores. The cosine distance calculation is arranged so that if two texts have exactly the same frequency spectrum, then the outcome is zero [0.00]. If little or no stylistic relationship exists between two texts, then the outcome of the cosine distance is in the range 0.75–1.25. The groupings of texts, based on their stylistic similarities, is shown as a dendrogram in Chart 1.

In every case where individual works were written by the same author, the measurement made a correct match. The similarity between different works by an individual author was nonetheless quite varied, with cosine-delta distances ranging from 0.25 to 0.75.[32] The novel *Our Mutual Friend* by Charles Dickens, for example, is stylistically rather distinct from the other three novels by Dickens in this corpus. Interestingly, *Our Mutual Friend* was serialised toward the end of the author's career in 1864/1865, while the other three novels were all serialised during a span of a few years: *Nicholas Nickleby* in 1838/1839, *Barnaby Rudge* in 1841, and *Martin Chuzzlewit* in 1843/1844. This might suggest that the style of an author can develop from one period to another, but there can certainly be other explanations.

The most interesting result presented on Chart 1 is that English translations of three novels by Fyodor Dostoevsky were grouped together. The stylistic affinity between two novels translated by the same translator, *The Possessed* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, proved closer than in some cases between different novels written by the same English or American novelist. The third translation of *The Idiot* by a different translator, was further removed from the other two translations, but still showed a closer stylistic affinity to them than to any other novel. Chart 2 shows the stylistic distance between *The Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoevsky and all other novels in the corpus.

Secondly, we tested how responsive texts written in Icelandic were to our measurement tools by applying the cosine-delta variant of Burrows' Delta to a control corpus of

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32 It should be noted that a delta measurement (using Burrows or other measures) is relative, as it is dependent on the corpus used as reference. The reference corpus decides the frequency spectrum of the most frequent words, and one gets different results depending on the composition of the reference corpus. A reference corpus containing texts from only two authors who are relatively similar to each other, compared to other contemporary authors, will have a narrower frequency spectrum than a reference corpus containing texts from many authors (and will therefore give higher delta values). If the reference corpus contains many texts from dissimilar authors, it can be expected that the word frequency spectrum will be wider and therefore that lower deltas will be obtained. This means that no universal or direct meaning can be given to the absolute delta value; it can only have meaning relative to other delta values in the reference corpus. For example, two texts can be considered to have the same author if the delta distance is more than three standard values lower than the mean of the intra-corpus delta distances.
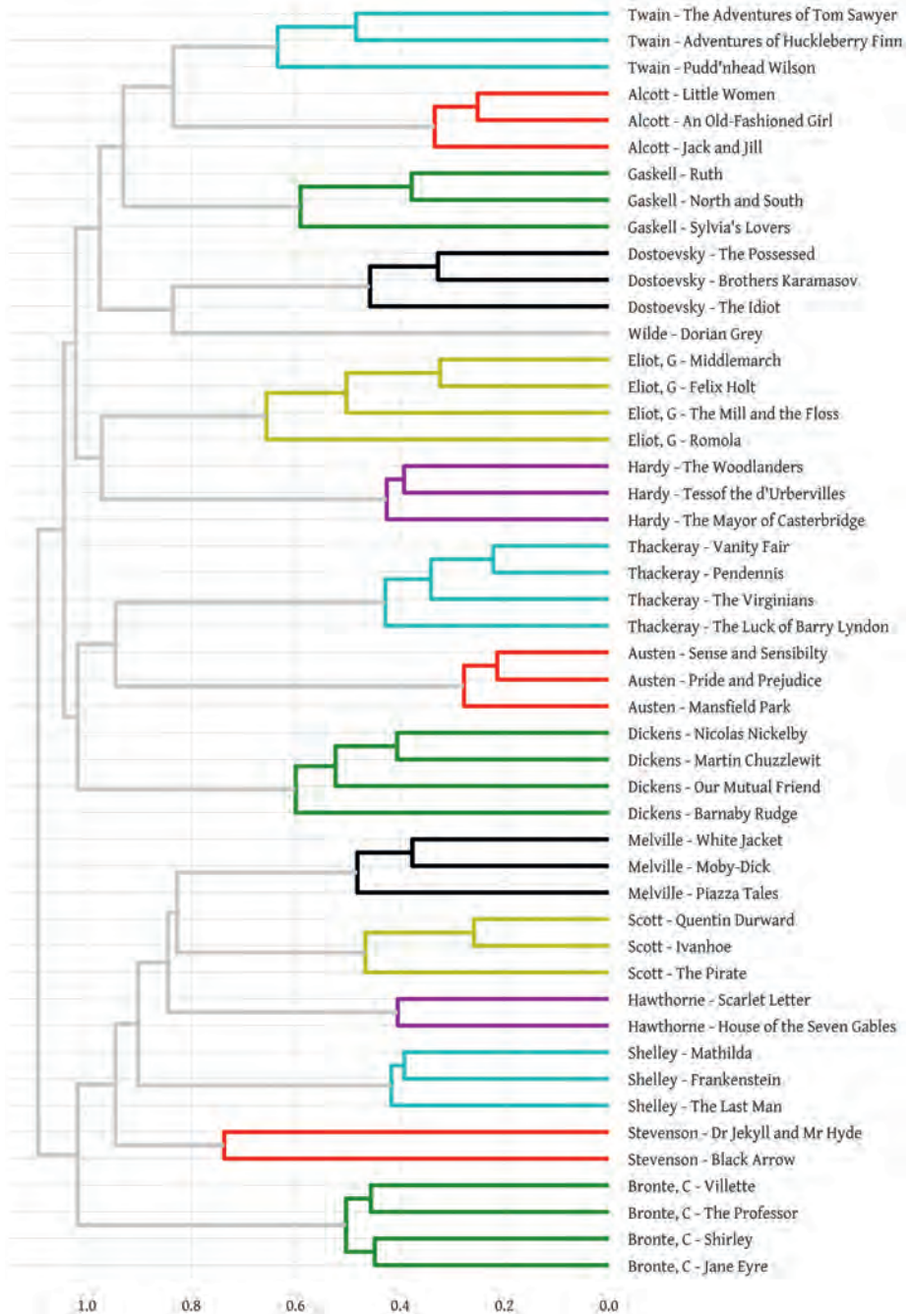
Chart 1: Dendrogram showing the resulting grouping of cosine-delta distance measurements of 19th-century texts in English.
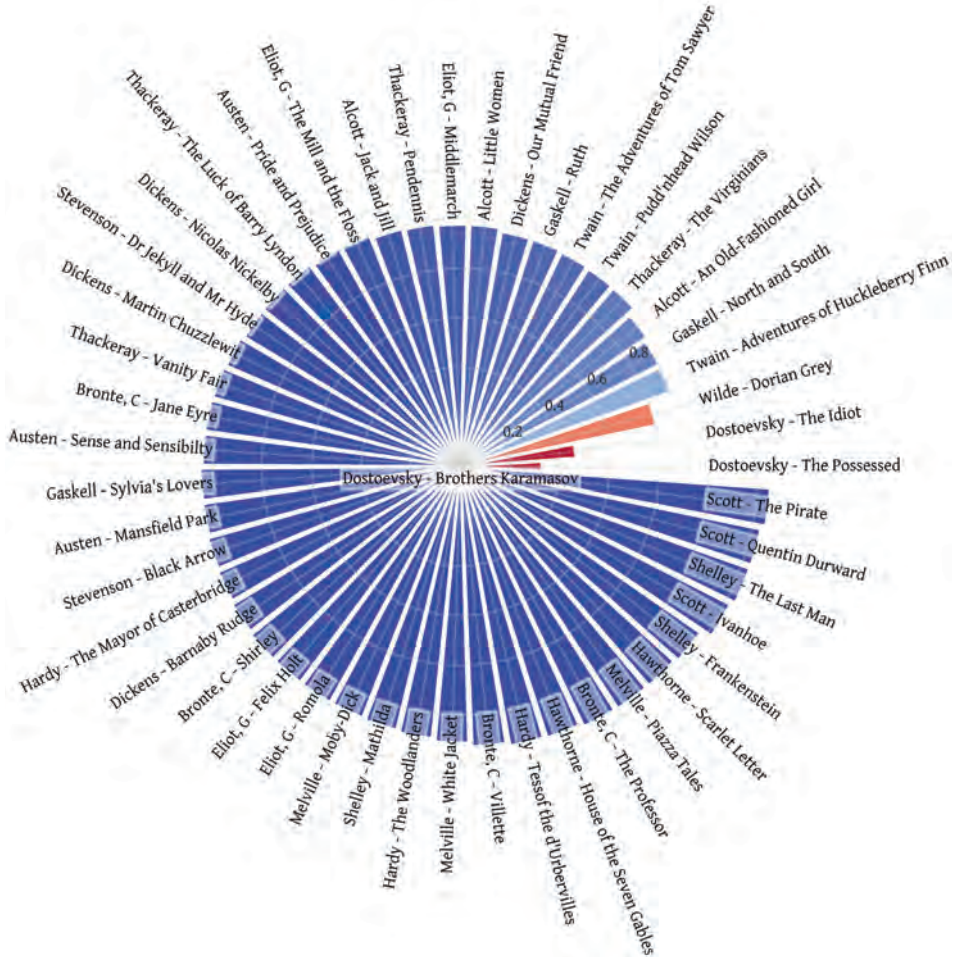
Chart 2: The cosine-delta distance relative to *The Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoevsky shown as a spiral graph in increasing order. The measurement (showing the distances of 0.2 – 0.4 – 0.6 – 0.8 – 1.0 and 1.2) can be found on the upper right side of the shield.

twenty-one 19th- and early-20th-century novels, novellas, and short stories by eight Icelandic authors. Instead of using only the most frequent words in our measurements here, we used the most frequent character n-grams (in our case 4-grams) in which each word is segmented into character sequences of length n (or shorter). This extension of the Burrows' Delta Method has shown similar quality in results as whole word Delta measurements, but improved robustness in some cases.[33] The main advantage with n-gram

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33   Eder 2013.

segmentation is that more measurement points are obtained from each text, which is helpful for shorter texts. As with the English novels, all nouns were eliminated from the original corpus, but focus was then placed on the [1000] most frequent 4-grams of the remaining words and the [150] most frequent Part-Of-Speech (POS) tags, i.e. grammatical tags, of the whole texts (including the POS tags of the nouns). The distances were calculated using the cosine similarity as described above. The measurements were used to group the texts and were successful in all cases but one. This is a fairly fruitful run, considering that some of the texts are quite short. The critical exception is Torfhildur Hólm's historical novel *Brynjólfur biskup Sveinsson*, which shows closer stylistic similarity to two novels by Jón Thoroddsen than to Hólm's own short story *Týndu hringarnir*. The groupings of texts, based on their stylistic similarities, is shown in Chart 3.

The similarity between different works by an individual Icelandic author was more varied than in the case of the English corpus, with cosine-delta distances ranging from 0.33 to 0.94. Chart 4 shows the cosine-delta distances of all the pairs measured as a colour scheme. The colours 'frame' (in the form of larger squares, variably distinctive) the corpus of each author, except in the cases of Torfhildur Hólm.

This figure, as well as the other figures already presented, are useful for comparison with parallel figures representing our latest measurements of the Old Norse sagas.

3.

The original control corpus of sagas that we worked with consisted of *Íslendingasögur*, *Landnámabók*, *Sturlunga saga*, and *Heimskringla*.[34] We have now enlarged this corpus, adding various other kings' sagas (*Konungasögur*) and legendary sagas (*Fornaldarsögur*), and we have also measured it in a variety of ways. First, we would like to present the results where individual sagas were measured against each other. Here, focus was placed on all the sagas of the extended control corpus and the [1000] most frequent 4-grams in the corpus (after removing all nouns), as well as the [150] most frequent POS tags of the whole texts (including the POS tags of the nouns). The distance was calculated using the cosine similarity as described above. Limiting the inter-clusters cosine-delta distances to a maximum of 0.77, the method revealed fourteen clusters of sagas possibly written

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34   The core of the corpus is still a modern spelling edition of *Íslendingasögur*, *Heimkringla*, *Sturlunga saga*, and *Landnáma*, which is available at the website *The Gigaword Corpus*, maintained by The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies (https://malheildir.arnastofnun.is/, last accessed 1 March 2021). To this corpus we have been adding various texts that either are available on the website *Heimskringla* (https://heimskringla.no/wiki/Forside, last accessed 1 March 2021) or have been published in the *Íslenzk fornrit* series in recent years. The text of all the sagas tested was converted into modern Icelandic spelling. Relatively short sagas were not considered, except those found in *Heimskringla* and *Sturlunga saga*.
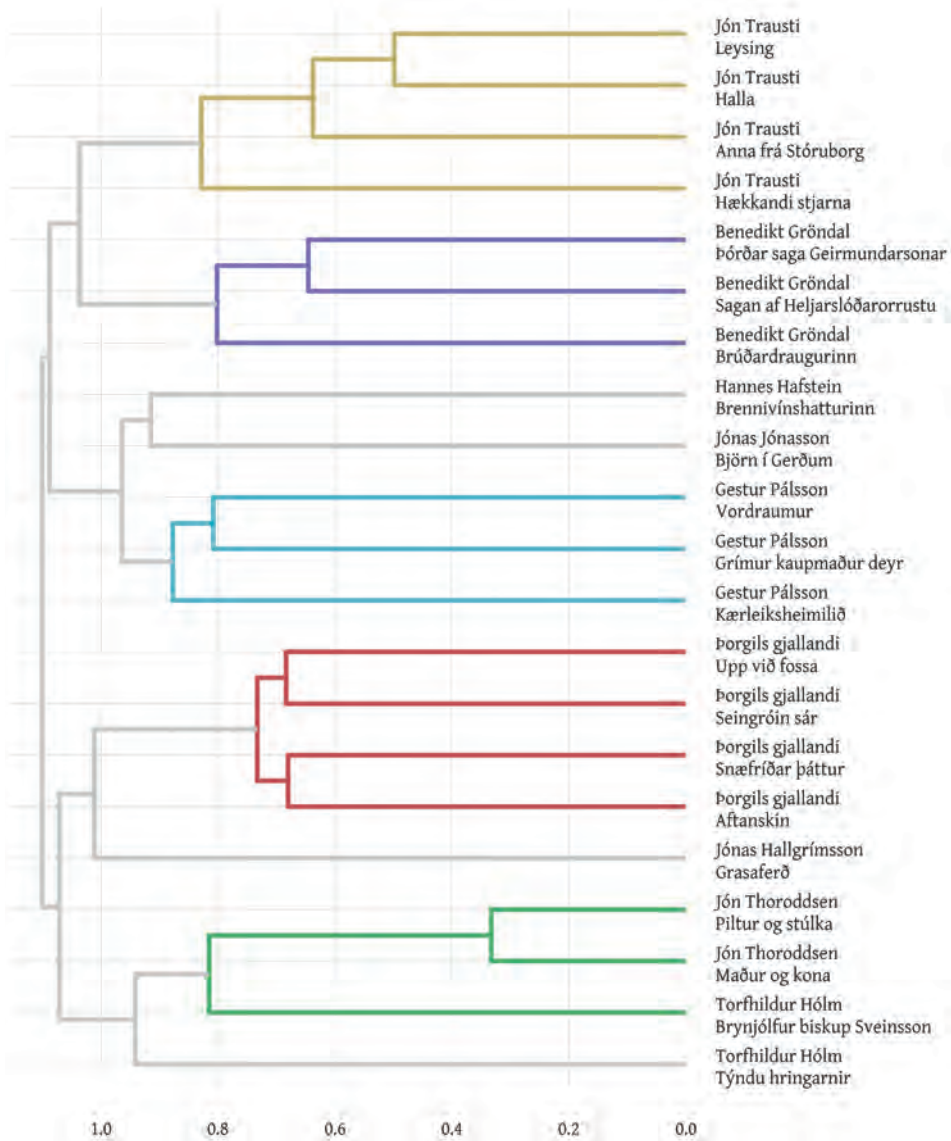
Chart 3: Dendrogram showing the resulting grouping of cosine-delta distance measurements of 19th- and early 20th-century texts in Icelandic.
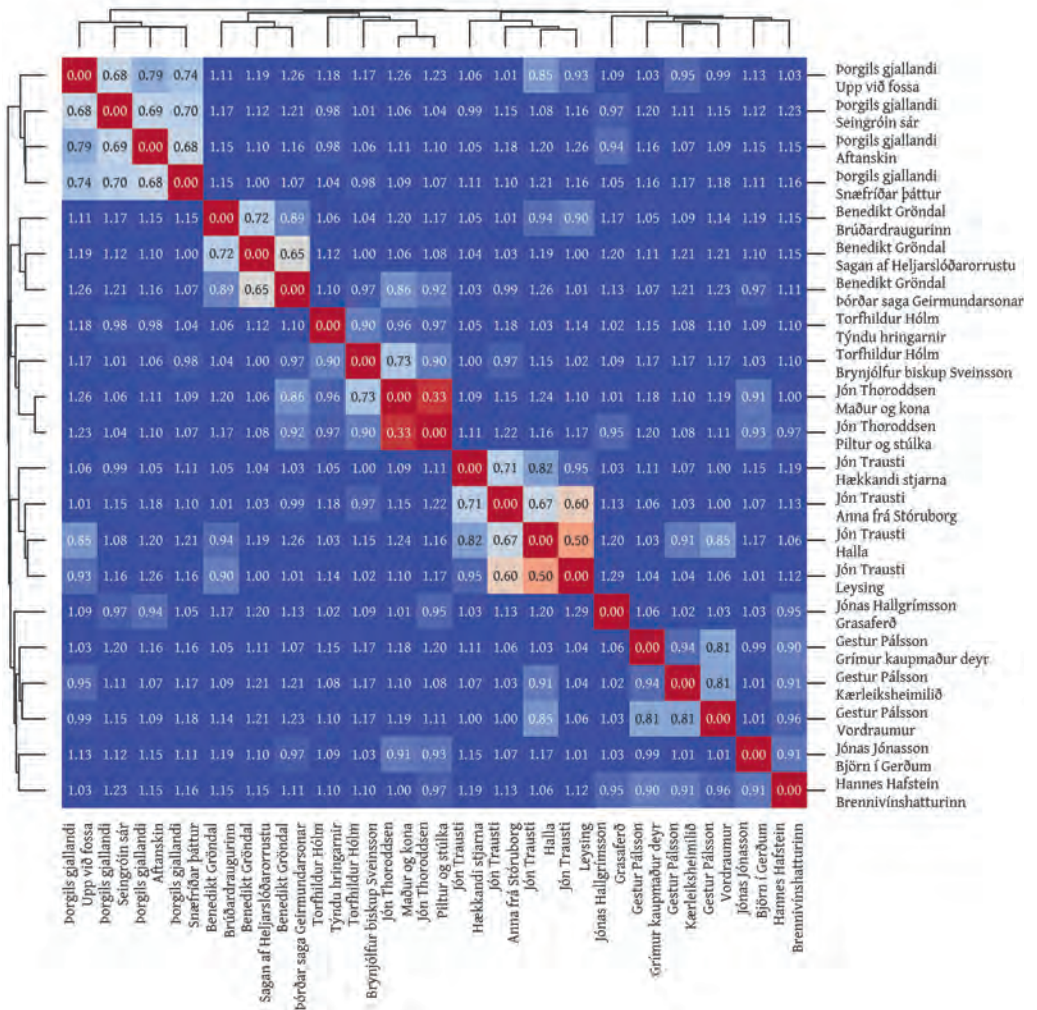
Chart 4: Colour scheme showing intra-text cosine-delta distance measurements of 19th- and early-20th-century texts in Icelandic.

by fourteen different authors, which is a more arresting result than suggested by our earlier measurements of a more limited corpus. The groupings of texts, based on their stylistic similarities, is shown in Chart 5.

This measurement suggests strongly not only that *Íslendinga saga* (generally assigned to Sturla Þórðarson) and *Þórðar saga kakala* were written by the same author, but also that *Þorgils saga skarða*, and even *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Gull-Þóris saga*, might belong to this author's corpus. Similarly, this measurement strongly suggests that *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* and *Fljótsdæla saga* were written by the same author. *Egils saga* and certain
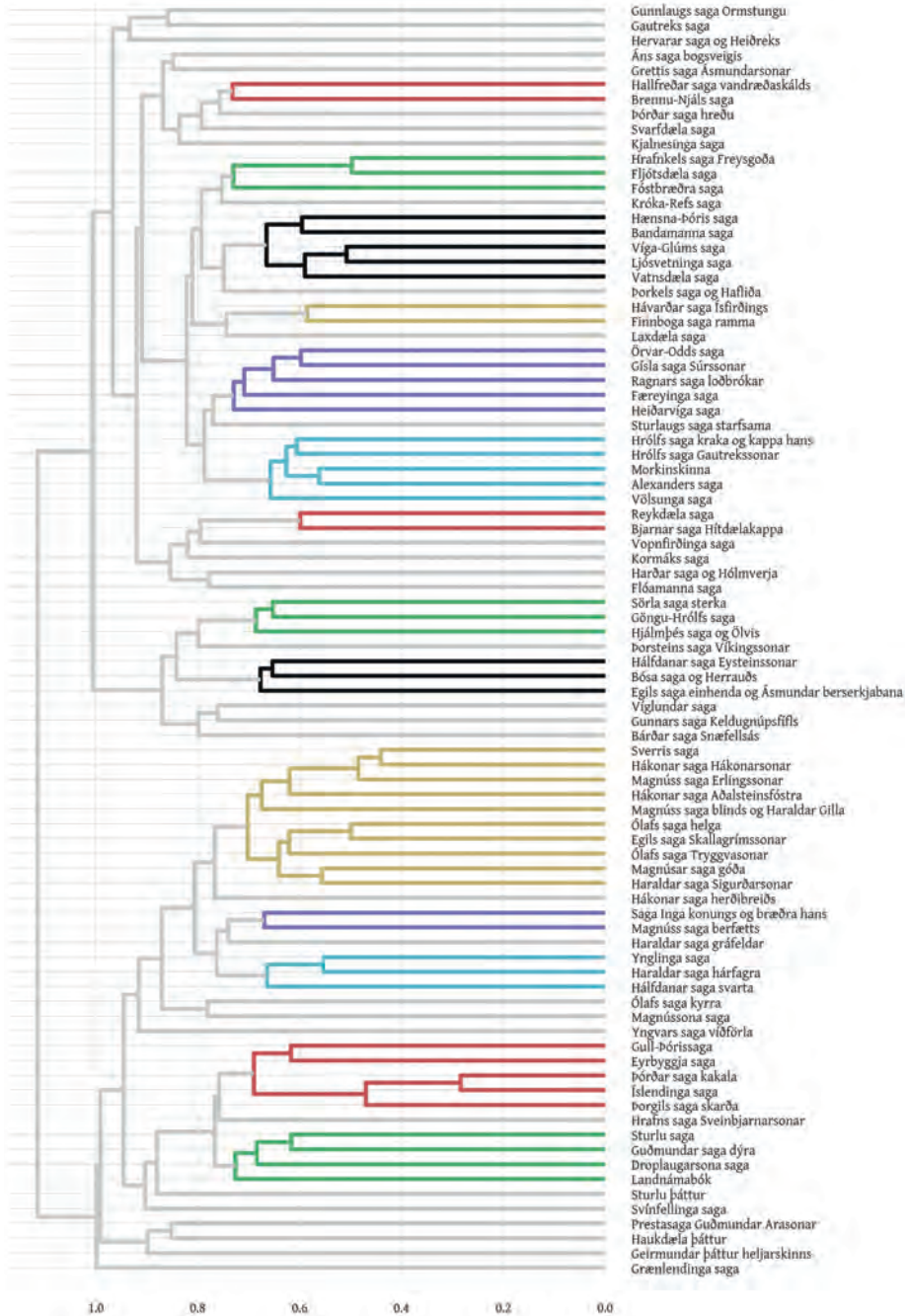
Chart 5: Dendrogram showing the resulting grouping of cosine-delta distance measurements of saga texts in Icelandic.

sagas in *Heimskringla* (generally assigned to Snorri Sturluson), in particular *Ólafs saga helga*, continue to be grouped together, but apparent inconsistencies can be seen in the assumed author assignments as *Sverris saga* (generally assigned to Karl Jónsson the abbot) measures close to both *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* (generally assigned to Sturla Þórðarson) and *Magnúss saga Erlingssonar* in *Heimskringla* (generally assigned to Snorri Sturluson). These earlier assignments can hardly all be accurate. The saga-pairs showing the shortest inter-cosine-delta distances:

Saga 1	Assumed author	Saga 2	Assumed author	cosine-delta
Þórðar saga kakala	Unknown	Íslendinga saga	Sturla Þórðarson	0.284
Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar	Sturla Þórðarson	Sverris saga	Karl the abbot	0.441
Þorgils saga skarða	Unknown	Þórðar saga kakala	Unknown	0.451
Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar	Sturla Þórðarson	Íslendinga saga	Sturla Þórðarson	0.458
Magnúss saga Erlingssonar	Snorri Sturluson	Sverris saga	Karl the abbot	0.460
Þorgils saga skarða	Unknown	Íslendinga saga	Sturla Þórðarson	0.490
Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða	Unknown	Fljótsdæla saga	Unknown	0.497
Egils saga Skalla-grímssonar	Unknown	Ólafs saga helga	Snorri Sturluson	0.499

Table 1: Saga-pairs with cosine-delta inter-distance less than 0.5.

The same results can also be presented as a colour scheme. Chart 6 reveals the apparently complicated relationship between certain sagas which have been assigned (correctly or incorrectly) to Sturla Þórðarson, Karl Jónsson, and Snorri Sturluson. Here we may possibly be seeing the effect which different compilers, commentators, and scribes had on the stylistic fingerprints of the 'original' authors (writers as well as storytellers):

	Íslendinga saga	Þórðar saga kakala	Sverris saga	Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar	Magnúss saga Erlingssonar	Þorgils saga skarða	Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða	Fljótsdæla saga	Egils saga Skallagrímssonar	Ólafs saga helga
Íslendinga saga	0.00	0.28	0.73	0.46	0.68	0.49	1.21	1.31	0.78	0.91
Þórðar saga kakala	0.28	0.00	0.64	0.51	0.68	0.45	1.07	1.21	0.81	0.85
Sverris saga	0.73	0.64	0.00	0.44	0.46	0.85	1.08	1.18	0.75	0.63
Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar	0.46	0.51	0.44	0.00	0.51	0.73	1.18	1.29	0.73	0.63
Magnúss saga Erlingssonar	0.68	0.68	0.46	0.51	0.00	0.86	1.14	1.22	0.72	0.60
Þorgils saga skarða	0.49	0.45	0.85	0.73	0.86	0.00	1.01	1.15	0.92	0.87
Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða	1.21	1.07	1.08	1.18	1.14	1.01	0.00	0.50	1.18	1.13
Fljótsdæla saga	1.31	1.21	1.18	1.29	1.22	1.15	0.50	0.00	1.24	1.25
Egils saga Skallagrímssonar	0.78	0.81	0.75	0.73	0.72	0.92	1.18	1.24	0.00	0.50
Ólafs saga helga	0.91	0.85	0.63	0.63	0.60	0.87	1.13	1.25	0.50	0.00

Chart 6: Colour scheme showing intra-text cosine-delta distance measurements of a sample of sagas with the shortest inter-text distances.

Secondly, we would like to introduce our Overlapping Rolling Delta measurement of the corpus.[35] Here the sagas were segmented in order to examine if some parts of any saga gave measurements that were particularly close to (or far away from) other parts within the same saga or in other sagas. A segment length of 5000 words was chosen and a step size of 1000 words. The cosine distance measure was then applied to the vector of z-score normalised [1000] most frequent 4-grams (after removing all nouns) extended by the z-score normalised vector of the [150] most frequent POS tags of the words in the corpus (including the POS tags of the nouns). The z-score was calculated using weighted

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35   Cf. Rybicki et al. 2014; Eder 2016.

means and standard deviations such that the contribution of each saga was preserved despite different lengths (and number of segments), hence preserving the balance of the corpus. Employing the Overlapping Rolling Delta resulted in a significant increase in the number of measurements; the number of texts in the corpus increased from 86 to 1880 segments and the distance measurements from 3655 to about 1.8 million. Visualising such a high number of measurements is a challenge, and to keep it manageable the focus here is limited to sagas and saga collections showing the lowest delta-cosine distance measure. These are mainly the sagas in *Heimskringla* and *Sturlunga saga*, as well as *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* and *Sverris saga*.

In order to visualise the degree to which parts in a reference-saga match a comparison-saga, the proportion of all segments in the comparison-saga with cosine-delta distance lower than 0.77 (chosen as the 5 % quantile of all inter-segment distances) was calculated. A normal value for this proportion is 5 %, but higher values indicate that the comparison-saga matches better than the average and vice versa. It is also possible to do this calculation where the reference- and comparison-sagas are the same saga or saga collection, but then a measure of the internal consistency is obtained. Charts 7 and 8 show comparisons of selected sagas with the *Heimskringla* and *Sturlunga saga* collections, respectively. The internal measurement of *Heimskringla* and *Sturlunga* is marked above in bold in each figure.

The interpretation of these results is not straightforward, but the main observations are the following:

(1) *Sturlunga saga* is stylistically more consistent internally than *Heimskringla*. This may come as a surprise, as scholars have generally regarded *Sturlunga saga* as a compilation of different works but *Heimskringla* as a coherent work composed by one author.

(2) A large part of *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* measures consistently close to *Sturlunga*, while the sections where this occurs for *Heimskringla* are short and few.

(3) Two sagas from *Heimskringla*, *Magnúss saga Erlingssonar* and *Saga Inga konungs*, have sections measuring close to *Sturlunga* and, furthermore, *Magnúss saga Erlingssonar* measures close to sections from *Hákonar saga* and *Sverris saga*.

(4) *Sverris saga* has some sections that measure close to *Heimskringla*, but these seem to coincide with the sections in *Hákonar saga* where this occurs.

(5) Sections from *Egils saga* generally measure close to the latter half of *Ólafs saga helga*, but less so to other parts of *Heimskringla*.

(6) None of the sagas that measure close to *Heimskringla* show a strong stylistic similarity to the first part of *Ólafs saga helga*. This may indicate that this part of *Ólafs saga helga* was composed by someone else than the composer of the rest of *Heimskringla* or copied from an independent source.
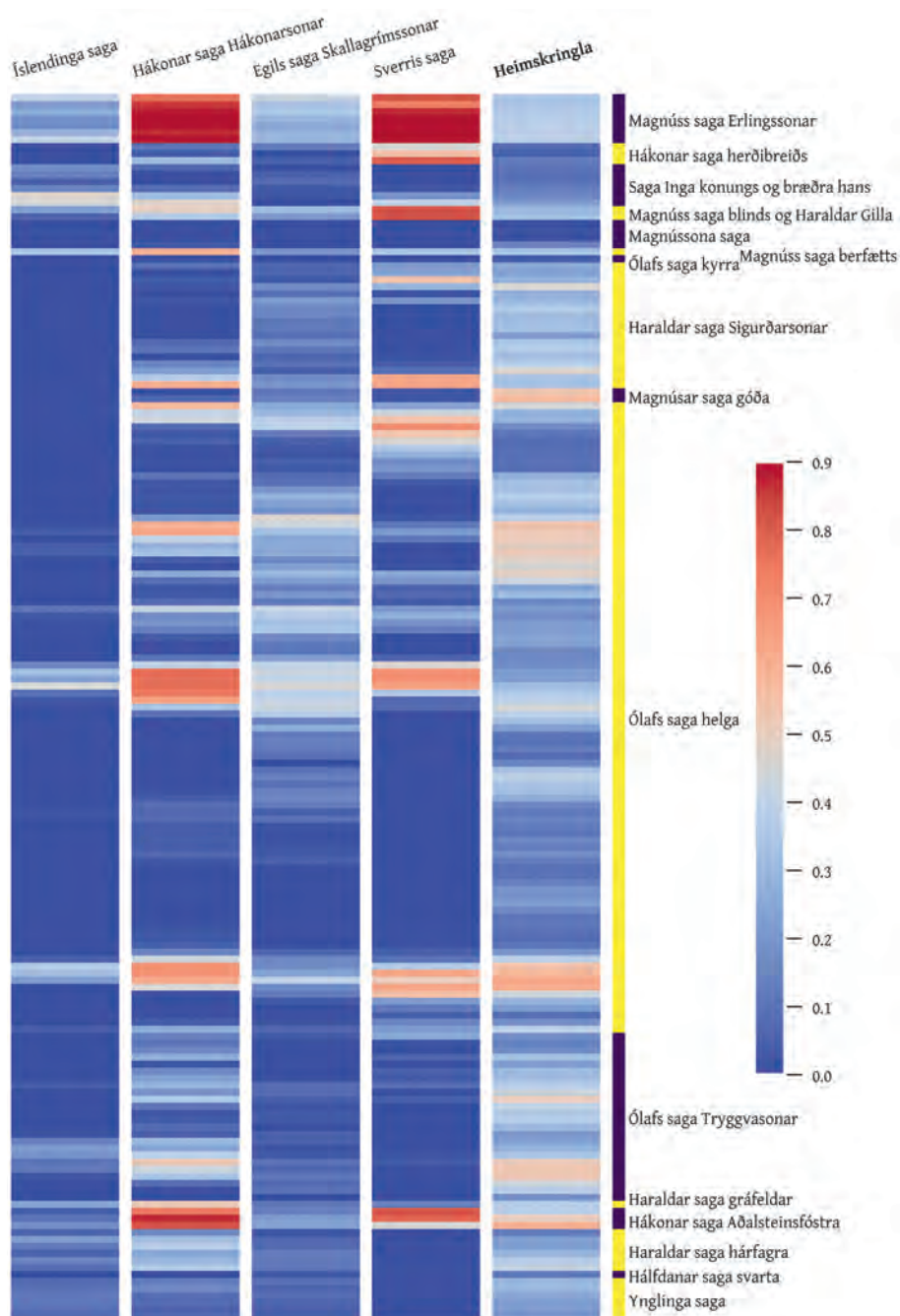
Chart 7: A heatmap showing the density of running delta segments of selected sagas measuring closer than 5 % quantile of the whole corpus to *Heimskringla* as well as the intra-density of *Heimskringla.*
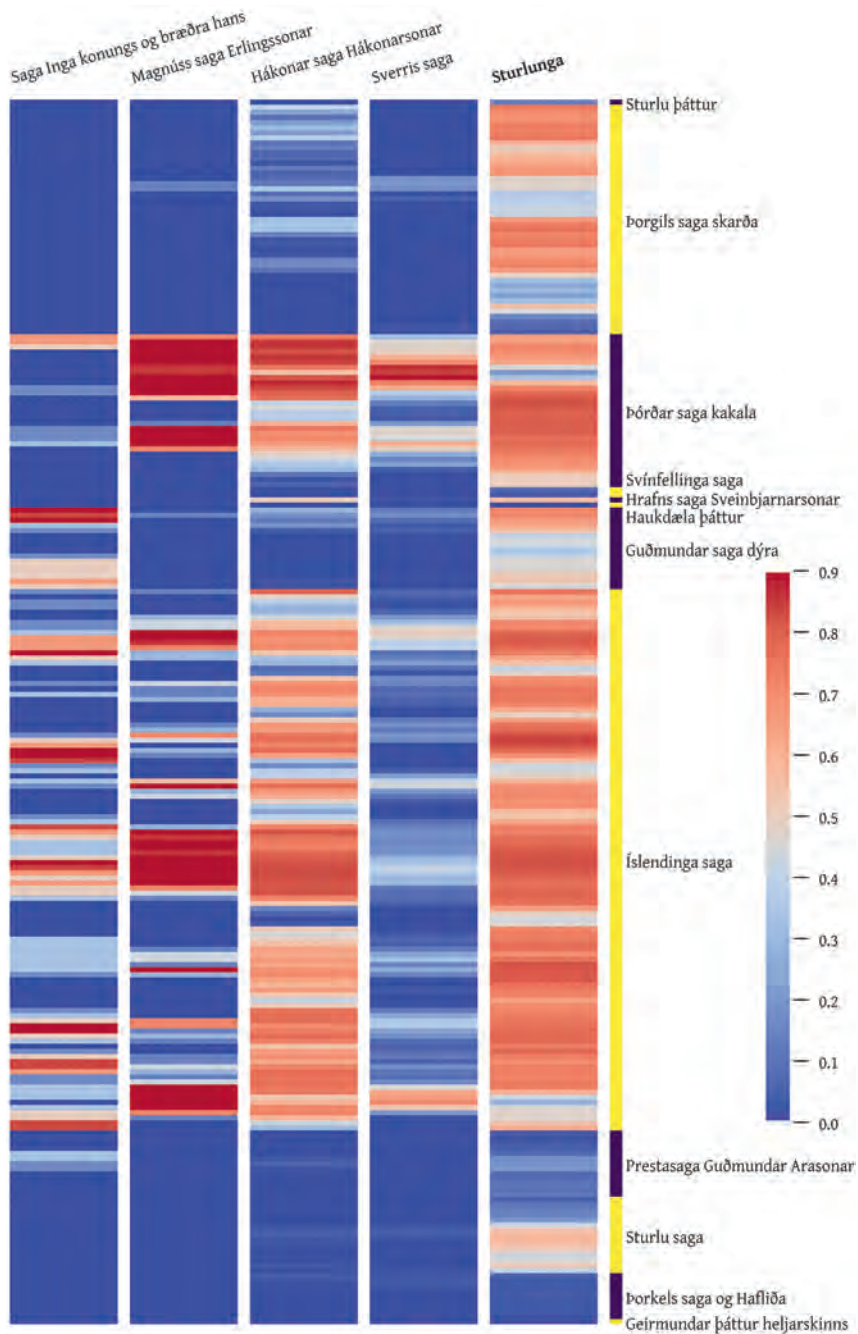
Chart 8: A heatmap showing the density of running delta segments of selected sagas measuring closer than 5 % quantile of the whole corpus to *Sturlunga* as well as the intra-density of *Sturlunga*.
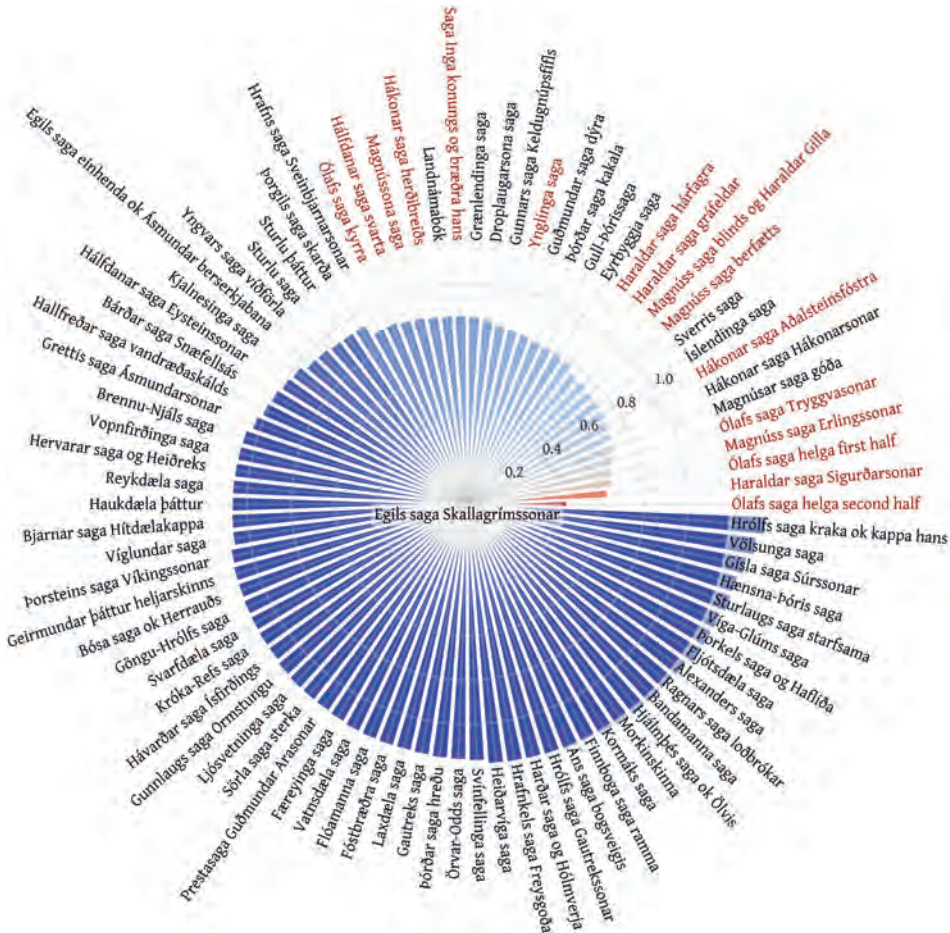
Chart 9: The sagas' cosine-delta distance relative to *Egils saga* shown as a spiral graph ordered in increasing order. The sagas of *Heimskringla* are coloured red.

Following upon the last lead, we again measured complete sagas against each other, but this time divided *Ólafs saga helga* into two halves. The result was that *Egils saga* measures much closer to the second half of *Ólafs saga helga* (cosine-delta distance 0.45) than to the first half of *Ólafs saga helga* (cosine-delta distance 0.68). Chart 9 shows the stylistic distance between *Egils saga* and all other sagas in the corpus (with *Ólafs saga helga* divided into two halves).

This result and most of the other measurements discussed above are accessible on our website http://fingrafor.ullur.net/. It is our wish for medieval researchers to be able to utilise this data to add to the present knowledge and understanding of the intricate processes of saga writing.

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Judy Quinn

Anonymity and the Textual Construction of Authority in Prosimetrum

Abstract

The ways in which anonymity participates in the textual construction of authority is the focus of this chapter, which proceeds through an investigation of the literary effects that were achieved in two different kinds of medieval Icelandic prosimetrum, examples which demonstrate how literate authors exploited the potential of orally transmitted poetry to enrich their prose. The case studies are drawn from *Gylfaginning* by Snorri Sturluson, where anonymous poetry simulating the speech of gods is quoted within a treatise by a named author, and *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, where stanzas by contemporary poets named and unnamed are quoted within an anonymous saga about a 12th-century political feud. The theoretical frame is provided by reflections on authorship by Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes which, while dating from the 1960s, still hold considerable relevance for the analysis of the competing voices of prosimetrum, especially with regard to the establishment of authority within written discourse. The notion of 'an index of truthfulness', constituted by poetic quotation around which the narration develops, is explored and it is proposed that across a wide range of discursive situations voices speaking according to conventions of poetic composition are rendered authoritative through the performance of quotation.

While the ground-breaking essays on authorship by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault from the 1960s were focussed on post-medieval continental European culture, a number of their observations find illuminating parallels in the conditions of medieval Icelandic prosimetrum, where poetic voices are quoted by a voice that speaks prose. The assumption of a straightforward relationship between the authority of a text and the identity of its author, whose foundations were shaken in the 1960s, had not always been a constant and had in fact varied considerably across the centuries and across genres. In the case of medieval Iceland, anonymity sometimes guaranteed an authority that was legitimated by tradition, as seems to have been the case with anonymous eddic poetry, orally composed and orally transmitted for generations before being written down in the 13th century. The stories of the past that flowed into the emergent literary genre of the *Íslendingasögur* (sagas of Icelanders) similarly derived their authority from shared cultural tradition rather than from the identities of the people who formulated the

written texts, whose names were not routinely attached to their works. The medieval Scandinavian genres where the name of the author clearly underwrote the authority of the text include not only learned treatises, as might be expected, but also orally composed poetry in complex metres whose poets had staked their reputations on being identified by name in connection with their works in the skaldic tradition. When one kind of text is folded into another – as is the case with saga prosimetrum, where stanzas by named poets are quoted by anonymous authors – an unusual kind of authorial voice is created, one that blends the authority of skaldic tradition with the authority of the anonymous saga tradition.

In this chapter, I will focus on two very different prosimetric texts to explore the way anonymity participates in the textual construction of authority.[1] Firstly I will analyse the mode of quotation of traditional anonymous poetry that simulates the speech of gods and supernatural beings within a treatise by a named author (*Gylfaginning* by Snorri Sturluson); and secondly, the quotation of stanzas by contemporary poets named and unnamed within an anonymous saga about a 12th-century political feud (*Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*). Together these texts reveal the complex literary effects that were achieved by medieval Icelandic prosimetrum writers as they explored the potential of harnessing the resources of orally transmitted poetry within prose narratives.

To frame the discussion, I want to begin by reflecting on a distinction made by Foucault about the different kinds of authorship that pertain to different kinds of texts. In his essay, 'What is an Author?', Foucault discusses a change in attitude that occurred during the 17th and 18th centuries. Before that time, he argues, some kinds of texts did not always require authors, while some conventionally did:

> Even within our civilization, the same types of texts have not always required authors; there was a time when those texts which we now call "literary" (stories, folk tales, epics, and tragedies) were accepted, circulated, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author. Their anonymity was ignored because their real or supposed age was a sufficient guarantee of their authenticity. Texts, however, that we now call "scientific" (dealing with cosmology and the heavens, medicine or illness, the natural sciences or geography) were only considered truthful during the Middle Ages if the name of the author was indicated.[2]

Into this first category, of texts that have not required authors, we may put the written saga, narratives that were circulated and valorised in medieval Iceland, apparently without any preoccupation, at the time, about the identity of their authors. Their age, or

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2   Foucault 1977, p. 125.

their traditional nature, guaranteed their authenticity as culturally valuable depictions of the distant and recent past and, as far as the written record goes, their anonymity was ignored.

Into the second category, where texts were only considered truthful if the name of the author was indicated, we may, as already mentioned, place skaldic poetry transmitted orally and then in writing with, in most cases, the name of the poet attached. While we may not wish to label this discourse 'scientific', it is characterised by exclusive access to political interaction, specialised eye-witness observation, and a kind of discursive expertise in formulating *dróttkvætt* praise poetry. The authors Foucault mentions in this category, Hippocrates and Pliny, were culturally and discursively a world away from Viking-Age and medieval skalds, yet the tenacious way in which skaldic poets were identified by name when their compositions were quoted indicates that their authority could be deployed in a way not dissimilar to that of classical authors. Skaldic verse had a special discursive power which was reinforced during the transition from orality to literacy, with poets maintaining their status as authorities.[3] Indeed the author of the 12th-century *First Grammatical Treatise* equated skalds with authority: "Skáld eru höfundar allrar rynni eða máls greinar sem smiðir eða lögmenn laga" ('The scalds [sic] are authorities in all (matters touching the art of) writing or the distinction (made in) discourse, just as craftsmen (are) [in their craft] or lawyers in the laws').[4] The anonymous author of the treatise has in fact become known in scholarship as the First Grammarian, gaining a name of sorts through identification with his text. He and other medieval Icelandic authors of treatises, such as Ari Þorgilsson, Óláfr Þórðarson, and Snorri Sturluson, are more obvious candidates to be assigned to the 'scientific' category of texts.

The particular labels Foucault assigns to his categories, 'literary' and 'scientific', are naturally context-dependent and to a certain extent can be set aside when his articulation of the anonymity binary is transferred to the medieval Scandinavian cultural milieu. The usefulness of the distinction Foucault draws about pre-modern texts when applied to medieval Scandinavian works rests primarily on the concept of anonymity and with it the paradoxical authority the unnamed, tradition-bearing voice carried forward into the literate age. An example of this phenomenon, mentioned earlier, is the traditional eddic poetry preserved in GKS 2365 4to and known as the *Poetic Edda*. The authorial voice of eddic tradition – especially those poems introduced by a narrator – would have supplied a ready storytelling model for the emergent (anonymous) voice of written saga prosimetrum, as well as there being other storytelling modes in the pre-literate period we know less about which writers would also have drawn on.

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3   See further Jesch 2005.
4   The First Grammatical Treatise, pp. 224–226 (with normalised spelling).

Foucault further argued that during the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, the situation he described was inverted, with named authorship becoming an essential feature of 'literary' works while anonymity was increasingly favoured for texts that transmitted received wisdom:

> scientific texts were accepted on their own merits and positioned within an anonymous and coherent conceptual system of established truths and methods of verification. Authentification no longer required reference to the individual who had produced them; the role of the author disappeared as an index of truthfulness [...]. [5]

Once again, the description of these conditions finds a ready parallel with the circumstances that must have pertained during the literarisation of saga narratives: not as a change from a former situation, as Foucault described it for continental Europe, but as the state of play in medieval Iceland during the development of a culture of alphabetic literacy. As traditional material that had been orally transmitted was transformed into saga text, we may assume it operated within "an anonymous and coherent conceptual system of established truths and methods of verification" as understood by saga audiences. It was presumably the texts' presentation of traditional material which obviated the need for identifying individual transmitters of prose narratives; the "index of truthfulness", such as it was, was tied to the transmission of skaldic poetry where the quotation of stanzas was conventionally attributed to named poets and thereby provided a mode of verification.

The force of quotations by named voices within an anonymous work is significant and amounts to a textual phenomenon of critical interest, to which I will return. In advance of that, however, I want to consider a complex Old Norse text which is distinguished by its many layers of quoted voices, where "an anonymous and coherent conceptual system of established truths" intersects with a named authorising voice. The text in question is the treatise known as the *Edda*, initiated, it is assumed, by Snorri Sturluson, but now extant in multiple versions that demonstrate numerous creative phases whose material traces postdate the death of the author.[6] A part of the treatise dealing with pre-Christian mythology is known as *Gylfaginning*. It is a unique and highly experimental work, which engages at a profound level with questions of truth as it works to organise elements of traditional pre-Christian beliefs within a framework of Christian doctrine.[7] It quotes eddic poetry copiously, drawing much of its authority from

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5   Foucault 1977, p. 126.

6   For an overview of Snorri and his work, see Wanner 2008. For an overview of the variation in the manuscripts of the work, see Guðrún Nordal 2001, pp. 44–72.

7   See further my forthcoming article on *Snorra Edda* where some of these issues are treated in more depth: Quinn 2021.

the anonymous conceptual system of established truths conveyed by the eddic corpus of traditional poems.

Gylfaginning is constructed as a series of nested quotations within a narrative told about King Gylfi (who identifies himself in the text as Gangleri), prefaced by paratextual material including the prologue and the rubric (in one manuscript) naming the work and its author.[8] The quotations within quotations can be set out schematically as a cascading sequence of voices:

> ∞ Bók þessi heitir Edda. Hana hefir saman setta Snorri Sturluson [...]
>> ∞ [Prologue]
>> ∞ Gylfi konungr var maðr [...] Hann nefndisk Gangleri [...] hóf svá mál sitt.[9]
>>> ∞ [...] ok segir [Gangleri] þau tíðindi er hann hefir sét ok heyrt. Ok eptir honum sagði hverr maðr öðrum þessar sögur.[10]
>>> ∞ En Æsir setjask þá á tal ok [...] minnask á þessar frásagnir allar er honum váru sagðar, ok gefa nöfn þessi hin sömu er áðr eru nefnd mönnum ok stöðum þeim er þar váru [...][11]
>>>> ∞ Hár segir:
>>>>> ∞ Svá sem segir í *Völuspá* [...][12]
>>>>> ∞ Ok þessi segir hon nöfn þeira dverganna [...][13]

> This book is called Edda. It has been compiled by Snorri Sturluson [...]
>> [Prologue]
>> Gylfi was the name of a man [...] He called himself Gangleri [...] [he] began his questioning.
>>> [...] and [Gangleri] related those events he had seen and heard about. And following his account one person after another told these stories.
>>> But the Æsir then gathered in discussion and [...] rehearsed all the narratives which had been told to him and gave those same names which were previously mentioned to people and places there [in Sweden] [...]
>>>> Hár says:
>>>>> As it says in the *spá* of the *völva* [...]
>>>>> And she [the *völva*] says these are the names of those dwarfs [...]

The narrative of *Gylfaginning* opens out into a dialogue, with Gylfi posing questions and the three named Æsir (Hár, Jafnhár, Þriði) answering them. The hall in which the dialogue takes place, though, turns out to be a multi-media illusion, and doubt is thereby

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8   Snorri Sturluson: The Uppsala Edda, p. 6. The attribution of the work to Snorri specifies his activity as that of compilation (*setja saman*), with only his authorship of Háttatal explicit: "er Snorri hefir ort" ('which Snorri has composed'). In what follows, I assume that Snorri was the author of *Gylfaginning*.

9   Snorri Sturluson: Gylfaginning, pp. 7f.

10   Snorri Sturluson: Gylfaginning, p. 54.

11   Snorri Sturluson: Gylfaginning, pp. 54f.

12   Snorri Sturluson: Gylfaginning, p. 9.

13   Snorri Sturluson: Gylfaginning, p. 16.

cast over whether the quoted voices might also be illusory.[14] As we read, we are hearing voices (as is always the case when we read and part of the cognitive adventure of engaging with the written word); but in what sense can the reader 'believe' those voices? All kinds of tricks occur during the course of the dialogue in *Gylfaginning* with, in particular, an embedded narrative about Þórr's encounter with Útgarðaloki ending with the scene of their dialogue evaporating before Þórr's eyes, a scenario that is duplicated at the end of Gylfi's conversation with the three Æsir, when the hall his visit has taken place in disappears into thin air.[15]

The imbricated plotting of the narrative of *Gylfaginning* repeatedly resists straightforward logical alignment. What has been conveyed during the wisdom contest is plunged further beyond the verifiable when the questing Gangleri is depicted transmitting what he has seen and heard – "ok segir [Gangleri] þau tíðindi er hann hefir sét ok heyrt. Ok eptir honum sagði hverr maðr öðrum þessar sögur"[16] – at the same time as his competitors-in-wisdom, the Æsir, launch another discourse in which the very names of the figures in their answers to Gylfi are subsequently assigned to their contemporaries in Sweden: "En Æsir setjask þá á tal ok [...] minnask á þessar frásagnir allar er honum váru sagðar, ok gefa nöfn þessi hin sömu er áðr eru nefnd mönnum [...]."[17] Almost in anticipation of the complex textual history of his own work, Snorri sets up multiple lines of transmission from the Æsir's account, one disseminated through Gylfi's kingdom somewhere in Sweden based on his recollection and another propagated by the Æsir themselves through soubriquet-Æsir who take on the identities of the figures in the narratives just told.

The effect of so many twists is spectacularly destabilising for the reader.[18] So much of the ancient eddic verse that has been quoted in support of the responses to Gangleri's questions would have been familiar to the 13th-century audience of the text – and served as an index, if not of truth then of authentic, ancient tradition – yet if those quoting it are unreliable speakers, where does that leave the reader and their trust in the assumed author of the work? Myths that were accepted, circulated, and valorised in cultural memory, because their real or supposed age was a sufficient guarantee of their authenticity, are undermined as untruthful in the context of a theologised revision of the past, voiced sporadically by the Æsir and engineered by the narrator in the structure of *Gylfaginning*.

It is worth pausing here to reflect on the effects of these shifts in speaker as the text leads us through the cascade of quotations. As Roland Barthes asked, when we read a text, 'Who is speaking?'. His response was as follows:

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14   See further Glauser 2009.
15   Compare Snorri Sturluson: Gylfaginning, pp. 43 and 54.
16   Snorri Sturluson: Gylfaginning, p. 54.
17   Snorri Sturluson: Gylfaginning, p. 54.
18   On this effect, see Glauser 2013.

> We shall never know, for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where every subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.[19]

At a very literal level, much industry has gone into assigning a point of origin for the voice of *Snorra Edda* and identifying authorial intentions tying portions of the text to the body of the author. One of the implications of "the negative where all identity is lost", however, is that the composite voice that writing creates resists that simple equation, especially when the composite voice masquerades as the many colourful and loquacious identities that we find within *Gylfaginning*. While the special voice of some works may well meld several indiscernible voices, in a work such as *Gylfaginning* which foregrounds the particularity of many quoted voices, some voices may also be amplified beyond their weight in words. So many quotations are couched within quotations in this auditory *mise en abyme* that, at any one moment, a particular voice may seem more commanding than the others around which it echoes. An example of this phenomenon is referenced above, at the point when Hár quotes again from a poem called *Völuspá* – literally the *spá* ('prophecy') of the *völva* ('seeress'), a poem quoted extensively throughout *Gylfaginning* – and the voice of the *völva* is projected beyond other voices as she is heard listing mythological details: "Ok þessi segir hon nöfn þeira dverganna" ('And she [the *völva*] says these are the names of those dwarfs'). From within the text, she is presented speaking the very names that Hár ventriloquises, Gangleri reports, and the narrator records.

To return to the cascade of quotations set out earlier, let us look at another example from early on in the dialogue between Gangleri and the three Æsir, at the beginning of the roll-call of gods in which Óðinn is introduced,[20] well before the formal introduction of Loki.[21]

> ∞ Þá mælir Þriði:
>> ∞ [...] svá sem hér er sagt at Óðinn mælir sjálfr við þann Ás er Loki heitir:
>>> ∞ 'Œrr ertu Loki [...]'[22]

> Then Third said:
>> [...] just as it is said here that Óðinn himself spoke to that god who is called Loki:
>>> You're mad, Loki [...]

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19   Barthes 1977, p. 142.
20   Snorri Sturluson: Gylfaginning, p. 21.
21   Snorri Sturluson: Gylfaginning, pp. 26f.
22   Snorri Sturluson: Gylfaginning, p. 21.

Here, in response to a question from Gangleri, Þriði responds by quoting lines that are purported to be the very words Óðinn himself spoke.[23] One of the effects of this assertion of authenticity is the amplification of a particular voice within the cacophony of quotations within quotations such that the reader temporarily loses any sense of the hierarchical order of the framing voices and therefore of the inferred intellectual argument that what is told to Gangleri may be illusory. Suddenly it is Óðinn's tremendous voice that thunders out, as the gravitational centre of authority shifts within the text. To show this schematically, the hierarchy of authorial voices can be momentarily inverted during this intense instance of eddic quotation:

∞ **'Œrr ertu Loki [...]'**
  ∞ svá sem hér er sagt at **Óðinn mælir sjálfr** við þann Ás er Loki heitir:
    ∞ Þá mælir Þriði:
      ∞ [...] ok segir [Gangleri] þau tíðindi er hann hefir sét ok heyrt. Ok eptir honum sagði hverr maðr öðrum þessar sögur.
      ∞ En Æsir setjask þá á tal ok [...] minnask á þessar frásagnir allar er honum váru sagðar, ok gefa nöfn þessi hin sömu er áðr eru nefnd mönnum ok stöðum þeim er þar váru [...].
      ∞ Gylfi konungr var maðr [...] Hann nefndisk Gangleri [...] hóf svá mál sitt
    ∞ [Prologue]
    ∞ Bók þessi heitir Edda. Hana hefir saman setta Snorri Sturluson [...]

You're mad, Loki [...]
  [...] just as it is said here that Óðinn himself spoke to that god who is called Loki:
    Then Third said:
      [...] and [Gangleri] related those events he had seen and heard about. And following his account one person after another told these stories.
      But the Æsir then gathered in discussion and [...] rehearsed all the narratives which had been told to him and gave those same names which were previously mentioned to people and places there [in Sweden] [...]
      Gylfi was the name of a man [...] He called himself Gangleri [...] [he] began his questioning.
    [Prologue]
    This book is called Edda. It has been compiled by Snorri Sturluson [...]

The text of *Gylfaginning* is a striking example of how the inventive and dislocating effects of verse quotation within a prose account can work, especially of the manner in which

23 The idea that readers are hearing the very words of the gods is promoted elsewhere in the text as well: "Hér máttu heyra í Grímnismálum" ('You can hear about it here in *The Words of Grímnir*') and "ok enn hefir hann [Óðinn] nefnzk á fleiri vega þá er hann var kominn til Geirrøðar konungs" ('and Óðinn called himself by various names when he visited King Geirrøðr'). Snorri Sturluson: Gylfaginning, pp. 33 and 21. The deictic marker "hér" ('here') serves to make the connection between explanation and evidence rhetorically palpable.

the quoted voice can sound louder than the narrating voice, which is itself, of course, a composite voice created by the artifice of writing. To draw in Foucault's observations here as well, we might observe in relation to the effects achieved in *Gylfaginning* that

> [writing] implies an action that is always testing the limits of its regularity, transgressing and reversing an order that it accepts and manipulates. Writing unfolds like a game that inevitably moves beyond its own rules and finally leaves them behind. Thus, the essential basis of this writing is [...] primarily concerned with creating an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears.[24]

As Óðinn berates Loki, I would argue, Þriði, Gylfi / Gangleri and the narrator all tumble out of the frame and what sense we have of Snorri-the-author disappears (unless we resolutely and endlessly reinstate him in our reading practice or commentary). As the game that is the text of *Gylfaginning* unfolds, the writing moves beyond its own rules and the intellectual conceit – that all these myths might be understood as illusory – is momentarily but repeatedly left behind.

The writing subject evanesces even more readily in anonymous works, such as the many sagas about Iceland's past that were written from the 13th century onwards. One of these, *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, is set in the early decades of the 12th century when literate culture was being established in Iceland; the earliest manuscripts of the work, however, are from some two hundred years later.[25] The saga is classed among the *Samtíðarsögur* (sagas of Contemporary Times), many of which are anonymous, although *Íslendinga saga*, a major work within the compilation manuscripts which record these sagas, is attributed to Snorri Sturluson's nephew, Sturla Þórðarson.[26] Despite the fact that no author's name was attached to *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* during its manuscript transmission, many scholars have attempted, unconvincingly, to find a name that might fit, implicitly equating the lack of a named author with a diminution in the text's authority and value.[27] As mentioned earlier, the authority of saga texts in the medieval period appears to have derived not from authorship by a named person but from the nature and style of the material being transmitted. As such, saga prosimetrum presents a very interesting

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24   Foucault 1977, p. 116.

25   The saga forms part of the compilation known as *Sturlunga saga* and is partially preserved in two 14th-century manuscripts: *Króksfjarðarbók* and *Reykjarfjarðarbók*. As the text of the saga is fragmentary in both, later paper manuscripts preserving copies of the medieval work have been drawn on by editors. See Ursula Brown's (1952, pp. LII–LXII) introduction to her edition of *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, for a discussion of the manuscripts of the saga and the rationale for using British Museum Add II, 127 as the basis for her edition.

26   See Úlfar Bragason 2010.

27   In the introduction to her edition of the saga, Brown (1952, pp. L–LII) surveys the speculation and concludes: "It is unlikely the author of *Þorgils saga* will ever be identified beyond doubt."

textual scenario – possibly unique in medieval literature – where traditional material travelled through texts without being tied to a named author while, at the same time, elements of the text were verified by being attributed to named poets. This scenario is most starkly evident in the sagas of Norwegian kings (*Konungasögur*) where the quotations of stanzas by court poets are deployed in the narrative to corroborate the material presented in prose by the saga narrator.[28] Poetic quotation is more subtly at play in sagas about the very speakers of the stanzas themselves, the many sagas about Icelanders of the settlement period (*Íslendingasögur*) and later (*Samtíðarsögur*).

To date, the quotation of stanzas within saga prose has tended to be analysed in terms of the functional relation of the quotation to the preceding prose, with the inquit taken as a distinguishing signal between so-called 'authenticating' stanzas (introduced by "svá segir [name of poet]" ['as [the poet] says']) and so-called 'situational' stanzas (introduced by "þá kvað [name of saga character]" ['then [the saga character] recited']).[29] While this functional orientation provides a useful tool in the analysis of saga prosimetrum, it can create a false division in terms of literary effects, since a stanza spoken by an intradiegetic figure in the narrative can also function as authentification. Furthermore, the same kind of stanza could be used by narrators either as verification by a speaker disengaged from the immediate substance of the narrative ('svá segir') or it could be staged as speech within a dramatic encounter in the narrative ('þá kvað'), depending on how the saga author wanted to set the scene. Anonymity cuts across these effects in interesting ways. Eddic poetry, as we saw, could be deployed as quotations of the words of the gods or supernatural figures themselves, with the eddic poet effaced in the process of quotation – the alliterative rhythm and conventions of the eddic mode authenticating the transmitted traditions. When skaldic poetry was quoted within saga prosimetrum, on the other hand, a different array of effects is evident. The quotation of stanzas by named figures in the saga carried with it a straightforward authenticity effect, yet quotation of skaldic stanzas by unnamed poets could also be used to rhetorical advantage by saga narrators, as we shall see.[30]

In saga narratives, quoted stanzas present the words of figures of the past, fixed across time by the forces of metrical form, made audible again to the reader through a rendering of poetic performance. The words of figures of the past are also staged by the narrator as dialogues in prose and while these present a simulacrum of conversations that once took place, they lack the verification that inheres in the form of poetry, especially that in complex metres such as *dróttkvætt* and related metres, which control the

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ordering of syllables through the alliteration of stressed syllables across pairs of lines, demand more or less consistent patterns of internal assonance within the line (*hendingar*) as well as fixing the numbers of syllables in the line and the number of lines in the stanza. To put it another way, it is the poet who unequivocally authors the wording of a stanza whereas the authorship of the same figure's prose dialogue is more nebulous, crafted as it is by the saga narrator who chooses whether it is cast as direct or indirect speech, how extensive the quotation or reported speech is, and the degree to which it is modified or evaluated by interruptions from the narrator. By way of contrast, it is the norm for entire stanzas to be quoted uninterrupted – and, it may be inferred – unedited.

To a significant extent it is therefore the inherent formal features of skaldic stanzas that serve to enhance their actuality as preserved utterance, even in instances where the historical figure to whom they are linked is unnamed.[31] *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* preserves seventeen verse quotations, of which seven are spoken by named figures in the saga and ten stanzas (which have much in common with the others in terms of metre and style) are quoted not as utterances attributed to particular speakers but as compositions circulating at the time, thereby participating in the same economy of verification as those stanzas depicted as being the compositions of named figures in the saga. The very first quotations in the saga, which round off the depiction of a lawsuit between the feuding chieftains at the centre of the saga, are introduced as corroborating evidence: *Þar um váru kveðnar vísu þessar*[32] ('These verses were composed about that'). While the three stanzas quoted in succession each covers similar material in terms of content, they are distinguished from one another by their metrical flourishes and probably represent the work of competing poets commemorating Þorgils' successful prosecution of a case against his enemies.[33]

Since just one stanza would have been sufficient to verify the account, the narrator's choice to indulge in the metrical and semantic variations on a theme one or more poets have produced on the occasion of the law case is significant. It signals, on the one hand, the narrator's taste for poetic superfluity; and on the other, it is evidence of a disinclination at this stage of the saga to personalise the exchanges or to restage the compositions as a social event, with the speakers identified and a specific setting described. The quotations just flow into the text – "Þar um váru kveðnar vísu þessar" – composed by passive agents whose voices endow the account with authority but who themselves are reduced to detached, unidentified voices, untethered to any context

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31 By referring to the actuality of the stanzas as performed utterance, no inference is made that they are necessarily authentic compositions from the time of the saga's setting, though they are, of course, presented as such.

32 *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, pp. 11f. All quotations from the saga are from Ursula Brown's edition with the translation informed by her Notes.

33 For a detailed discussion of the use of verse quotation in *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, see Quinn 2020.

of performance. Who speaks here but the constructed voice of authored skaldic tradition, authenticated by rhythm and assonance, a voice that is at once authored and curiously without identity. (The author in this case does not even have an assumed life before their textual death.) Whether or not the saga author might have known the identity or identities of the poets whose stanzas are quoted cannot be ascertained but it is possible that the absence of named speakers was a deliberate textual manoeuvre to maintain the narrator's voice as the dominant narrative channel while exploiting the authenticity effects lent to the narrative by anonymous skaldic quotation.[34] If so, the narrator cleverly exploited the medium without encumbering the narrative with additional identities whose relations within the saga's network would have required at least some elaboration.

A similar mode of anonymous authentication closes the saga; again anonymous poetic quotation is deployed to clinch an account of a lawsuit: *Ok þá er lokit var málum þessum, þá var sú visa kveðin*[35] ('And when this case was finished, then this stanza was composed'). Except that once again a superfluity of anonymous poetic compositions is in evidence, as the inquit is followed by not one stanza but two (both anonymous), and once again the stanzas represent poetic variations on a theme, with some of the same wording repeated between them.

Quotations of stanzas by named figures in the feud narrative are also woven into the dialogue of the saga and presented as integral to the storyline. An example of this is the quotation of a verse by Þórðr Rúfeyjarskáld, who is specifically identified as a poet when he is introduced in the saga.[36] In this scene in chapter 12, Þórðr asks Þorgils Oddason about the value of an axe he had been given – and which Þórðr coveted, judging it fair compensation for a verse he had previously composed about Þorgils. The narrative moves easily here between indirect speech, direct poetic recitation and direct speech:

> Þórðr [...] spyrr, hvers þeim þœtti verð øxin, en þeir urpu á tvær merkr. Þórðr kvað vísu:
>   "Metin [er] marka tveggja [...]
>   Ok fagrslegin fála
>   fastleggs virð[i] [h]ála
>   semdi sjá fyr kvæði [...]."
> Þorgils mælti at Þórðr skyldi taka landsleigu undir sjálfum sér, en hann sagðisk eiga lóg til øxarinnar.[37]

34   The element of competition between prose and poetic voices in Old Norse prosimetrum was explored in Quinn 1997.
35   Þorgils saga ok Hafliða, p. 43. There is a further example of the anonymous style of quotation midway through the saga: "Ok var þetta þar um kveðit" ('And this was recited there about it.'). Þorgils saga ok Hafliða, p. 30.
36   Þorgils saga ok Hafliða, p. 3.
37   Þorgils saga ok Hafliða, p. 21.

Þórðr asked what they thought the axe was worth and they guessed two marks. Þórðr recited a verse: "Valued at two marks [...] And this beautifully wrought axe would be a very fitting gift to a man who values gold for his poem [...]" Þorgils said that Þórðr might take land rent for himself but declared that he had no right to the axe.

Another crucial scene in the escalation of the feud between Þorgils and Hafliði Másson involves Þorgils' own poetry, bolstered in this instance by his own prose utterance, in a mimetic rendering of the way poetic recitation added gravitas not just to a prose saga, but also – according to the depiction in the saga – to the interactions on the ground between the men on one side of the feud, as Þorgils rallies them to action:

> Þá tóku margir undir, at þat væri glíkligast, at Þorgils mundi ráða at sinni athǫfnum þeira. Þá kvað Þorgils vísu:
>
> > "Munat óssvita ásum
> > ar[n]sprengjand[i] lengi,
> > þat segi ek, gulls ins gjalla
> > Gerðr, þinglog[i] verða."
>
> "Ok munum vér ríða verða", sagði Þorgils [...]. [38]

> Then many responded that it would be best if Þorgils were to decide on their reaction. Then Þorgils recited a verse: "The one who makes the eagle burst [warrior] must not for long fail to keep his engagement with the noble men – that I declare, lady of the ringing gold." "And let us ride onwards", said Þorgils [...].

Þorgils' stanza is an artful declaration of his own valour, addressed – incongruously in this prosimetric context – to an unnamed woman, one who stood as judge of masculine prowess and, within the convention, was potentially instrumental in facilitating the transmission of it. The anomalous apostrophe highlights the authenticity of the stanza as Þorgils' own words, unedited by the saga narrator to fit exactly into the context of quotation but prevailing as verification of the chieftain's resolute character as witnessed by his supporters (who, it is to be inferred, should transmit the stanza). But the stanza alone was not enough to tell the story of Þorgils' retaliation: the saga narrator supplemented the poetic quotation with dialogue as Þorgils spells out exactly how his poetic words translate into action as, in prose, he urges his supporters to ride with him to pursue their cause.

    This is an interesting case of an apparently restaged utterance by an identified figure in the saga in the presence of intradiegetic listeners within the saga. The staging of verse as a performance in front of an audience of retainers is evident elsewhere too and underlines a sense that poetic compositions are vitally of their moment, capturing

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38   Þorgils saga ok Hafliða, pp. 39f.

attitudes and reactions just as they were expressed at the time they were supposedly first uttered. After Þorgils seriously injures Hafliði's hand in a skirmish, the narrator describes how Ingimundr the priest, Þorgils' kinsman and ally, was sent to find out how serious his injuries were, with his response staged in just this way, as the very words that he spoke when greeted on his return to his booth at the thing:

> Ok þá er þeir kómu heim til búðar Þorgils, þá váru þeir spurðir tíðinda ok eptir erindum sínum. Þá kvað Ingimundr prestr:
> "Fingr eru þrír af þeiri,
> þó skyldi mun fleiri
> sundr[á] s[æl]lings hendi,
> slíkt er bo[g]gr mikill, hoggnir."
> Síðan var kvatt var féránsdóms [...][39]

> And when they came back to Þorgils' booth, they were asked for news about how things had gone. Then Ingimundr the priest recited: "Three fingers were chopped off that hand; that is a serious injury – yet still more could have been choped off the rich man's hand." After that, a court of execution was convened [...].

Boasting of violent mutilation cuts both ways in the prosimetrum of the saga, serving to foreground the aggressive spirit among Þorgils' band of supporters at the same time as it confirms the extent of Hafliði's injury. The narrator reveals the detail of the injury after describing the successful prosecution of Þorgils (who is outlawed as a *skógarmaðr*, or 'man of the wilderness'), as a prelude to the mounting tension of the imminent confiscation court.

A final example demonstrates the same prosimetric style, where a stanza by Ingimundr in praise of Þorgils is staged not as a detached, ceremonial tribute to a chieftain but as an impromptu partisan declaration during manoeuvres:

> Reið Þorgils í framanaverðri fylkingu sinni. Þá kvað Ingimundr:
> "[...] Þar ríðr mætr at móti,
> mál[m]rýri tel ek skýran
> orðinn, allrar ferðar
> Odda sonr í broddi."[40]

> Þorgils rode at the forefront of his troop. Then Ingimundr recited: "[...] There rides the respected son of Oddi [Þorgils] to the encounter, at the head of his company. I think the destroyer of weapons [warrior] has become wise."

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39   Þorgils saga ok Hafliða, p. 27.
40   Þorgils saga ok Hafliða, p. 35.

Such a stanza would lend authority to the saga narrative however it was contextualised, whether, as here, staged as part of a scene in the narrative or whether as corroborating evidence (had it been introduced "Svá segir Ingimundr", for example, to affirm details mentioned in the preceding prose). Since Ingimundr is an important actor in the feud narrative – and an unashamed partisan – his identification as the author of the stanza adds dimension to the prosimetrum in comparison with, say, the first three stanzas of the saga that were quoted anonymously.

Authorship of quoted stanzas can be seen to be deployed to advantage by the saga narrator, in other words. In circumstances where identification serves to deepen characterisation and nuance the telling of the feud narrative, the narrator identifies the poet of the quoted stanza; where it is the composition itself that is highlighted, anonymity can be convenient. Flexibility in approach is nowhere more obvious in the saga than in the sequence of stanzas quoted within the depiction of the unruly banter that occurs during a wedding feast (chapter 10). In this vivid scene, those on Þorgils' side of the feud taunt a wedding guest who is a relative of Hafliði's on account of the guest's bad breath. The bullying scene is described in detail and results in the guest, the chieftain Þórðr Þorvaldsson, walking out of the feast. Seven poetic compositions of various lengths are included in the account, with those by Ingimundr – who started it all – and Þórðr – who joins in the game in good humour to begin with – attributed to them, while all of the others are anonymously recorded.

> [...] **Ingimundr prestr** laut at sessunaut sínum ok mælti við hann,
> svá sem hinn spyrði: (v. 4)
> [...] þá kveðr **Þórðr** í mót: (v. 5)
> [...] Þá var þetta kveðit til Þórðar: (v. 6)
> Hér hlær **Þórðr** mjök at þessum kveðlingi ok kveðr í mót þegar: (v. 7)
> Þá var þetta kveðit: (v. 8)
> Þá var þetta kveðit: (v. 9)
> En er Þórðr gekk út, þá var þetta kveðit: (v. 10)[41]

> [...] **Ingimundr the priest** lent towards his seating companion and spoke, as if he had been asked:
> [...] then **Þórðr** said in return:
> [...] Then this verse was directed to Þórðr:
> **Þórðr** laughs heartily at this verse and immediately retorts [...]
> Then this verse was recited [...]
> Then this verse was recited [...]
> And while Þórðr was walking out, this was recited [...]

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41   Þorgils saga ok Hafliða, pp. 15–17.

Four of the compositions are not attributed to a named poet, yet they are nonetheless quotable because of their authoritative form, as poetry.[42] As suggested earlier, while verses like this participate in the same economy of verification as stanzas depicted as being the compositions of named figures in the saga, they travel within the prosimetrum without biographic strings attached: to paraphrase Foucault, authentification did not require reference to the individual in this context. Unlike the first three stanzas quoted in *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, however, the anonymous compositions about Þórðr's foul-smelling breath are staged not as detached evidence but as part of a lively interactive scene, albeit one in which the identity of speakers is only sporadically, and pragmatically, revealed. Whether masked or unmasked, the quoted poets speaking through prosimetric texts are significant, their revelations providing a malleable resource for saga narrators to work with.

In this chapter, I have investigated some of the literary effects that could be achieved by medieval Icelandic prosimetrum writers as they exploited the potential of orally transmitted poetry to enrich their prose. Despite the markedly different discourses out of which each work is constituted, both *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* and *Gylfaginning* demonstrate the ways in which verse quotation provides an 'index of truthfulness' around which narration develops. In both works, the voices speaking according to conventions of poetic composition are rendered authoritative through the performance of quotation, even though the time and place when the rhythmic lines were composed were already separate from the scene of writing and markedly distant, especially in the case of the eddic verse quoted within *Snorra Edda*.

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42   This scene, in which Þórðr is in fact able to track down the identity of the speaker of v. 9 after it has been spoken, is analysed in more detail in Quinn 2020.

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Lena Rohrbach

The Persistence of the Humanistic Legacy

Concepts of Authorship and Textuality in *Konungasögur* Studies

Abstract

This chapter discusses underlying concepts of authorship and work in studies of medieval compilations of the history of the Norwegian kings, the so-called *Konungasögur*. It unveils the establishment of an intricate connection between notions of author and work in the wake of humanistic traditions in the 17th and 18th centuries that up to the present-day influence preconceptions of the relationship between individual manuscripts and the existence of abstract text-works, namely *Heimskringla*. A material study of the medieval transmission of these sagas discloses that the modern classifications do not reflect medieval textuality and suggests a need to adjust future preoccupations with these texts.

Keywords

Heimskringla, Snorri Sturluson, Manuscript Studies, *Konungasögur*, Humanism, Philology, Árni Magnússon, Research Paradigms

1. Authors and Works – Entangled Histories

It is one of the more intricate tasks within the field of Old Norse studies to delve into the matter of the authorship of *Konungasögur* (Kings' sagas) compilations; there are libraries filled with studies on the relationship between the individual compilations and their transmission. This chapter will nonetheless try to add some new perspectives to the ongoing discussions by approaching modern scholarly classifications in light of the actual material transmission of these texts, as well as premodern taxonomies of them. It is impossible to discuss the matter of the authorship of these sagas without taking up the notion of the 'work', Barthes' *œuvre*, as this has been such a dominant line of thought not least in discourses on authorship in relation to the *Konungasögur*. Our persistent attempt to identify authors and to define the authorship of a certain author-figure is intrinsically linked to our adherence to the notion of works, or as Stephen Nichols put it in a chapter in a collected volume on medieval notions of authorship in 2006:

> What has been less remarked, however, is the link between the emergence of textual philology and the modern concept of the author. We tend to think of philology as concerned principally with the quest for an original text, the poet's text, the Ur-text. [...] Yet, philology had, of necessity, to take

as its corollary of the search for a stable text, the quest for its originator. That is, the "author", the poet viewed not as authorial agency, but as a "person" in the metaphysical sense of the term; in short, the active "presence" in the text of both a mind and a body. [...] Without an author there can be no philology. More precisely, we should say that the concept of the work of art as the expression of an individual voice, predicated on a particular life experience originates with humanism.[1]

Even scholars receptive to the ideas of New Philology and the *mouvance* and variance of premodern Old Norse literature tend to hold on to notions of work. This tendency is for instance reflected in Bo Wendt's text-theoretical approach, which has been highly influential in new-philological studies in the field of Old Norse studies in recent years. Wendt identifies different levels of text, distinguishing the text-work, the text-witness, and the text-carrier.[2] In his understanding, the text-work is the notion of an abstract textual entity at a given time, and is thus not identical with the origin or archetype of a text; the text-witness is the specific manifestation of a text-work; and the text-carrier is the material carrier of a text-witness. Wendt's terminology reflects our inability, or at least reluctance, to let go completely of the idea of an abstract notion of work beyond the material text and to approach the text in a manuscript as a 'witness' to something else, rather than as a text in itself. The reluctance to let go of notions of work is omnipresent in our field and is (still) often accompanied by attempts to identify the author-genius behind it. This chapter intends to discuss the origins, developments, and implications of this entanglement of the concepts of work and author in the case of the *Konungasögur*.

2. Notions of Authors and Works in 20th-Century *Konungasögur* Scholarship

The discussion of authorship has been particularly active and persistent in studies of the transmission of compilations of *Konungasögur*. This applies in particular to preoccupations with what is commonly denoted as *Heimskringla*, defined in modern editions and scholarship as an encompassing collection of sagas narrating Norwegian royal history from the Ynglings up to Magnús Erlingsson in the 12th century.[3] The work of *Heimskringla* is more often than not referred to by its relation to its presumed author, Snorri, this name even being used as a chiffre for the work in many

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1   Nichols 2006, p. 79.
2   Wendt 2006, pp. 258f. Wendt's terminology has been discussed by Johansson (2010) in particular with regards to the usefulness of the differentiation between text-witness and text-carrier for manuscript textuality.
3   To mention but a few entries in more recent handbooks and editions: Whaley 1991, p. 9; Ármann Jakobsson 2005, pp. 396f.; Finlay / Faulkes 2011, p. VII; Whaley 2012, p. CLXIX.

studies.[4] Since Gustav Storm's influential study *Snorre Sturlassöns historieskrivning* from 1873, nigh uncountable publications dealing with the author-figure Snorri and the relationship of *Heimskringla* to other sagas have seen the light of day. One decisive boom of studies preoccupied with the authorship of Snorri was closely connected to the establishment of the Icelandic school and the developing interest in identifying authors, not least those who could be connected to a national cause, in an attempt to identify the 'nationality' of a work, with Sigurður Nordal's monograph *Snorri Sturluson* from 1920 catalysing the discussion.[5] Since then there has been an unbroken line of new publications taking up the question of whether or to what extent Snorri was the author of *Heimskringla.*[6] For other compilations of *Konungasögur*, however, there are only isolated discussions as regards potential author-figures.[7] This focus on *Heimskringla* and its author has undoubtedly been influenced and promoted by the aesthetic values of the Icelandic school; other compilations – notably *Fagrskinna*, *Morkinskinna*, *Hulda*, *Hrokkinskinna*, and *Flateyjarbók* – that did not meet these aesthetic ideals were ignored and not included in debates over authorship.[8] Yet the focus on *Heimskringla* is also closely related to views on the status of the texts in question, and these views have their origin much farther back in time.

At this point, a brief review of the medieval transmission of *Konungasögur* and the text-philological classification of these manuscripts is necessary for the following discussion. Table 1 lists in chronological order the extant medieval manuscripts containing complete or fragmentary compilations of *Konungasögur*. The table also lists manuscripts burnt in the great fire of Copenhagen in 1728, as they have been relevant for the per-

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4   The examples are legion. Even Louis-Jensen (1977, p. 143), one of the most pronounced sceptics of the authorship of Snorri Sturluson, at one point refers to an early modern copy of *Konungasögur* as containing a "Snorre-tekst" ('Snorri-text'), i.e. *Heimskringla.*

5   Sigurður Nordal (1920, pp. 23–30) discusses previous scholarship on that matter in detail and strongly advocates that Snorri was the author of *Heimskringla.*

6   As recently as 2017, John Megaard (2017, pp. 349–351) reached the conclusion that Snorri wrote not only *Heimskringla*, but basically also all other *Konungasögur* compilations before and after *Heimskringla.* This conclusion is certainly not representative for the state of scholarship, but in a way Megaard's extreme position reflects the ongoing striving in our discipline to make sense of the intricate textual relationships between the transmitted texts. Critical as to the authorship of Snorri and the use of notions of authorship in general are Cormack 2001 and Boulhosa 2005. The most profound studies in that matter, by Jonna Louis-Jensen and Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, will be discussed in detail below.

7   Jakobsen (1975) discusses the characteristics of the author of *Fagrskinna* in his article "Om Fagrskinna-forfatteren" without identifying a name. Sigurjón Páll Ísaksson, as recently as 2012, suggested that Snorri was the author of *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna.*

8   This is also discussed by Ármann Jakobsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson (2011, p. XVI) in their introduction to the edition of *Morkinskinna* in *Íslenzk fornrit.*

ception of the textual relationships of these compilations, not least as they were copied and discussed by humanistic scholars in the 17th and 18th centuries:

Signature	Name	Dating[9]
NRA 51	Fagrskinna (B)	1240
Lbs. Fragm. 82	**Kringla**	**1260**
GKS 1009 fol.	Morkinskinna	1275
AM 39 fol.		**1300**
AM 45 fol.	**Fríssbók**	**1300–25**
AM 47 fol.	**Eirspennill**	**1300–25**
AM 66 fol.	Hulda	1350–75
GKS 1005 fol.	Flateyjarbók	1387–94
GKS 1010 fol.	Hrokkinskinna	1400–50
burnt	Fagrskinna A (B)	
burnt	**(Kringla)**	
burnt	**Gullinskinna**	
burnt	**Jöfraskinna**	

Table 1: Medieval manuscripts of compilations of *Konungasögur*. Entries in bold highlight manuscripts subsumed to the text-work of *Heimskringla*.

Of these manuscripts, the items highlighted in bold have been classified in scholarship as text-witnesses of the work *Heimskringla*, with an x-branch comprising *Kringla* and, in a sub-branch, AM 39 fol. and AM 45 fol. (*Fríssbók*), and a y-branch comprising AM 47 fol. (*Eirspennill*), *Jöfraskinna*, and *Gullinskinna*.[10] Of these manuscripts, only AM 39 fol., *Fríssbók*, and *Eirspennill* are extant as medieval manuscripts, whilst *Kringla* (apart from a

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9   All datings in this article are based on the Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog. ONP: Dictionary of Old Norse Prose, URL: https://onp.ku.dk (last accessed 1 March 2021), unless otherwise stated.

10   For a thorough discussion and visualisation of the stemma, see Louis-Jensen 1977, pp. 35–43.

single-leaf fragment), *Jöfraskinna*, and *Gullinskinna* survived only in early modern copies after they were burnt in 1728. *Heimskringla* is thus the construction of an abstract text-work – to use Wendt's terminology – based on text-philological considerations of textual relationships, whereas the other compilations are texts handed down in one manuscript each (or two manuscripts, in the case of the two versions of *Fagrskinna*) – not including the early modern copies of those manuscripts.[11]

3. Questioning Concepts of Authorship and Work

The different textual status of the compilations is probably also the reason why the alterity of concepts of authorship were discussed earlier in relation to the 'manuscript compilations' than to the 'work' *Heimskringla*. In connection with his edition of *Morkinskinna* in 1932, Finnur Jónsson already stressed that it is "meningsløst at tale om eller tænke på en forfatterindividualitet" ('meaningless to talk or think about an author personality'),[12] with the notion of the compiler rather than the creative author being applied early on to these compilations. In their attempt "[t]owards the profile of the author" of *Morkinskinna*, Theodore Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade remarked that "[i]t is dangerous to speak of a single author in the case of a work that has, more often than not, been regarded as a composite."[13] In their edition of *Morkinskinna* in 2011, Ármann Jakobsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson also discuss thoroughly the status of medieval authors of sagas and denote them as master builders, who collect, rearrange, and finish the work of others and bring it into their final form. In that context, they also take up the question of whether we have to imagine this master builder as an individual or as a collective, thus moving away from the idea of there being one mastermind behind the making of a text:

> Höfundar sagnarita eru safnarar sem velja efni í sögur sínar, skipa því niður og skapa nýtt samhengi. Þeim má líkja við síðasta byggingarmeistara stórrar dómkirkju, þann sem leggur lokahönd á verk annarra. Gera má ráð fyrir að þáttur þessa meistara hafi verið mikill, ekki ósvipað og þess sem að lokum bjó til heild úr sögunum sem mynda Heimskringlu. Var þessi síðasti meistari einn eða má gera ráð fyrir heilli ritnefnd á bak við verkið?[14]

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11 *Fagrskinna* is ultimately also the scholarly construction of a text-work, in that two textual versions are subsumed under this name.

12 Finnur Jónsson 1932, p. XL. In his edition of *Eirspennill*, on the other hand, he identifies four parts, deriving from "forskellige værker eller forfattere" ('different works or authors', Finnur Jónsson 1916, p. XVII f.). See p. 153 of this volume. All translations in this chapter are mine, unless stated otherwise.

13 Andersson / Gade 2000, p. 72.

14 Ármann Jakobsson / Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson 2011, p. XIV.

> The authors of saga-compilations are collectors who select the material in their sagas, break it down, and create a new context. They can be compared to the final master builder of a major cathedral, the one who puts the finishing touches on the work of others. One can assume that the masters' impact was considerable, not unlike that of the one who shaped a whole out of the sagas that form Heimskringla. Was that last master one person, or do we have to assume a scribal collective behind the work?

Ármann and Þórður Ingi thus reject the idea of an individual author for the medieval saga compilations, yet whilst they do not name the mastermind behind *Heimskringla*, nor do they let go of the notion of there being a work called *Heimskringla*. The existence of this work, however, has in recent decades been questioned by some scholars. In her diligent studies of the transmission of *Konungasögur*, Jonna Louis-Jensen repeatedly questions notions of *Heimskringla* as a work and the attribution of its authorship to Snorri Sturluson. She criticises previous scholarship for approaching the manuscripts with the understanding that "Heimskringla er et værk af én forfatter" ('Heimskringla is the work of a single author').[15] The differences between the manuscripts lead her to the conclusion that "there has never been a 'complete version' authorised by Snorri Sturluson himself",[16] and she convincingly argues that the accepted stemma of *Heimskringla* is not equally meaningful for the whole textual range from *Ynglinga saga* to *Magnúss saga Erlingssonar*, due to the differences between the individual manuscripts.[17] The main manuscripts all differ in contents and range, with only *Kringla* – or rather its early modern copy – featuring the complete temporal range.[18] Furthermore, Louis-Jensen's studies also demonstrate that the (medieval) manuscripts of *Konungasögur* exhibit intricate textual relationships beyond those indicated by established stemmata. Several manuscripts are to be regarded as hybrids of several textual traditions, such as *Fríssbók*, which is in parts closely related to *Morkinskinna*,[19] and the compilations *Hulda* and *Hrokkinskinna*, which have not traditionally been subsumed to

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15   Louis-Jensen 1997, p. 131.
16   Louis-Jensen 2004, p. 100.
17   Louis-Jensen 1977, p. 36.
18   *Fríssbók* does not contain the middle part, i.e. *Óláfs saga helga*, but only a note by the main scribe stating where *Óláfs saga helga* ought to be inserted (see Fig. 9 below). *Jöfraskinna*, or its early modern copy, has a different version of *Óláfs saga helga*, and *Eirspennill* and *Gullinskinna* (or its copy) only feature (parts of) the third part of the 'work' (Louis-Jensen 1997, pp. 233f.). AM 39 fol. is handed down defectively, and it is uncertain whether it contained the middle part (Louis-Jensen 1997, pp. 237f.). Cf. Table 2 below. See also Louis-Jensen 1977, pp. 16–31.
19   Louis-Jensen 1977, pp. 83–94. The textual character of *Fríssbók* was already discussed by Carl Richard Unger (1871, p. IV, see below) in his edition of the codex. See also Jørgensen 2007, p. 6; Andersson / Gade 2000, p. 8.

the work *Heimskringla*, but which are indebted both to the texts of the y-branch and to the text of *Morkinskinna*.[20]

Another persistent sceptical voice has been Jon Gunnar Jørgensen who in the beginning of his dissertation on the lost vellum *Kringla* states that his study came into being in the context of a project that had the goal of publishing a new edition of *Heimskringla*. This goal, Jørgensen writes, "has never been achieved, for the simple reason that it now seems unlikely that our surviving witnesses to the texts associated with *Heimskringla* go back to a single archetype comprising all the elements in the collection of sagas traditionally known by that name."[21] He then raises doubts "about whether the unified structure which we find in *Kringla* and associate with *Heimskringla* is much older than this vellum."[22] Already in an earlier article on the mentions of the name of Snorri as author in the humanistic translations of *Heimskringla*, Jørgensen states that his discussion might have consequences for the "realitetsdiskusjonen" ('reality discussion') about *Heimkringla*'s author, but that he does not wish to go into that question in more detail.[23] Jørgensen articulates similar reservations in a more recent contribution on Nordic editions of *Heimskringla*, where he emphasises that, in the case of *Heimskringla*, "different editions have not only communicated and documented a work, but in fact have also established it".[24] This conclusion comes very close to a deconstruction, and the following considerations will attempt to follow this line of thought to its logical end.

4. Medieval Textual Materialities and Modern Editorial Practices

The arguments brought forward by Jonna Louis-Jensen and Jon Gunnar Jørgensen against the meaningfulness of thinking about *Heimskringla* as a work can be supplemented by further material studies of the medieval manuscript transmission. When including all texts in the extant codices into the consideration, the distinct textuality of each individual manuscript becomes even more obvious:

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20   Louis-Jensen 1977, p. 190.
21   Jørgensen 2007, p. VII.
22   Jørgensen 2007, p. 97.
23   Jørgensen 1997, p. 45.
24   Jørgensen 2013, p. 63.

	[Kringla]	AM 39 fol.	Fríssbók	Eirspennill	[Jöfraskinna]	[Gullinskinna]
Prologue	X		X	Leiðarvísir	X	
Hkr I	X	X	X	-	X	-
Hkr II	X	?	-	-	OH	-
Hkr III	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sverris saga				X		
Böglunga sögur				X		
Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar			X	X		

Table 2: Contents of the six main codices subsumed to *Heimskringla*. Adapted and extended table based on Louis-Jensen 1997, p. 234. Codices only extant in early modern copies are displayed in square brackets.

The two extant medieval codices, *Fríssbók* and *Eirspennill*, differ considerably in their textual structure.[25] *Fríssbók* opens with the famous prologue traditionally ascribed to *Heimskringla*, whereas *Eirspennill* has an excerpt of *Leiðarvísir* placed on fol. 1r; furthermore, whilst *Fríssbók* contains what is usually denoted as *Heimskringla* I and III – including the textual familiarity with *Morkinskinna* mentioned above – *Eirspennill* contains *Heimskringla* III only. The codices also differ in the end of the compilations; *Fríssbók* features *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* after *Magnúss saga Erlingssonar*, whereas *Eirspennill* also includes *Sverris saga* and *Böglunga sögur* at its end (see Table 2). In his introduction to the edition of *Eirspennill*, Finnur Jónsson reasons about the beginning of the codex:

> Håndskriftet begynder, ligesom så mange andre, på anden side af bl. 1. Første side har altså fra første færd af været ubeskreven. Senere har dog den 1. hånd herpå skrevet småstykker af abbed Nikolas' rejsebeskrivelse, ialt 17 linjer. Der er ingen grund til at aftrykke dem her, da dr Kålund har benyttet dem og hæntet udførlige varianter derfra i sin Alfræði íslenzk.[26]

> The manuscript begins, like so many others, on the verso page of folio one. The first page has thus initially been left blank. Later, though, the first hand has written some minor pieces from Abbot Nicholas' itinerary [i.e. the *Leiðarvísir*] on it, in total 17 lines. There is no reason to print them here, as Dr. Kålund has used and provided them as extensive variants in his Alfræði íslenzk.

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25   The early modern copies of the burnt manuscripts do not allow for any assertions about the materiality and textual range of their medieval pretexts; AM 39 fol. is also of only limited significance in this regard due to its fragmentary transmission.

26   Finnur Jónsson 1916, p. VIII.

This note illustrates that Finnur Jónsson did not regard the text on folio 1r as being part of the 'text'. The text on the folio opens with the rubric *prologus*, followed by an excerpt on the tripartite structure of the world with information on Africa and its holy places (Fig. 1), which is clearly reminiscent of the beginning of *Ynglinga saga* as it is found in *Fríssbók*.[27] *Ynglinga saga* in *Fríssbók* is introduced by the rubrication "her hefr vpp konvnga bok ept*ir* savgn Ara *p*restz froða Oc hefr f*y*rst v*m* þriþivnga skipti heims*ins*. En sidan f*ra* avllv*m* Nor*egs* k*onvngv*m" ('here begins the book of kings following the accounts of the priest Ari the learned. And it begins with the tripartition of the world and then it relates about all the kings of Norway') (Fig. 2), followed by a brief description of the three parts of the world.[28] Whereas the beginning of *Ynglinga saga* quickly turns towards Sweden, the excerpt in *Eirspennill* dwells on the description of Asia and the rivers running from paradise. The short text thus situates the history of the Kings of Norway within a global Christian cultural geography. Evidently, the text on folio 1r in *Eirspennill* is not simply a random, subsequent note by the main scribe with no connection to the following text, but is, on the contrary, a proper prologue – even titled as such – for the following text, and it should thus be approached as an integral part of the compilation.

The material layout of *Eirspennill* displays *Sverris saga*, *Böglunga sögur*, and *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* as continuous parts of the preceding text, with pen-flourished opening initials corresponding in size and decoration to the opening initial on fol. 1v (see Figs. 4–7).[29] These four initials are the largest in the codex. The individual sagas of *Heimskringla* are introduced by pen-flourished initials in two colours with three lines of indentation (see Fig. 8), while most chapter initials are lombards in one colour with two or three lines of indentation (see Figs. 4, 6, 7, 8). This materiality suggests that fol. 1v with the beginning of *Magnúss saga góða* from the outset formed the beginning of the first main text of the codex, preceded by a prologue, and that *Sverris saga*, *Böglunga sögur*, and *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* were treated as texts on the same textual level, whereas the introductions of new kings within the first main text were regarded as major sections of this text, but at a higher textual level than the individual chapters.

The materiality of *Fríssbók* leads to a similar conclusion. *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* is materially displayed as part of the text on the same level as the texts ahead of it (see Figs. 2, 9 and 10): Multicoloured, foliate initials with spiral vines of Romanesque style,

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27 AM 47 fol., f. 1r. Cf. Alfræði íslenzk 1, pp. 6 and 8–10.

28 AM 45 fol., f. 1v. This introduction is preceded by the prologue as known from the editions of *Heimskringla* with the rubric *Prologus* (f. 1r, see Fig. 3).

29 The opening initial on f. 1v is indented five lines high, with the indentations for the initials introducing *Sverris saga*, *Böglunga sögur*, and *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* measuring 5, 4, and 4 lines, respectively.
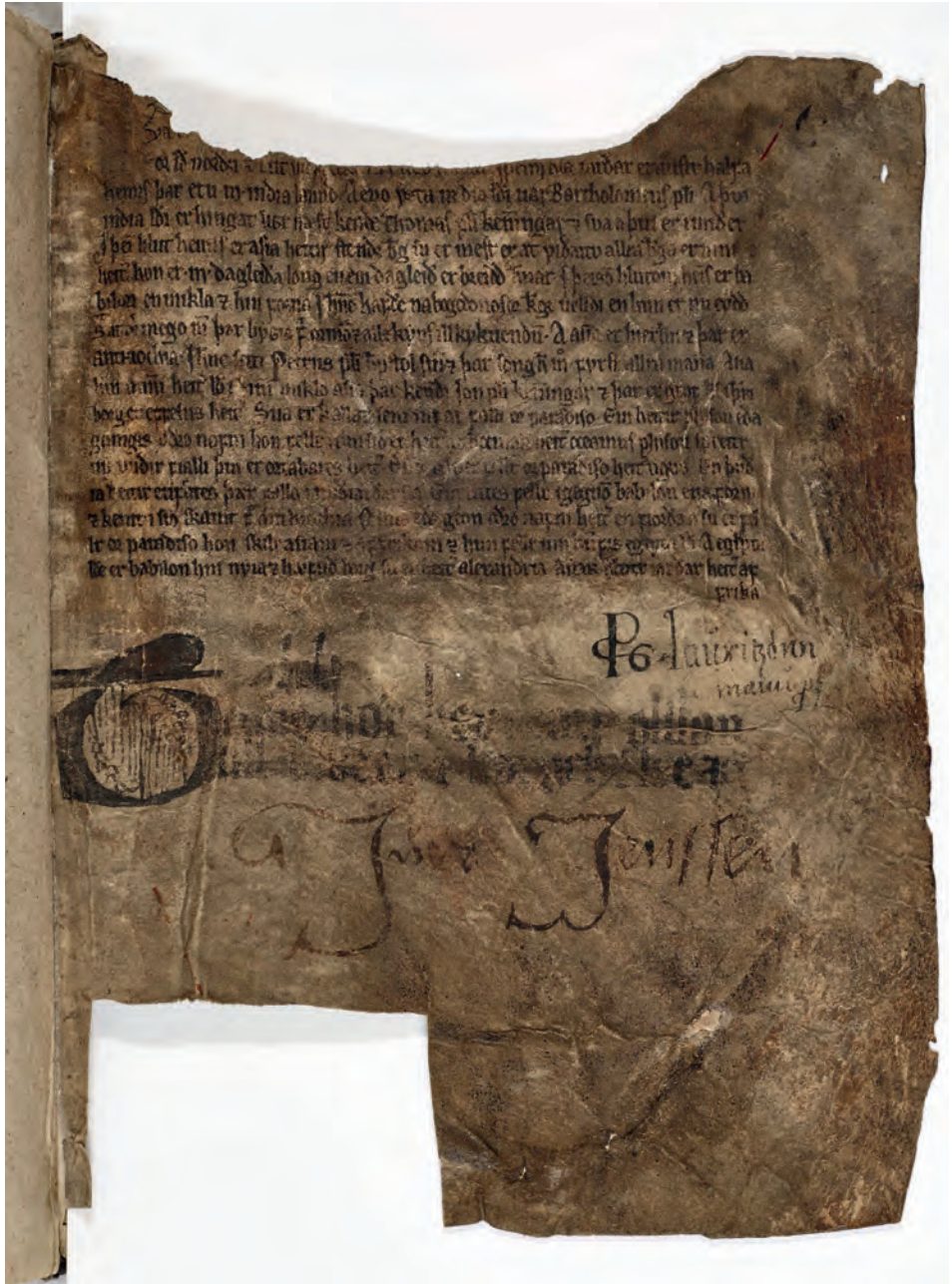
Fig. 1: Eirspennill, AM 47 fol., f. 1r. *Prologus.*

Fig. 2: Fríssbók, AM 45 fol. f. 1v. Beginning of *Ynglinga saga*.

Fig. 3: Fríssbók, AM 45 fol., f. 1r. *Prologus*.

with 6 to 13 lines of indentation, introduce the individual sagas in the compilation.[30] The opening initials of *Ynglinga saga* on fol. 1v, with 13 lines of indentation, and of *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, with 10 lines of indentation, are the largest in the codex, thus highlighting them somewhat in comparison to the other sagas. Furthermore, the initial of *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* stands out in that it begins on a new page with blank space on the previous page and is the only one of the major initials in Romanesque style to feature a figurative decoration of a dragon. These material accentuations might indicate that the sagas from *Ynglinga saga* to *Magnúss saga Erlingssonar* were regarded as one textual entity, but the difference in size and style is not as distinctive as in *Eirspennill*.

The textual macrostructures of *Fríssbók* and *Eirspennill* thus reveal planned textual arrangements that differ from each other in range and focus, but both have in common that they present a continuous comprehensive history of kings different from and beyond what is usually described as *Heimskringla*. Both codices were edited as compilations at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, and the textuality and materiality of the two manuscripts were reflected and rendered in dissimilar manners in these two editions. The differences in the choices of the editors Finnur Jónsson and Carl Richard Unger are highly significant as regards the underlying preconceptions of the textual status of the different parts included in the codices.[31] Finnur Jónsson's 1916 edition of *Eirspennill* reflects editorial interventions based on assumptions of textual entities in close connection to contemporary notions of work and authorship; not only does he dismiss the text on folio 1r as secondary, but he also identifies four distinct sections "fra forskellige værker eller forfattere" ('from different works or authors'), namely "Heimskringla, den sidste tredjedel omtrent" ('Heimskringla, roughly the last third') and the three other *Konungasögur* mentioned above.[32] That 'Heimskringla' in the codex only consists of the third part of the assumed work does not pose a problem for Finnur; on the contrary, he denotes this part of the codex as "[d]en del, der frembyder mindst vanskeligheder" ('the part that poses least difficulties'), and with reference to his edition of *Heimskringla* claims that it is "skreven efter et godt håndskrift" ('written based on a good manuscript').[33] Fifty years earlier, Unger was by contrast considerably more faithful to the materiality of the edited text, and as early as 1871 characterised the text in *Fríssbók* as close to, but not identical with, *Heimskringla*, thus preparing the ground for further critical investigation into the textual tradition:

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30   Four initials in this style do not introduce a new saga, but indicate chapters within the sagas of individual kings. The only saga introduced by an initial in a different style is *Hálfdanar saga svarta* on f. 7v, which is opened by a pen-flourished initial in red and blue with five lines of indentation, and *Magnúss saga Erlingssonar* is not materially indicated as a new text.

31   On the philological standpoints of Finnur Jónsson's and Unger's editions, see Jørgensen 2013, pp. 58f.

32   Finnur Jónsson 1916, p. XVII f.

33   Finnur Jónsson 1916, p. XVIII.

Fig. 4: Eirspennill, AM 47 fol., f. 72v.
Opening initial of *Sverris saga* with
preceding *prologus*.

Fig. 5: Eirspennill, AM 47 fol., f. 129r.
Opening initial of *Böglunga sögur*.

Fig. 6: Eirspennill, AM 47 fol., f. 139v.
Opening initial of *Hákonar saga
Hákonarsonar*.
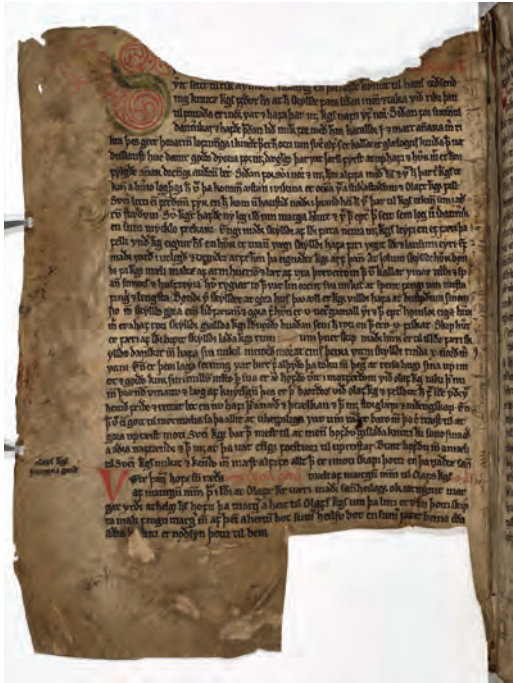
Fig. 7: Eirspennill, AM 47 fol., f. 1v.
Opening initial of *Magnúss saga góða*.
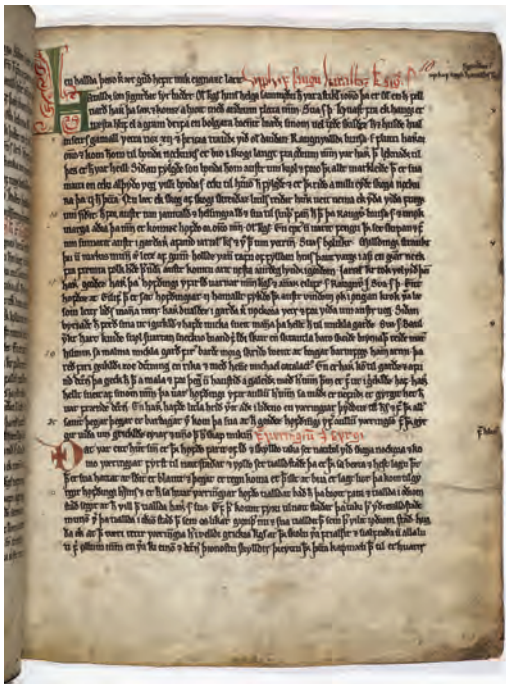
Fig. 8: Eirspennill, AM 47 fol. f. 10r.
Opening initial of *Haralds saga
Sigurðarsonar*.

Fig. 9: Fríssbók, AM 45 fol., f. 37r. Opening initial of *Magnúss saga góða* and rubrication indicating the position of *Óláfs saga helga* ahead of this saga.
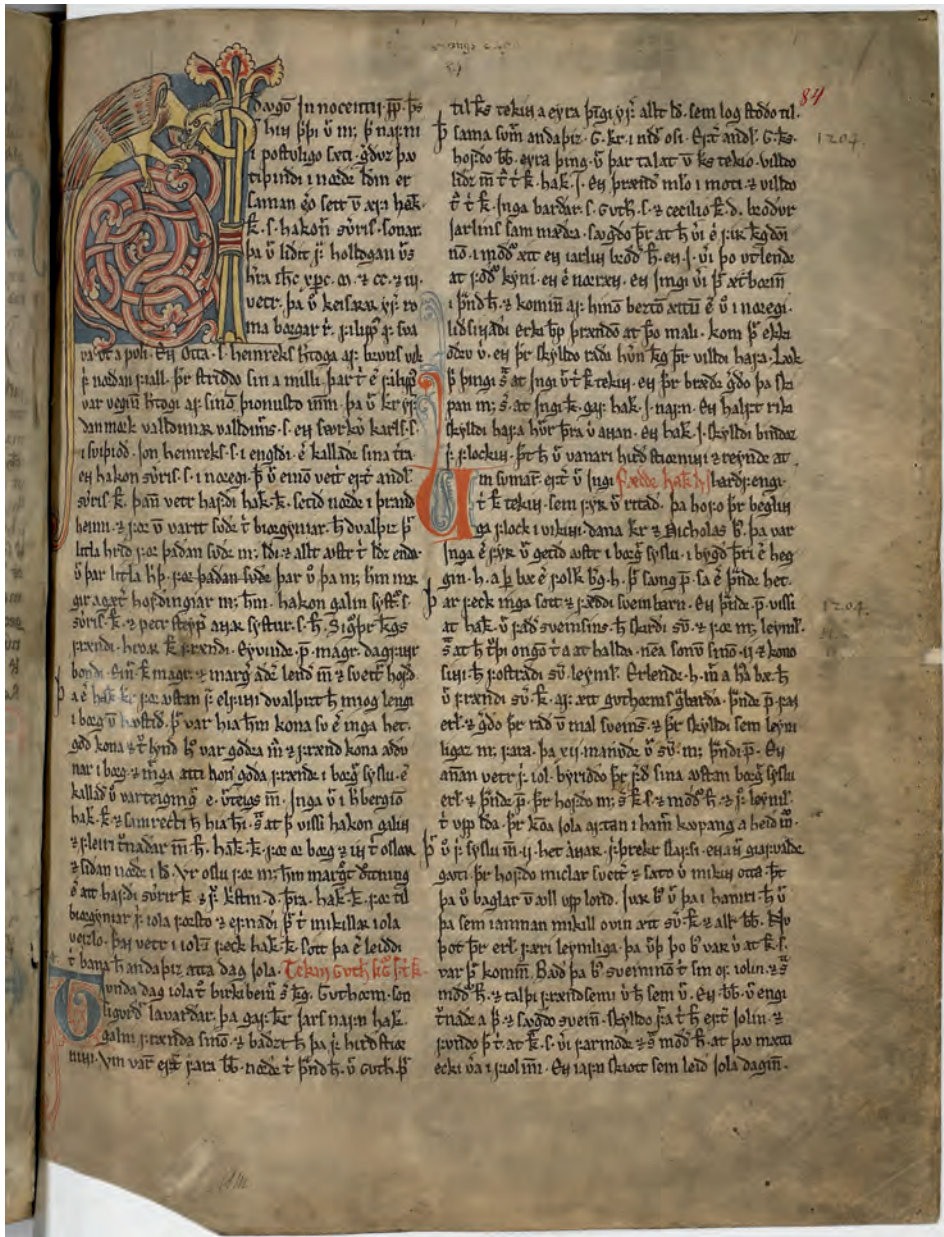
Fig. 10: Flateyjarbók, AM 45 fol., f. 84r. Opening initial of *Hákonar saga góða*.

Texten i Frisianus stemmer indtil Slutningen af Harald Haardraades Saga væsentlig med Heimskringla. [...] I Olaf Kyrres og Magnus Barfods Saga ere Afvigelserne ikke saa ubetydelige fra Heimskringla; disse blive endnu mer iöinefaldende, naar man udskyder af Texten i denne, hvad der mangler i Haandskriftet Kringla.[34]

The text in Frisianus accords until the end of Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar for the most part with Heimskringla. [...] In Óláfs saga kyrra and Magnúss saga berfœtts, the divergences from Heimskringla are not inconsiderable; these are even more eye-catching if one takes out the text that is lacking in the manuscript Kringla.

Accordingly, he lists the individual sagas in the codex from *Ynglinga saga* to *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* as individual items on the same textual level in the table of contents, and notions of a work-entity do not influence his rendering of the manuscript text.[35]

5. The Medial Birth of *Kringla heimsens* and Snorri the Author

Unger's faithful treatment of the material text of *Fríssbók* and his distancing of it from the work *Heimskringla* is an exception to the rule. The idea of *Heimskringla* as a work persists in scholarly discourse, even in contributions sceptical as to the meaningfulness of this notion. Yet why are we so hesitant to let go of the notions of the work *Heimskringla* and its originator Snorri? Why do we treat *Heimskringla* as an abstract text-work whilst the other compilations are approached as manuscript texts embedded in a textual culture of openness and *mouvance*?

Attempts to answer this question lead back to Stephen Nichols' reflections on the close relationship of the development of philological traditions in the wake of humanism and the birth of the notion of the author presented in the beginning of this chapter. Our notions of authorship and of the textual relationships between *Konungasögur* manuscripts are deeply rooted in and dependent on the editorial and philological enterprises of the humanistic scholars of the 17th and 18th centuries. As pointed out in earlier studies, Snorri was for the first time named as an author of *Konungasögur* in the early modern translations of Laurents Hanssøn and Peder Claussøn, the latter edited by Ole Worm and printed in 1633.[36] The title page of Worm's print gives the author Snorre Sturlessøn and the title *Norske Kongers Chronica* (see Fig. 11). In his introduction to the print, Ole Worm mentions the name of the work, *Kringlu Heimsens*, and claims that it "skal være beskrefuen aff Snorre Sturlesøn" ('is said to be written by Snorri Sturluson'), later on also denoting Snorri as the "ret autor til denne Chrønicke" ('rightful author of

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34   Unger 1871, p. IV.
35   Unger 1871, p. IV.
36   Louis-Jensen 1977, pp. 43 and 48; Jørgensen 1995, p. 45; Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir 1998, pp. 98f.; Boulhosa 2005, p. 12.
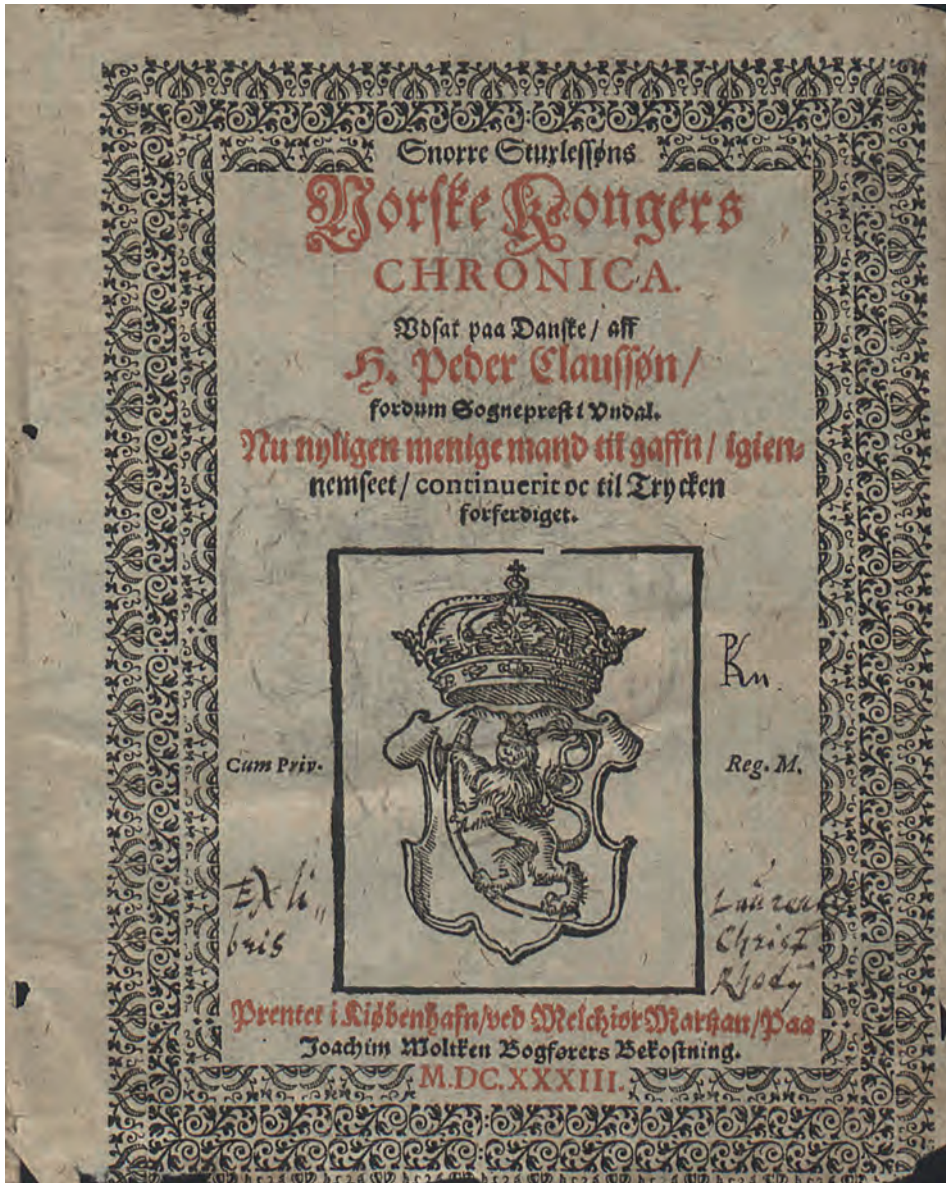
Fig. 11: Snorre Sturlessøns Norske Kongers Chronica. Udsat paa Danske aff H. Peder Claussøn (1633). Title page.

this chronicle').[37] The question of what led Ole Worm and the early modern Norwegian translators to the conclusion that Snorri was the author of *Kringlu heimsens* has been discussed in depth by generations of scholars since the end of the 19th century; the arguments are well-known and do not need to be repeated in detail in this context.[38] Suffice it to say that the references to Snorri in the medieval transmission paint him not as an author in the modern understanding, but rather as a knowledgeable authority, and the conceptual framework of the medialisation of his authorial knowledge seems to be one of vocality and scripturality alike. Whatever the reasons, by means of presenting the name of Snorri Sturluson on the title page of the *Norske Kongers Chronica*, following the conventions of the recent tradition of printing, Ole Worm transformed the medieval

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37 Snorre Sturlessøns Norske Kongers Chronica, b3.

38 One recurring theory was that a now lost manuscript mentioned Snorri as the author; this was prominently discussed and later dismissed by Gustav Storm (1873; 1883), but Jakob Benediktsson (1955) reactivated the hypothesis. See Louis-Jensen 1977, pp. 49–51 for a thorough discussion of the different positions. Furthermore, references to Snorri in extant texts have also been brought forward, as well as dismissed, as arguments for medieval and early modern knowledge about his authorship. None of these references unequivocally denote Snorri as an author, let alone an author of a specific work. The well-known passage in *Sturlunga saga* (p. 421) only states that Snorri put together saga-books; neither are the saga-books specified nor is the semantic notion of *setja saman* undebated. For a study of the semantic frames of *setja saman*, see Müller 2020, pp. 127–141; the relevant passage in *Sturlunga saga* is discussed on pp. 129f. Jürg Glauser (2010, p. 319) describes the concept of *setja saman* as a translation of the Latin *componere* and as "the act of intertextual production of a text"; see also Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir 1998, p. 98. The often-quoted references to Snorri in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (pp. 263, 268 and 286f.) and *Orkneyinga saga* (p. 107) do not invoke Snorri as an author who wrote down a specific work in a fixed form, but rather as an authority for the veracity of the incidents narrated. Gustav Storm (1883, p. 48) had already noted in 1883 that these sagas refer to Snorri as an authority: "andre Skrifter fra Sluten af 13de og fra 14de Aarhundrede (Jarlesagaen og den store Saga om Olav Trygvessøn) citerede Snorre Sturlassøn som Autoritet for norske Begivenheder" ('other texts from the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century [Jarlasaga and Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta] quoted Snorri Sturluson as authority for Norwegian incidents'). Storm's denotion of Snorri as an authority here can be taken as an indication of his change of perspective; ten years earlier, in his monograph *Snorre Sturlassöns historieskrivning*, he instead used the word "Forfatter" ('author') and postulated that learned men in the 13th and 14th centuries "kjendte altsaa Snorres Kongesagaer som ét samlet Værk, og nogle af dem angav bestemt Snorre som Forfatter" ('thus knew Snorri's *Konungasögur* as one assembled work, and some of them surely named Snorri as author', Storm 1873, pp. 3f.). Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir (1998, p. 99) refers to these two passages as references to "Snorri als Gewährsmann für Informationen" ('Snorri as guarantor of information'). Significantly, all the references to Snorri in these two sagas use the verbum dicendi *segja* rather than *skrifa* or *rita*, thus referring to an oral account rather than a written text. For a detailed discussion of the medial implications of references to sources for sagas and the different settings between vocality and scripturality, see Glauser 2010.

authority Snorri into a proper author, a transformation that had long-lasting conse-
quences for the reception of *Konungasögur* in the following centuries.[39]

Worm's own understanding of authorship and textual integrity, however, seems to
be rather generous and in line with medieval variant textuality: he informs us in his
prologue that he used the translation of Peder Claussøn Friis, which he "paa det flittig-
ste confererit, oc siden indtil Enden forbedrit oc continuert" ('very diligently compared
and later amended and continued until the end'). He notes that in some manuscripts,
actually in the "beste versionibus" ('best versions'), the final text of the chronicle is
Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar, yet Worm deems that this cannot have been written by
Snorri "efterdi hand bleff ihielslagen Aar 1240 i samme Kong Hagens 25 Regimentis
Aar" ('because he was slain in the year 1240 in the 25th year of King Hákon's reign').[40]
This judgement, however, does not prevent Worm from including *Sverris saga*, *Böglunga
sögur*, and *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* in the book, thus including the range of texts as
we find it in *Eirspennill*; furthermore, just as in *Eirspennill*, these three sagas are again
displayed materially as integral parts of the *Chronica*, with continuous running titles
and continuous book numberings (see Fig. 12–13). Yet Worm was still not satisfied with
this range of texts and added further texts at the end covering the reigns of the Norwe-
gian kings up to the end of the 14th century, that is, the beginning of the Kalmar Union.
These additions are introduced as such by a short prologue on p. 796, with the end of
the *Norske Chronica* being announced on the previous page at the end of *Hákonar saga
Hákonarsonar*: "her endis den Norske Chronica / som aff det Islendiske Sprock er trans-
fererit" ('here ends the Norwegian chronicle / translated from the Icelandic language')
(see Fig. 14).[41] Nonetheless, the later additions are also typographically presented as
parts of the *Chronica* by means of the continued book numbering and the running title

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39 For a similar reasoning, see Boulhosa (2005, pp. 13–15), who concludes after a detailed discussion
    of paratexts in Hanssøn's translation that these provided the book with an "authoritative author-
    ship" and that these endeavours have to be understood in light of the contemporaneous evolve-
    ment of nationalist discourses in 16th-century Scandinavia. The staging of Snorri as the author
    was also a decision made against the author Ari Þorgilsson, who, as Boulhosa rightly pointed out,
    unlike Snorri, was named as an author(ity) for the following chronicle in the beginning of *Fríssbók*
    (see Boulhosa 2005, pp. 9–11). On the connection between the evolving tradition of author names
    on title pages and the emergence of copyrights, see the article by Gudrun Bamberger in this vol-
    ume.

40 *Snorre Sturlessøns Norske Kongers Chronica*, unpaginated. See also Louis-Jensen 1977, p. 59.

41 *Snorre Sturlessøns Norske Kongers Chronica*, p. 795. In his introduction to the print, Ole Worm ex-
    plicates: "Her hos / efterdi der fattedis mange Kongers Liff oc Leffnit / indtil de Danske Konger fick
    Regeringen ofuer Norge / hafuer jeg aff atskillige documentis samlet en kort Sum aff de Kongers
    Historier som fattis / at Chrønicken kunde blifue dis fuldkommere." ('As there were many kings'
    lives and deeds missing until the Danish kings became rulers over Norway, I have gathered from
    numerous documents a short summary of the deeds of those kings that were lacking, so that the
    chronicle become more complete', c3. Cf. also p. 796).
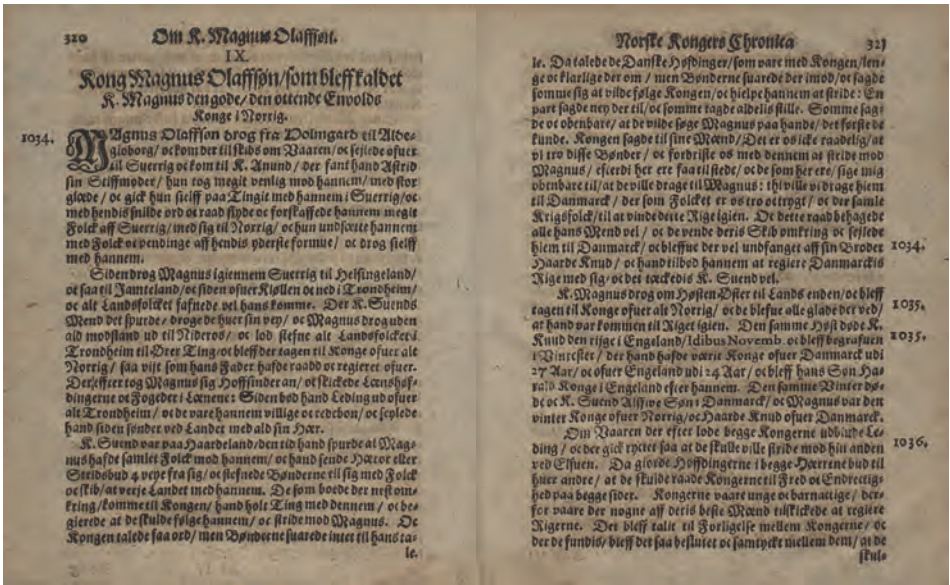
Fig. 12: Snorre Sturlessøns Norske Kongers Chronica (1633). Beginning of *Magnúss saga góða* with running title *Norske Kongers Chronica* and book numbering IX (pp. 320f.).
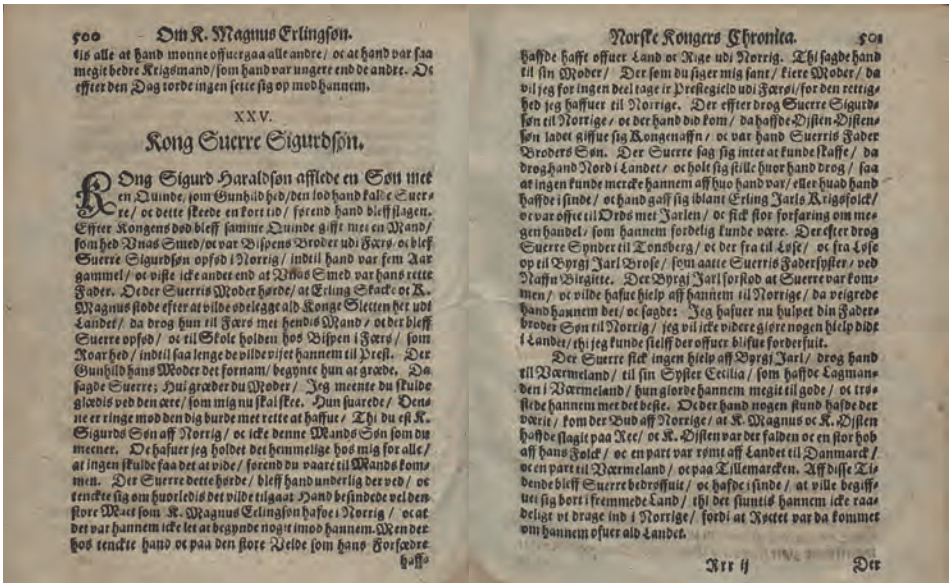
Fig. 13: Snorre Sturlessøns Norske Kongers Chronica. Beginning of *Sverris saga* with running title *Norske Kongers Chronica* and book numbering XXV (pp. 500f.).

Norske Kongers Chronica. 795

tharina Kircke i Bergen til et Hospital/ oc gaff der til 200 ma-
mataboel Jorder/ hand lod giøre alle Helgen Kirckegaard i
Bergen/ oc gaff der til 100 mamataboel Jorder/ hand lod
oc bygge Afuelsnæs Kircke/ som er en iblant de første Landsby-
Kircker udi Norrig/ hand lod giøre Steenmuren omkring
Tonsbiergs hus/ oc et Torn ofuer Porten/ hand lod giøre et
Hospital i Tonsberg/ sønden for S. Olofs Kircke/ oc gaff der til
30 mamataboel Jorder/ hand lod grafue Dybet ved Skilliefte-
nen/ hand lod oc bygge Barfod Brødre Kircke udi Tonsberg/
som bleff siden ført til Dracksmarck/ oc der lod hand bygge Ma-
riæ Kircke aff Steen/ oc gaff der til 50 mamataboel Jorder/
hand lod herligen bygge Valdisholmen/ hand lod giøre en Be-
festning i Ragnils Holmen ved Kongehelle/ Hand lod bygge
mange Der under Vigsiden/ Hand lod lod bygge Marstrands
By/ Hand lod oc giøre et Feste udi Miøs ved Rigesaker i Hol-
men/ med megit andet/ som langt er at skrifue om. Gud Fa-
der/ Søn oc hellig Aand/ bevare/ ærefuld giøre oc velsigne slig
en Herris Siele/ som saa mange nytsommelige Giernin-
ger hafuer efter sig ladit/ som den salige Herre
K. Hagen giorde/ oc endis hans
Historia.

**Her endis den Norske Chronica/ som
aff det Islendiske Sprock er
transfererit.**

Hhhhh   Gun-

Fig. 14: Snorre Sturlessøns Norske Kongers Chronica. „Her endis den Norske Chronica/som aff det Islendiske Sprock er transfererit" (p. 795).
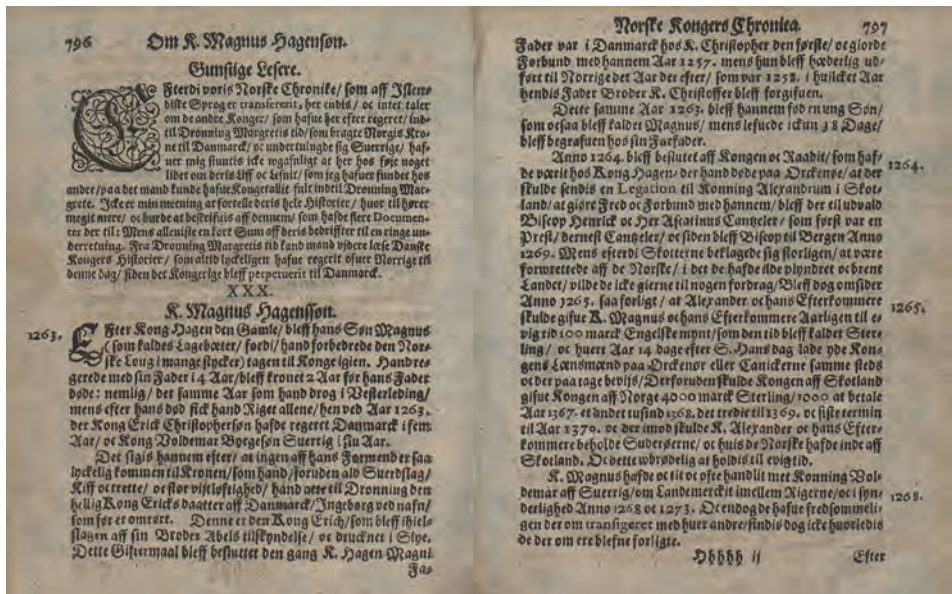
Fig. 15: Snorre Sturlessøns Norske Kongers Chronica. Beginning of *Magnúss saga Hákonarsonar* with pro-
logue, running title *Norske Kongers Chronica* and book numbering XXX (pp. 796f.).

(see Fig. 15), and all follow the title page that prominently presents Snorri the author.
Worm thus presents a compilation of texts that only peripherally reflects philological
consideration, and which roams rather freely through the textual tradition, but *Kringlu
heimsens* and Snorri the author had come into the world.[42]

Some sixty years later, the title and author name appear for the first time together
on the title page of Johan Peringskiöld's trilingual edition *Heims Kringla Eller Sturlusons
Nordländske Konunga Sagor* (1697), which was based on an early modern copy of *Kringla*
in the hand of Jón Eggertsson (Fig. 16). Peringskiöld employs this title and author name
in a considerably narrower manner than Worm, and it is with his edition that the title
of *Heimskringla* and the authorship of Snorri become inextricably linked with the textual
range of *Kringla* (or its copy).[43] Unlike Worm, however, Peringskiöld himself reflects
neither on his choice of textual basis nor on his reasons for the authorial attribution
and the naming of the chronicle.[44]

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42   More positive as to Worm's achievements Jørgensen 2013, p. 53.
43   See Louis-Jensen 1977, pp. 16f.; Louis-Jensen 1997, pp. 231f.
44   On the editorial principles of Peringskiöld, see Jørgensen 2013, pp. 54f.

Heims Kringla/

Eller

Snorre Sturlusons

Nordländske Konunga Sagor,

Sive

HISTORIÆ REGUM

SEPTENTRIONALIUM,

â

SNORRONE STURLONIDE,

Ante secula quinque, patrio sermone antiquo

Conscriptæ,

Quas

Ex Manuscriptis Codicibus edidit,

Versione gemina, notisque brevioribus,

Indici Poëtico vel Rerum, sparsim insertis,

Illustravit

JOHANN: PERINGSKIÖLD.

NIL OBSTAT VIRTUTI

Evn. Sal.

A. o. R.

Cyprianŭ.

cIↄIↄccXXIII.

STOCKHOLMIÆ

Literis Wankiwianis, Anno Christiano M. DC XCVII.

Fig. 16: Heims Kringla Eller Snorre Sturlusons Nordländske Konunga Sagor (1697). Title page.

6. The Consolidation of *Heimskringla* in the 18th Century

This first staging of the work *Heimskringla* and Snorri as its author gained momentum with the philological classifications and studies of the Icelandic manuscript transmission made by Thormod Torfæus and Árni Magnússon. Unlike their two Danish and Swedish antiquarian predecessors, these two men had a distinctive interest in the texts of the manuscripts and the relationship between them. In the "Prolegomena" to his *Historia rerum Norvegicarum* of 1711, Torfæus refers to information about Snorri's authorship, possibly related to Worm's considerations and Peringskiöld's recent edition, but is very cautious and reticent when it comes to specifying what comprised the historical writings of Snorri and how much he himself composed of the texts ascribed to his name: "Definire autemnon possum, qvousq, Snorrius historiam suam deduxerit, vel qvantum eorum, qvæ hodie sub nomine ipsius legimus, ipse composuerit." ('I cannot however define, until what point in time Snorri stretched his history, or how much of what we today read under his name he himself composed.')[45] Torfæus' work thus reflects 18th-century scepticism over the notion of authorship and the 17th-century attributions of texts to Snorri.

Yet Torfæus at the same time plays a decisive and significant role in expanding the idea of Snorri Sturluson as an author, as well as in establishing names for the manuscripts containing *Konungasögur*. He declares that he has used two exemplars of Snorri's history in his own work, the first of which he calls 'Kringla' after the first word in that manuscript, the second of which he refers to as the 'Codex Regius' or 'Jöfraskinna'.[46] He also ascribes the major parts of *Hrokkinskinna* and *Morkinskinna* to the authorship of Snorri – "Snorrium etiam authorem maxima sui parte agnoscunt" – but adds that they were later augmented and interpolated.[47] He regards *Fagrskinna* as the epitome of Snorri's chronicle ("Breviarum sive Epitome Chronici Snorrii"), and he finally mentions *Gullinskinna* as a fifth codex that stretches until Hákon Hákonarson's reign. He writes that he is treating these manuscripts here because he will refer to these *libri* in the course of his work.[48] Indeed, in his *Historia* he does not refer to

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45 Thormod Torfæus: Historia rerum Norvegicarum, unpaginated.

46 "Illius historiæ binis exemplaribus, fide dignissimis, in præsenti Operere concinnando usi sumus: qvorum unum Kringlam, ab initiali voce sic dictum, alterum verò discriminis causa Jöfraskinnam, ꓺ: Codicem Regium, appellare placuit." ('Two very faithful exemplars of this history have been used in the present work, one of which I have named *Kringla*, after the opening words, the other, which I for matters of distinction decided to call *Jöfraskinna*, that is *Codex Regius*.', Thormod Torfæus: Historia rerum Norvegicarum, unpaginated).

47 See also Louis-Jensen 1977, p. 1.

48 "Hæcqve ideo monere semel loco heic oportuno visum est, ut sciat Lector, qvinam sint illi libri, qvos nominibus hisce passim per totum Opus in testimonium adductos offendet. Extant autem illi omnes in Bibliotheca Regia, his titulis mea manu distincti." ('And therefore, it seemed convenient at this point to call attention to this once and for all, in order that the reader may know which

a text-work of a chronicle by Snorri, but to the texts of these manuscripts. Torfæus' discussion thus reveals a high awareness of the variance of the medieval texts, but at the same time demonstrates a desire to identify an authorial figure behind these texts, a desire that seems to be characteristic for this period. Yet the authorial figure remains confined to the introductory paratext, whilst the manuscripts are the sources and references in the *Historia* itself.

Torfæus' distinct interest in the medieval textual tradition of the *Konungasögur* is also reflected in the number of copies of these manuscripts that he commissioned. The majority of transcripts of *Konungasögur* manuscripts around 1700 were produced by Ásgeir Jónsson, Thormod Torfæus' assistant; he transcribed *Kringla* several times, but also *Jöfraskinna* and the two versions of *Fagrskinna*.[49] Some of his copies reveal philological attempts to create a text-work, as is the case with AM 44 fol., which is a conflated version of *Hrokkinskinna* and *Morkinskinna*, and also with AM 38 fol., about which Ásgeir Jónsson himself wrote: "Þessi bok var confererut (þo obiter) vid þær Membranas, Iofraskinnu, Kringlu og Gullinskin*nu*" ('This book was conflated (although occasionally) with the codices Jöfraskinna, Kringla, and Gullinskinna').[50] Furthermore, Ásgeir Jónsson used the text of *Jöfraskinna* to fill out lacunae in *Kringla*, as pointed out by Jon Gunnar Jørgensen.[51] These scribal activities reflect the philological impetus to produce a 'best text' and an understanding of which texts Ásgeir Jónsson (or his commissioner Thormod Torfæus) thought belonged together or were of one kind, but Ásgeir does not place an author's name in the paratext of any of his transcripts.

Árni Magnússon, however, does so; in his list of the manuscripts in his possession in AM 435 a 4to, he lists that *Fríssbók*, *Eirspennill*, and AM 39 fol. contain "Snorra Sturlusonar æfi Noregs k*onun*ga" ('Snorri Sturluson's life of the kings of Norway') among other texts (see Fig. 17).[52] Furthermore, in his catalogue of the books of Thormod Torfæus that later became part of his collection, Árni lists Ásgeir Jónsson's conflated manuscript of *Kringla*, *Jöfraskinna*, and *Gullinskinna* (AM 38 fol.), as well as the transcript of *Gullinskinna* (AM 42 fol.), as "Noregs k*onun*ga sögur Snorra Sturlusonar" ('Snorri Sturluson's sagas of

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are the books that he will encounter given as a reference by these names throughout the entire work. These are all in the Royal Library, distinguished by myself by these titles.' Thormod Torfæus: Historia rerum Norvegicarum, unpaginated). On Torfæus' role in the establishment of manuscript names, see also Jørgensen 2007, p. 17.

49   Copies of *Kringla* in his hand are AM 35 fol., AM 36 fol., AM 63 fol., AM 70 fol., and Oslo UB 521 fol. He furthermore copied *Fagrskinna* A (AM 52 fol., AM 301 4to and AM 303 4to), *Fagrskinna* B (Oslo UB 371 fol.), *Gullinskinna* (AM 42 fol.), the hybrid manuscript AM 38 fol., and *Hrokkinskinna* and *Morkinskinna* (AM 44 fol.). He also made additions to AM 37 fol., an older transcript of *Jöfraskinna* in the hand of Jens Nilssön.

50   AM 38 fol., f. 386v.

51   Jørgensen 2007, p. 9.

52   AM 435 a 4to, f. 37v and 40v.
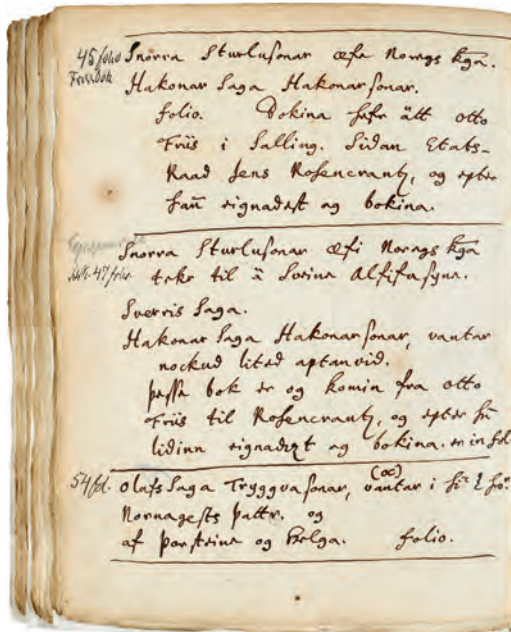
Fig. 17: Snorra Sturlusonar æfi Noregs konunga. *Fríssbók* and *Eirspennill* in Árni Magnússon's list over manuscripts in his possession. AM 435 a 4to, f. 37v.

the kings of Norway'), whereas the conflated version of *Hrokkinskinna* and *Morkinskinna* is not attributed to an author's name, but simply called "Noregs konunga sögur" ('sagas of the kings of Norway', see Fig. 18).[53] In the catalogue of Árni Magnússon's manuscripts made by Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík after Árni's death, only the medieval AM 39 fol. and Ásgeir Jónsson's manuscripts AM 35–38 fol. – copies of *Kringla*, *Jöfraskinna*, and the conflated version – are listed as "Snorra Sturlusonar æfe Noregskonunga", whereas *Fríssbók*, *Eirspennill*, and other transcripts of *Konungasögur* (among them also more copies of *Kringla*) made by Ásgeir Jónsson and others are listed only as "Noregs konunga Saugur" (see Fig. 19).[54]

What we find in the writings and catalogues of Thormod Torfæus, Ásgeir Jónsson, Árni Magnússon, and Jón Ólafsson is an intensive preoccupation with the medieval texts, and whilst Torfæus seems to have a rather open and vague understanding of Snorri's authorship and refers to texts in individual manuscripts rather than to the chiffre of Snorri in his history, the catalogues of Árni and Jón Ólafsson clearly exhibit an attempt to classify texts and to identify text-works with attributed authorship. *Morkinskinna*, *Hrokkinskinna*, and *Fagrskinna* fall out of the corpus in Árni's catalogue, and Jón Ólafsson subsumes even fewer manuscripts to Snorri's work.

53   AM 435 b 4to, f. 1r and 3r.
54   AM 456 fol., f. 2v/3r.
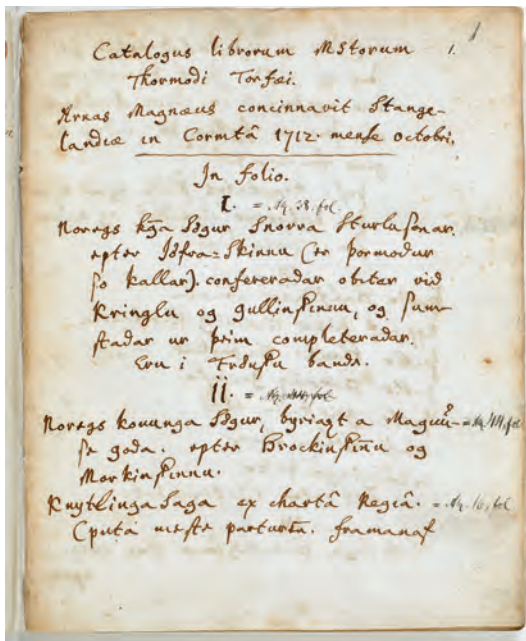
Fig. 18: Noregs konunga sögur (Snorra Sturlusonar). Entries in Árni Magnússon's catalogue of Thormod Torfæus' books. AM 435 b 4to, f. 1r.

7. Back to the Texts: A Swan Song for *Heimskringla*

17th-century antiquarians and 18th-century philologists thus set the terminological and conceptional foundation that steered future preoccupations with the *Konungasögur*: Ole Worm and Johan Peringskjöld established the name of a work and staged Snorri as author, while Thormod Torfæus gave names to most of the medieval manuscripts. Yet it was Árni Magnússon's attributions of authorship that most profoundly and long-lastingly influenced understandings of the relationship between the individual compilations from Gustav Storm up to the present day, and which make us hold on to the notion of there being a text-work called *Heimskringla*. Árni set clear distinctions between Snorri's supposed work and other texts in the manuscripts and determined whether a manuscript fell into or out of the tradition; both Worm and Torfæus had a more inclusive understanding of the textual relationships, but it was Árni's creation of a text-work through his classifications of texts that is still reflected and widely accepted in modern stemmata of the *Konungasögur* tradition. The deliberations of Árni Magnússon and Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík might not have been completely objective; it is striking that their classifications of texts as *Snorra Sturlusonar æfe Noregs konunga* coincide with the medieval manuscripts in Árni's collection, while texts from other manuscripts – notably *Fagrskinna*, *Morkinskinna*, *Flateyjarbók*, and *Hrokkinskinna* – were not awarded this title. The treatment of *Hulda* falls outside of this pattern somewhat: Jón Grunnvíking-
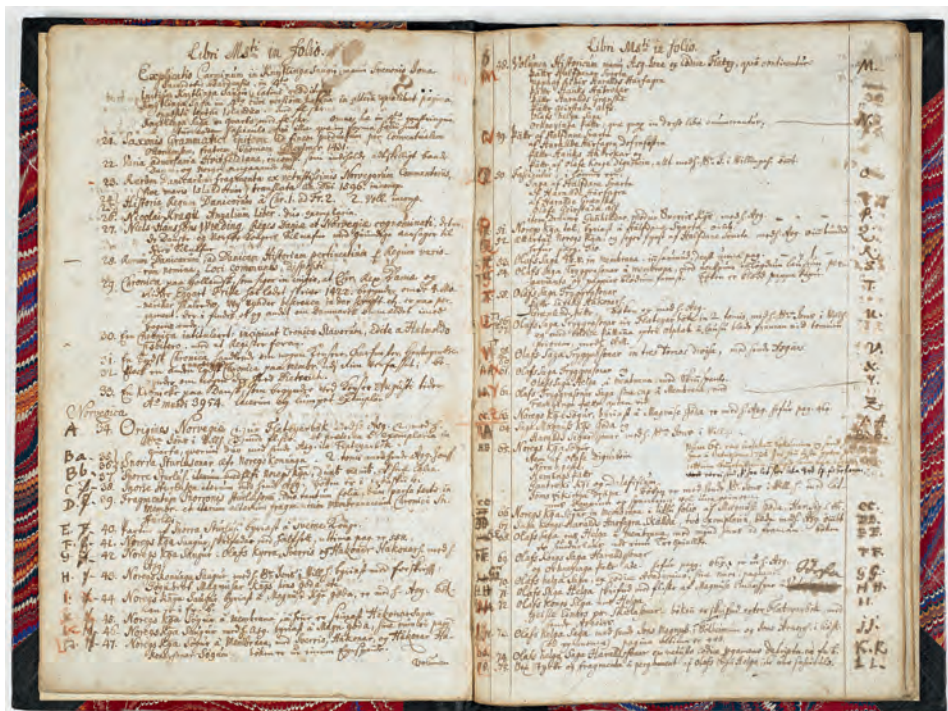
Fig. 19: List of *Konungasögur* manuscripts in Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík's catalogue of Árni Magnússon's books (1730). AM 456 fol, f. 2v/3r.

ur does not list it as Snorri's work and it does not appear as such in Árni's catalogue notes, but in some excerpts in Árni's hand in AM 454 fol. X he denotes the codex as "Snorro interpolatus (vulgo Hulda)" ('interpolated Snorri [commonly called Hulda]').[55] Their ambivalent treatment of the codex still influences the classification of its text, for which Jonna Louis-Jensen has shown a close textual relationship to the y-branch, but it is nonetheless still either treated as a stepchild in *Heimskringla* studies or more often left out completely.

It might be time to emancipate the medieval texts from the legacy of the 18th century and to leave *Heimskringla* behind for good. Both the macro-textual and the micro-textual level of manuscripts subsumed under this name clearly exhibit that we are dealing with unstable texts, rather than with witnesses of a fixed work. *Fríssbók* and *Eirspennill* are individual compilations with discernible rationales that should be taken seriously as such, rather than being forced into notions of work and authorship. These manuscripts

55   Louis-Jensen 1977, p. 1.

are recombinations and rearrangements of other compilations, just like the late-medieval compilations that Jürg Glauser characterises as postmodern-like phenomena.[56] This does not imply that we should not discuss textual relationships, nor that it makes no sense to establish (unrooted) stemmata of one kind or the other to illustrate textual relationships. Yet we might want to try to think about medieval textualities without constructing text-works and without hunting for the author-genius behind a rich and long textual tradition characterised by *mouvance* and variance. Some pretexts were more influential than others and left more traces in the subsequent tradition, but no manuscript is alike, and discussing *Fríssbók*, *Eirspennill*, *Morkinskinna*, *Hulda*, and *Flateyjarbók* on an equal footing as integral codices may actually prove more fruitful in rendering new perspectives than trying to relate everything that was written on the Norwegian kings to Snorri in one way or another. The materiality of the transmission strongly suggests that there was no notion of a work *Heimskringla* (with or without that title) with a stable textuality and fixed textual boundaries in the Middle Ages. *Fríssbók* and *Eirspennill* – and also the lost manuscripts of *Kringla*, *Jöfraskinna*, and *Gullinskinna* – are, or were, texts just like *Morkinskinna*, *Hulda*, and *Hrokkinskinna* that we should approach as such: as texts made by compilers building on a complex web of pretexts, and with complex textual relationships among each other.

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56 "In dem Sinn, daß sie 'lediglich' vorhandene Texte neu kombinieren, ließen sich die Kompilationen des 14. Jahrhunderts mit Umberto Eco als 'postmodern' bezeichnen." ('In the sense that they "just" combined existing texts, these 14th-century compilations may be called "postmodern" according to Umberto Eco', Glauser 1998, p. 42).

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Slavica Ranković

Spectres of Agency

The Case of *Fóstbrœðra saga* and its Distributed Author

Abstract

Drawing on the current studies of memory, agency, and artificial intelligence, this chapter revisits the concept of the 'distributed author' which, some years ago, I proposed as a way of encapsulating the complex dynamics between the communal and individual creativity that characterises medieval authorship. With its unusual patchwork structure that renders visible the spectres of the multiple overlapping agencies that brought it to being, *Fóstbrœðra saga* is used as a particularly amenable case study to illustrate this evolutionary, networked way of thinking about medieval authorship, and perhaps also authorship in general.

1. What Can We Learn about Authorship from AI Storytellers?

In early 2019, at the OpenAI research laboratory in San Francisco, a group of scientists conducted an experiment with (or, rather, played a little joke on) the artificial neural network they named GPT-2, whereby they challenged it to produce a plausible newspaper article based on the following, entirely implausible prompt:

> In a shocking finding, scientist [sic] discovered a herd of unicorns living in a remote, previously unexplored valley, in the Andes Mountains. Even more surprising to the researchers was the fact that the unicorns spoke perfect English.[1]

While continuing on from such an opening might have posed a considerable headache even to a seasoned journalist, GPT-2 proved itself well suited to the task. Despite the brevity of the human-written prompt and the improbability of its content, the machine produced a fully-fledged and remarkably detailed article in which not only are a credible name, area of expertise, and academic affiliation of the lucky researcher provided ("Dr. Jorge Pérez, an evolutionary biologist from the University of La Paz"), along with

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1   Cf. Radford et al. 2019a, Table 13; or Radford et al. 2019b, first sample.

a description of the animals themselves ("four horned, silver-white"), their natural habitat ("the valley had what appeared to be a natural fountain, surrounded by two peaks"), and the name of their species ("Ovid's Unicorn"), but a few possible explanations of the origins of these "bizarre creatures" are also put forward.[2] As to which of the three proposed theories is most likely to be correct – i.e. whether the Argentinian-born, English-speaking unicorns are "descendants of a lost race of people", the result of a possible cross-breeding ("when a human and a unicorn met each other"), or even "a lost alien race," – the article defers to the expertise of "Dr. Pérez" who, as befits a conscientious scientist, suggests that "the only way of knowing for sure" is "through DNA" testing.[3] Thus, without being given any instructions to that effect, GPT-2 not only applied the appropriate generic conventions in writing its article, but also attempted to address the very implausibility of its content. In other words, this inanimate computer programme appears to have somehow picked up on the words "shocking" and "surprising" from the initial prompt and appears 'aware' of the fact that its readers would expect some explanation for the incredulous discovery it reports.

Where do this apparent awareness and the numerous other intuitions regarding the article-writing conventions come from, if they were not built into the programme? Not only did the scientists not attempt to teach GPT-2 any rules (e.g. those pertaining to grammar and language in general, or to writing newspaper articles in particular), they did not even train it to identify task-specific concepts such as, in this case, 'unicorn', 'scientist', or 'shocking'. Instead, they let GPT-2 learn implicitly in an evolutionary manner, which is to say on the principle of trial and error. The 'teaching materials' or dataset on which this particular algorithm (or the 'language model', as its creators refer to it) is trained comprise eight million web pages (sourced from Reddit)[4] of varied, human-generated text, and, according to Radford et al., "GPT-2 is trained with a simple objective: predict the next word, given all of the previous words within some text. The diversity of the dataset causes this simple goal to contain naturally occurring demonstrations of many tasks across diverse domains."[5] Apparently, simply by getting better and better at predicting the next word in a given text, GPT-2 was eventually able to generate complex, coherent pieces of writing, such as the article on unicorns.

It seems surprising that there should be nothing more to GPT-2's authorship than following this simple principle and the corpus of texts (enormous and varied though it is) on which it has been trained, and yet in a sense it is not surprising at all, for it seems only

2   Radford et al. 2019b.
3   Radford et al. 2019b.
4   Reddit is a social media platform, an online forum comprising user-generated content, news, conversations, images, videos, etc. For more, see https://www.reddit.com/ (last accessed 1 March 2021).
5   Radford et al. 2019b.

to lend some 'hard' scientific support, or offer the proof of concept, for the already familiar postmodernist ideas about authorship and creativity (still often perceived as poetic abstractions and metaphors), in which a text, instead of being conceptualised as having a human genius at the centre of its origin, is construed as "a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable sources of culture",[6] as a machine of sorts: "to write is to produce a mark that will constitute a kind of machine that is in turn productive."[7] Now, we quite literally have machines produced by writing that are capable of producing writing in turn.

To be sure, machine learning algorithms such as GPT-2 still fall short of fulfilling scientists' ultimate dream of creating an artificial intelligence that would be on par with that of humans, but they are nonetheless with ever-increasing velocity taking that dream out of the realm of impossibility.[8] Fascinating though it is, GPT-2's article on unicorns is far from being perfect, as despite its overall coherent narrative it also features a few linguistic and logical infelicities, sometimes resulting in unintended hilarity as, for example, when, following on from the hypothesis about possible prehistoric human-unicorn sexual encounters, Dr. Pérez comments that "in South America, such incidents seem to be quite common".[9] Of course, to a lesser or a greater degree, this is also often the case with human-generated articles, such as the one you are reading presently, which was bound to undergo a few revisions before the editors (and the culprit who had perpetrated it) were happy for it to be published. Whilst machines such as GPT-2 may not yet be able to produce a page-turner that would keep us riveted to our armchairs for hours on end, the day when we will be able to type in (or simply voice) a request for 'an Austenesque novel with a sprinkling of Kafka and a pinch of Saxo Grammaticus' might not be that far off either. For now, however, machine learning algorithms such as GPT-2 provide us with unprecedented insights into our own human creativity – and with unprecedented transparency too, as the compact oneness of our skulls makes it all too easy to forget that concealed within each of these individual nutshells is also a neural network, something that is one and many all at the same time. To be sure, in some important details these two kinds of networks – the human brain and machine learning algorithms – significantly differ from one another, not least when it comes to the brain's organic substratum, its (currently) vastly larger number of neurons, and the far greater complexity and intricacy of the connections between them that, among other things, enables the brain to perform many heterogenous tasks simultaneously.[10] And yet, inasmuch as both can be described as webs of interrelated nodes where each

6   Barthes 2000, p. 128.
7   Derrida 1982, p. 316.
8   See Pavlus 2020 on the important inroads recently made towards the programmers' Holy Grail of getting artificial neural networks to develop common sense.
9   Radford et al. 2019b.
10   Cf. Schiappa / Rudd 2017.

connection between two nodes is weighted (i.e. has a particular value: negative / positive, stronger / weaker, etc.), and where each node has many inputs but produces a single output which is in turn broadcast to many other nodes, the brain and artificial neural networks such as GPT-2 can be said to be structurally and functionally analogous. The study of one therefore directly impacts upon the study of the other. From our point of view, it is precisely GPT-2's comparative simplicity in relation to the brain that makes it so amenable in the first place to interdisciplinary study (of the generation of texts, in this case). In particular, the finite number (eight million) and tractability of its influences (the Reddit dataset) ensure that any resulting creative behaviour of this algorithm cannot be ascribed to some mysterious, ingenious ingredient 'X'.

In parallel with the developments in machine learning and artificial intelligence, recent studies of memory and cognition are further dispelling the myth of the genius as a single source of origin by exposing the variety of ways in which memory (which is also to say learning and creativity), this most intimately experienced faculty of our individual brains, can be understood as a profoundly communal phenomenon.[11] From the basic, physiological makeup of the brain, which, with its more or less densely interconnected neurons and neuron populations, bears an architectural and functional resemblance to a society (a "parliament of [...] selfhood;"[12]), to the ultimate embeddedness of personal memory in inherited cultural narratives (including the very construals of self[13]), as well as its dependence on and susceptibility to social influence,[14] all the evidence points away from the singular, monolithic notion of the self towards a picture of multiple and malleable selves. In line with the thinking that has been around within the humanities for some time now, the current research in cognitive sciences offers further support for conceiving of identity, subjectivity, and personhood not in terms of immutable essences, but as being continually constructed, performed, and recreated in relation to our natural and cultural environments. Whilst terms such as 'constructed' or 'culturally situated / embedded' may carry the unfortunate connotation of disingenuousness and invoke the unpleasant image of the human as a socially controlled drone, the actual implications of current theories of memory, identity, agency, and personhood could not be further from such dystopian horrors. If anything, our capacity to adapt, change, and evolve in response to our milieus – rather than being defined from birth by a set of unchanging characteristics, some 'quintessence' that would confine and predetermine our every move – can be seen as liberating and empowering, making us active stakeholders in our societies, not merely their products.

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11   Cf. Ranković 2010; Ranković 2018.
12   Cf. McEwan 2011, p. 262.
13   Cf. Nelson 2003; Wang 2011.
14   Cf. Hirst / Brown 2011; Dudai / Edelson 2016.

2. The Long Shadow of the Author-Genius

Beyond the narrow confines of academia, the above ideas have been gaining wider, popular currency and have influenced the way in which authors today think of themselves too. Here, for example, is what one of my favourite living novelists says of her own shifting selfhood in a recent interview:

> "You are talking to a surrogate, facsimile version of Margaret Atwood," says, well, Margaret Atwood. "[Y]ou make a version of yourself that does the publicity. There is always an edited version, a presentation, always, even if you're saying: "this is the innermost secret of the core of my being", it is still a presentation. [...] You are talking to a made-up person."[15]

It is all the more paradoxical, then, that this comment by Margaret Atwood, at once playful and serious, was made in the context of the recent controversy that sprang up around the frenetic quest to uncover the 'true' identity of yet another self-confessed avatar – the famously anonymous Italian novelist writing under the pseudonym Elena Ferrante. Here we have an author who is literally, ardently attempting to embrace the spectral, 'facsimile' version of her public persona, which she named 'Elena Ferrante,' only to find her human host the subject of a relentless hunt.[16] Clearly, counter to the notions of the fluidity and provisionality of the self, as well as the various ways in which a literary work becomes autonomous from its creator, there still runs the desire for the author-genius, the need to point to a single, palpable source of origin so that creation can be explained and demystified, though only inasmuch as it leaves in its place a figure in our own familiar image to continue to worship, a figure by which one can continue to be mystified.

Of the various attempts at revealing the culprit behind the pen name Elena Ferrante, the one that gained most traction was that of the investigative journalist Claudio Gatti, who, in 2016, conducted a covert enquiry into the financial transactions of the novelist's publisher, which led him to claim that the person behind the pseudonym is not someone – as the readers were led to believe – who wrote from her immediate, personal experience of growing up in a post-war Naples slum, but the ten-years younger, Rome-based translator Anita Raja. A year later, a team of computer scientists and forensic linguists from the University of Padua suggested Raja's husband, the author and journalist Domenico Starnone, as the more likely candidate.[17] Neither of these theories has been definitively proven, but Gatti's article in particular has stirred up a great deal of controversy in literary circles, with some writers accusing him of maliciousness,

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15   Wilson 2016.
16   E.g. see Gatti 2016; Savoy 2018.
17   Cf. Tuzzi / Cortelazzo 2018.

sexism, and gross invasion of privacy,[18] asserting that it is after all the books that should matter the most, not least because that is where their author's 'true self' is supposed to reside anyway. Gatti's defence was that the mystery surrounding Ferrante's anonymity, coupled at the same time with a complete, fake biography of the 'author', is a venally motivated ploy to boost the sales of the books, which is why he says he was motivated to debunk it.

When asked how important she thought knowledge of an author's identity to be, Atwood replied: "I mean, is it the most important thing? No. Will it influence how people approach the books? Yes."[19] For this reason, the question of authorship will probably never be a trivial matter – even when it comes to the medieval kind of authorship, where those of us who study it are confronted daily with texts that often have roots in oral tradition; texts that are composed, copied, and compiled not by one person, but by a series of creative individuals who remain anonymous to us, some accidentally, some on purpose; texts that are, in a very palpable sense, products of centuries-long evolution,[20] ever-adapting to the changing tastes and needs of their audiences, and consequently often surviving in more versions than one, whether as wholes or in fragments. As items of such complex, multi-layered textuality, even when trapped in scholarly editions, these narratives tend mutinously to dissolve the linear boundaries imposed upon them, escaping through footnotes that call upon divergent manuscript readings and relationships to other texts in the corpus and that feature editorial clarifications and justifications of inclusions and exclusions. Under such circumstances, what use is it to know who it was that first committed this or that story to parchment (a moment that still seems to exert privilege), especially if, as was the case with the sagas of Icelanders, these individuals were themselves aware that the story came well before them and would continue to be told and retold well after them? Although Margaret Atwood is undoubtedly right to propose that such knowledge is likely to influence the way we read these texts, the question is what kind of influence it would exert and how far it would extend.

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18   E.g. see Winterson 2016.
19   Wilson 2016.
20   It is important to distinguish between evolution as a scientific theory that relates to complex processes of gradual change of entire species of variants (i.e. across a population – horizontally / synchronically and over time – vertically / diachronically) and the more popular usage of the term that conflates evolution with genesis and the pre-Darwinian idea of the 'great chain of being' which assumes a linear chronological progression from 'lower' towards 'higher', 'more perfect' entities. Throughout the present chapter, it is in the former, more rigorous sense that the concept of evolution is employed.

3. Spectres of Agency in *Fóstbrœðra saga*

Fóstbrœðra saga is an interesting case to consider in this regard. Being a bit of an oddity within the *Íslendingasögur* (sagas of Icelanders) genre, this text forcefully draws attention to the idiosyncratic agency that has had a hand in shaping it. Whilst it closely adheres to various conventions of the genre in terms of its content (e.g. revenge-taking, a blood-brotherhood that turns sour, the Icelander–king encounters, etc.), *Fóstbrœðra saga* also espouses bold stylistic departures, appropriating apparently incongruous discourses – medical, religious, romance – and featuring a sporadically ornate mode of expression, as well as a narratorial voice prone to occasional pontificating and passing explicit ethical judgements. Thus, when the repentant Þormóðr manages to win back the favour of his lover Þórdís by re-dedicating to her the verses he had previously and treacherously bestowed upon Þorbjǫrg kolbrún, the reader is treated to an elaborate simile, so profoundly uncharacteristic of a genre that famously adheres to terse expression and prefers 'showing' to 'telling':

> Ok svá sem myrkva dregr upp ór hafi ok leiðir af með litlu myrkri, ok kømr eptir bjart sólskin með blíðu veðri, svá dró kvæðit allan órœkðar þokka ok myrkva af hug Þórdísar, ok renndi hugarljós hennar heitu ástar gǫrvalla til Þormóðar með varmri blíðu.[21]

> And like the dark mists that are drawn up out of the ocean, dispersing slowly to sunshine and gentle weather, so did these verses draw all reserve and darkness from Thordis' mind and Thormod was once again bathed in all the brightness of her warm and gentle love.[22]

Whilst such a picturesque outpouring of sentiment would not be out of place in a medieval romance, one would be hard pressed to find even one other example of it in the entire *Íslendingasögur* corpus, save *Fóstbrœðra saga* itself.

Similarly uncharacteristic is the expert medical (and religious) explanation of Þorgeirr's otherwise formulaic heroic restraint, as manifested in his lack of reaction to the devastating news about his father's slaying:[23]

> Eigi roðnaði hann, því at eigi rann honum reiði í hǫrund; eigi bliknaði hann, því at honum lagði eigi heipt í brjóst; eigi blánaði hann, því at honum rann eigi í bein reiði, heldr brá hann sér engan veg við tíðenda sǫgnina, því at eigi var hjarta hans sem fóarn í fugli; eigi var þat blóðfullt, svá at þat skylfi af hræzlu, heldr var þat hert af inum hæsta hǫfuðsmið í ǫllum hvatleik.[24]

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21 Fóstbrœðra saga, ch. 11.

22 Unless otherwise stated, all the accompanying English translations are by Martin S. Regal (The Saga of the Sworn Brothers, here p. 355).

23 On the 'no reaction' formula, see Ranković 2017, pp. 385–390; for its specific applications to Þorgeirr, see Ranković 2020, pp. 115–119.

24 Fóstbrœðra saga, ch. 2.

His face did not redden because no anger ran through his skin. Nor did he grow pale because his breast stored no rage. Nor did he become blue because no anger flowed through his bones. In fact, he showed no response whatsoever to the news – for his heart was not like the crop of a bird, nor was it so full of blood that it shook with fear. It had been hardened in the Almighty Maker's forge to dare anything.[25]

This theory about God being the ultimate craftsman of Þorgeirr's brave, sturdy heart soon becomes a catalyst for a mini-sermon on free will – yet another atypical feature for a saga:

Ok af því at allir góðir hlutir eru af guði gǫrvir, þá er ǫruggleikr af guði gǫrr ok gefinn í brjóst hvǫtum drengjum ok þar með sjálfræði at hafa til þess, er þeir vilja, góðs eða ills, því at Kristr hefir kristna menn sonu sína gǫrt, en eigi þræla, en þat mun hann hverjum gjalda, sem til vinnr.[26]

And as all good things come from God, so too does steadfastness, and it is given unto all bold men together with a free will that they may themselves choose whether they do good or evil. Thus Jesus Christ has made Christians his sons and not his slaves, so that he might reward all according to their deeds.[27]

On less grave occasions, *Fóstbrœðra saga* uses similar displays of erudition and devoutness to create comical effects. This occurs, for example, in the scene in which Þormóðr's hapless dupe, Egill the Fool, gets so alarmed that, we are told,

Ǫll bein hans skulfu, þau sem í váru hans líkama, en þat váru tvau hundruð beina ok fjórtán bein; tennr hans nǫtruðu, þær váru þrír tigir; allar æðar í hans hǫrundi pipruðu fyrir hræzlu sakar, þær váru fjǫgur hundruð ok fimmtán.[28]

Every bone in his body shook, all two hundred and fourteen of them. All his teeth chattered, and there were thirty of them. And all the veins in his skin trembled with fear, and there were four hundred and fifteen of them.[29]

At every turn we encounter such idiosyncrasies that make us wonder who the author of *Fóstbrœðra saga* might have been – a priest, a doctor, both? – where he travelled, what he read, what sorts of literary influences he was exposed to, and what may have possessed him to stray from convention and risk experimenting in such quirky ways.

25　Regal: The Saga of the Sworn Brothers, pp. 332f.
26　Fóstbrœðra saga, ch. 3.
27　Regal: The Saga of the Sworn Brothers, p. 336.
28　Fóstbrœðra saga, ch. 23, p. 233, n. 3.
29　Regal: The Saga of the Sworn Brothers, p. 378.

Yet, as soon as we ask these questions, we must also ask in the same breath: Which author and which *Fóstbrœðra saga* do we have in mind exactly? As is the case with all other sagas, the first written version of *Fóstbrœðra saga* does not survive; and, what is more, the text that we encounter when we open the *Íslenzk fornrit* edition is a proper Frankensteinian creation. Its first eleven chapters are made up of the incomplete *Möðruvallabók* version of the saga (henceforth M), dated to c. 1350.[30] From there, the main text continues to follow the story according to this same venerable saga codex, but with the *Hauksbók* version (H; dated to the first third of the 14th century)[31] now running in parallel with it, though consigned to the lower part of the page as a secondary source. This goes on until around the middle of chapter 20, when the M text abruptly breaks off, whereupon the H version becomes the primary text. On top of that, the scenes unique to yet another manuscript, the late 14th-century *Flateyjarbók* (F),[32] have been intermittently inserted into the main text, only rendered in a smaller font to make the editorial interpolations visible.

Despite these precautions, critics have rarely resisted the temptation to ignore the patchwork nature of this text and to treat it as a continuous whole. This has proven to be perilous, especially when it comes to the assessment of Þorgeirr Hávarsson's character. Whether he is charged with "sterile self-assertion" and "senseless violence"[33] or with "the unbalanced, perhaps demonic lack of restraint",[34] two particular scenes are regularly invoked as evidence of Þorgeirr's unbridled behaviour. In one, he kills a certain Torfi Bundle,[35] thinking that the latter was purposefully, insolently ignoring his questions when the man simply could not hear him because of the rushing stream nearby; in the other, he chops off the head of a shepherd for seemingly no better reason than

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30   This dating is according to the *Íslenzk fornrit* editor of the saga, Guðni Jónsson 1943, p. LXX (see also Chesnutt 2001, p. LXVIII). However, a broader time period for the production of this codex is 1320–1370, with Einar Ólafur Sveinsson arguing for an earlier dating (1320–1350) and Jón Helgason for a later one (1350–1370). For more detail, see Chesnutt 2001.

31   See Guðni Jónsson 1943, p. LXX. More recently, Johansson (2018) has drawn attention to the composite structure of the *Hauksbók* as a whole, showing how the manuscripts it comprises (AM 371 4to, AM 544 4to and AM 675 4to) in turn consist of variously sized individual leaflets produced at different times, some even well after the death (in 1334) of its compiler and scribe, Haukr Erlendsson, after whom the codex is named. Johansson's arguments are instructive and illuminating, especially when it comes to trying to infer Haukr's 'intentions' regarding the choice of texts and their specific ordering; however, they do not affect the dating of the part of AM 544 4to that contains *Fóstbrœðra saga*, which features Haukr's own hand and for which 1334 is therefore the *terminus ante quem*.

32   Guðni Jónsson (1943, p. LXX) dates *Flateyjarbók* to c. 1390. Rowe (2005, pp. 11f.) notes that the work on this imposing codex commenced in 1387, with the last entries in the annals dated to 1394.

33   Cf. Meulengracht Sørensen 1993, pp. 406f.

34   Harris 2015, p. 81.

35   Cf. Fóstbrœðra saga, ch. 8.

that his neck was conveniently sticking out and that he hence *stóð svá vel til hǫggsins*[36] ("stood so well poised for the blow"[37]). Even if we ignore the clear elements of slapstick humour in these scenes of 'senseless violence', what we cannot afford to ignore is that they are both in fact unique to the F version of the saga and are distinctly at odds with the way Þorgeirr is portrayed in M and H. To be sure, in those two versions we are also explicitly told that Þorgeirr is a difficult, overbearing character, but in direct contrast to these overt pronouncements, in each of his conflicts the hero is actually shown to behave with utmost restraint and measure.[38] Þorgeirr's sworn brother Þormóðr is in F also portrayed as a far more unruly character (in *Fóstbrœðra saga* and *Þormóðar þáttr* alike) than in M and H. According to Úlfar Bragason, the crucial difference here is probably due to the fact that, in the M and H versions, Þorgeirr and Þormóðr are the ultimate heroes of the saga, whilst in F they only play the sidekicks to St. Óláfr Haraldsson, who is the actual hero.[39] The *Fóstbrœðra saga* featured in F is a subordinate narrative, its various segments pulled apart and inserted into *Óláfs saga helga*, which is treated as the main text. From this perspective, it would have paid off to accentuate the sworn brothers' irascibility, with their unfavourable characteristics being used to offset the virtues of the saintly king. This accords well with how, in a short preamble, the compiler of F, Jón Þórðarson, himself justifies the inclusion of *Fóstbrœðra saga* in his lavish codex: "From this, one must notice the grace and good luck of King Óláfr, that he showed that restraint to such terribly unruly men as these foster-brothers were, who loved the king above all other men."[40] Whilst it is unlikely that Jón Þórðarson invented those two episodes in chapter 8 – after all, *Grettis saga* likewise casts Þorgeirr in an unfavourable light[41] – it could be argued that he nevertheless successfully appropriated traditional material to fit his particular agenda, which, as Elizabeth Ashman Rowe persuasively argued, was probably to frame St. Óláfr and his kind treatment of Icelanders (even the unruly ones) as an example to that king's teenage namesake, King Óláfr IV Hákonarson, for whom F was intended as a gift.[42]

Nor is Jón Þórðarson's the only agency that can be discerned in *Fóstbrœðra saga*. The way in which a particularly charged conversation between King Óláfr and Þorgeirr has been presented differently in M and H respectively is an excellent case in point. In both scenes the king asks Þorgeirr to sail to Iceland and avenge one of his retainers – not only to punish the Icelandic culprit, but also to set a general example to Icelanders, as

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36   Fóstbrœðra saga, ch. 8.
37   Regal: The Saga of the Sworn Brothers, p. 347.
38   Cf. Ranković 2020, pp. 110–125.
39   Úlfar Bragason 2000, pp. 272f.
40   Cited in Rowe 2005, p. 57.
41   Cf. Ranković 2020, pp. 114f.
42   Cf. Rowe 2005.

a deterrent for the irksome liberties they seem to allow themselves. Compare, however, the different replies that the king receives. In M, the hero's answer is rather circumspect, which seems to betray some reluctance and discomfort on his part:

> Þorgeirr svarar: "Þat væntir mik, at ek muna hefnt fá þessa mótgørða, er yðr hafa gǫrvar verit í þessu verki." Konungr mælti: "Því býð ek þér um þetta mál, at ek hygg, at þú munir minn vilja gera í þessu verki." Þorgeirr svarar: "Skyldr em ek til þess at gera þat, sem þú vill."[43]

> Thorgeir answered, "I expect I will be able to avenge this offence against you." The king said, "I am asking you because I believe you will do my will in this matter." Thorgeir replied, "I am obliged to do as you bid me."[44]

By contrast, in H, Þorgeirr needs no further prodding by the king, nor does he acquiesce merely out of obligation. Instead, he gives an instant, concise, strongly affirmative answer: *Þat skal ek gjarna gera*[45] ('That I shall willingly do'; S. R.). Of course, in line with Margaret Atwood's point earlier, knowing that the person behind the words imputed to Þorgeirr was Haukr Erlendsson will inevitably impact our interpretation of them. In this case, it might make us less inclined to take them as an arbitrary variation: as an Icelander who held the office of lawspeaker both in his native land and in Norway, and who was himself a retainer of Norwegian kings (Hákon V and later Magnús VII), Haukr was likely to be intimately familiar with how an appropriate answer to a royal command should sound, especially as, by his time, the Norwegian Crown had well established its rule in Iceland. Conversely, given the M's scribe apparent tendency to adhere to his exemplars,[46] it is tempting to conjecture that, even though it is a few decades younger than H, the M text may in fact preserve the older, more varied set of attitudes from when Iceland's status was still in flux, unresolved – a circumstance that would be particularly amenable to a parallel circulation of more disparate, ambivalent, and perhaps even contradictory discourses regarding the Icelanders' relationship to Norwegian royalty.

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43 *Fóstbrœðra saga*, ch. 13.
44 Regal: *The Saga of the Sworn Brothers*, p. 358.
45 *Fóstbrœðra saga*, p. 183.
46 This is a tentative claim based on my detailed investigation of the usage of the formula pair *sem fyrr var sagt/ritat* in this codex (cf. Ranković 2016, pp. 321f.). While the individual sagas in M show consistency in this regard (consider, for example, *Laxdœla saga*'s clear preference for the written mode of the formula), the employment of the formula in the codex as a whole is widely varied from saga to saga. The lack of a more homogenous overall usage indicates that the scribe was most likely following his exemplars. This, of course, is not sufficient evidence to prove that the M scribe did not diverge from his exemplars in other ways, but it may point to certain conservative tendencies on his part.

Nor is this instance the only one in which Haukr intervenes.[47] Remember that florid passage about Þórdís allowing Þormóðr to bathe once again in "the brightness of her warm and gentle love"? Haukr, it seems, would have none of that sentimentality; instead, he simply notes that Þormóðr's re-dedication of the incriminating verses won him back Þórdís' love and affection, and that consequently "teksk nú upp með þeim ný vinátta"[48] ('a new friendship arose between them'; S. R.). Other such stylistically unusual passages, which, if Jónas Kristjánsson is right, were all part of the first written version of *Fóstbrœðra saga*, are also regularly culled by Haukr, including that concerning Egill the Fool and his thirty chattering teeth.[49] Of course, an argument can be made here that a preference for succinct expression is general tendency of Haukr's – perhaps more a matter of practicality and convenience than of aesthetics, considering the encyclopaedic size and ambition of H, which, in addition to sagas such as the one presently discussed, contains all kinds of texts, from historiography and myth to mathematical lore. Yet it does not seem like a pure coincidence that it is precisely the stylistically aberrant passages that are cut off from his redaction of *Fóstbrœðra saga.* Moreover, if pruning his exemplars were Haukr's general rule, we would hardly expect him to expand on the received material, which he in fact does on occasion.

One interesting intervention of this sort takes place in chapter 15 of the saga, in which Þorgeirr is forced to share quarters with his enemy Gautr Sleituson before the ship on which they had both secured passage can sail off to Norway. Having searched for an opportunity to provoke Þorgeirr ever since the slaying of his relative Þorgils Másson, Gautr finally finds it when the hero and his men leave the camp to gather firewood. Instead of waiting for the party to return, Gautr proceeds to cook his meal by using Þorgeirr's shield and spear as kindling. This offence, conversely, offers Þorgeirr a chance to take the higher ground and exercise restraint instead of taking instant revenge. Thus, when Gautr responds to his request for explanation for this extreme action only by adding further insult to injury, saying that he had burnt Þorgeirr's weapons because he did not fancy eating his food raw, in the M version of the saga we are told that *nú fann ekki á Þorgeiri, at honum mislíkaði sjá tiltekja Gauts*[50] ("there was no indication from Thorgeir that he was upset by what Gaut had done"[51]). This exemplary employment

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47   In addition to Haukr's own hand, four other scribal hands have been detected in the H version of *Fóstbrœðra saga.* Of these, the most prominent (after Haukr himself) is 'Hand 9', often referred to as 'Haukr's first Icelandic secretary' (cf. https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/en/AM04-0544, last accessed 1 March 2021), with only minor contributions by Hands 10–12. The examples discussed here fall within the part written by Haukr, but even if this were not the case, other scribes will presumably still have worked under his direction / supervision.

48   *Fóstbrœðra saga*, ch. 11.

49   Jónas Kristjánsson 1972.

50   *Fóstbrœðra saga*, ch. 15.

51   Regal: The Saga of the Sworn Brothers, p. 364.

of the traditional device mentioned above – namely, the 'no reaction' formula – subtly undermines the overt narratorial pronouncements about Þorgeirr's hot-headedness by placing him in the illustrious company of other worthy saga heroes capable of controlling their tempers and of taking revenge for the offences perpetrated against them not in the first instance, but later on with the advantage of temporal distance, broader perspective, and cooler reasoning. The H version of *Fóstbrœðra saga* goes a little further than M in emphasising Þorgeirr's self-control, expanding on the 'no reaction' formula by showing the hero to affirm (if only in mock-seriousness) Gautr's purposefully feeble excuse; Þorgeirr goes as far as elaborating on the legal necessity of cooking one's food, referring both to the Icelandic laws on this matter and to his Norwegian liege, King Óláfr, who, Þorgeirr calmly informs his stunned audience, strictly forbade his men to eat their food raw.[52] The scene thus becomes imbued with humour and suspense, for the more that Þorgeirr 'helps' his enemy to make him the butt of the joke now, the sweeter his last laugh will be at the end of the chapter.

Again, even though a keen interest in legal matters is one of the characteristic features of the saga genre (which in itself might not be a coincidence, but rather an indication of a good proportion of lawmen among the saga writers), knowing what we know about Haukr's life and career makes it difficult to ignore the possibility of a personal touch, i.e. that in the above instance he could not resist putting his professional knowledge to the service of saga humour. The question now arises as to whether this agency that we purport Haukr might have exerted upon his *Fóstbrœðra saga* exemplar was more or less authentic, more or less authoritative than that exercised by the person (read: culprit) who we deem responsible for the first written version of that narrative – 'the author?' After all, Haukr did nothing but make his own version of *Fóstbrœðra saga* sound more like a saga, bringing it closer in spirit to the tradition on which the errant author also drew. His 'legal joke', for instance, certainly has more of the ring of a traditional saga to it than does the shaking of the two-hundred-and-fourteen bones belonging to Egill the Fool. Thus, paradoxically, what makes Haukr's touch seem 'personal' is reflected in how deeply traditional it is. Then again, we might also ask whether the 'author's' stylistic experimentation is itself so utterly foreign to tradition, considering that every *living* tradition must also change in order to survive. As I have discussed elsewhere,[53] modern folklore research shows that oral singers and storytellers bring all sorts of novelty into their renderings of familiar narratives, novelties that can be appreciated as such only against the background of tradition on which they are dependent. However, in the absence of a literate collector ready to record them, such novelties are unlikely to survive unless they happen to appeal to the audience enough to be instantly picked up and transmitted further. As the latter scenario tends to be extremely rare (partly due to

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52   Cf. Fóstbrœðra saga, ch. 15.
53   Cf. Ranković / Ranković 2012, pp. 63–68.

the fleeting nature of oral performance, partly to the inertia of the already familiar), it often happens that the same invention must consequently be invented multiple times by multiple people and in multiple locations before it enters the common idiom and becomes the part of tradition.

If, then, all these 'doers' – the anonymous saga writer, Jón Þórðarson (the previously discussed compiler of F), and Haukr Erlendsson – can be said to have acted authentically and authoritatively, each according to his own agenda (often also a manifestation of a larger social agenda), what about the 'humble' M scribe? He seems a passive enough fellow, diligently copying the text before him – is his agency of a lower order? Not in my opinion. Were it not for his diligence (or was it a latent defiance to Norwegian overlordship?) – which, we must not forget, is not mandatory in a fluid manuscript culture, but is always a choice – all the traces of that provocatively circumspect response by Þorgeirr to King Óláfr's interference in Icelandic affairs would have disappeared, and with it the intricate tension that now suddenly flares up between Þorgeirr's long (M) and short (H) answers, enriching our understanding of the saga and the various cooperating and competing social, ethical, political, and aesthetic forces and attitudes that participated in shaping it.

4. How to Read the Distributed Author?

I say 'it', but, as we have seen, *Fóstbrœðra saga* (or indeed any saga, or any other traditional narrative for that matter) can be referred to in the singular only inasmuch as it is conceived of as a dynamic gathering of its various instances – in this case of M, H, F, and countless oral and written, known and anonymous other variants that these three had swallowed. As a traditional narrative, *Fóstbrœðra saga* is a "multiform",[54] a "distributed object",[55] something that is one and many all at once, always the same yet always different – just like the Danube is always the Danube (or Dunav, to me), even if, as Heraclitus warns, I can never step into the same Danube twice: it is always a different river that I step into, and always a different 'I' that does it. As such, despite some of the historically identifiable persons that left traces of their agency (all the more discernible for the saga's presently fragmented state), *Fóstbrœðra saga* can hardly be conceived of as a product of any one author, nor even of a multiplicity of authors where the relationship between the contributing individuals is merely additive. Rather, it is the product of the complex, networked, evolutionary dynamics between 'tradition and the individual talent' for which I some years ago proposed the term of 'distributed author'.[56]

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54   Lord 2000, p. 100.
55   Gell 1998, pp. 220–223.
56   Cf. Ranković 2007.

Within this term which is a deliberate contradiction in terms, an oxymoron, the 'author' of the 'distributed author' is as far from the classical notions of the author-genius as the word 'computer' is today from what it meant only a few decades ago, i.e. a person that does calculation. Rather, being modelled on the connectionist concept of distributed representation,[57] the term invokes the creativity of neural networks and their precarious ontology, to which the present study consistently refers in terms of their being simultaneously one and many: many inputs (tradition, society, and culture in general) that must result in a single output (e.g. a particular performance of a story coming out of the mouth of a particular storyteller), which is in turn broadcast to many (i.e. its audiences; which is to say, back to tradition). Under such circumstances, any concrete, unique, local intentions and investments (which, according to the earlier discussed theories, are also always socially situated intentions and investments) – of the quirky (doctor-priest-French romance lover?) writer; of the erudite lawman Haukr Erlendsson; of the calculated compiler Jón Þórðarson; of the diligent (possibly also dissident) M scribe; of the expert and novice saga-tellers X, Y, Z; of the changing audiences who wielded their praise and censure as narrative-shaping tools, sometimes even of the characters themselves, who, as was the case with historical and semi-historical figures such as the sworn brothers Þorgeirr and Þormóðr, were the first to 'write' their own sagas with their deeds, which were in turn most likely modelled on the sagas to which they grew up listening – all these perspectives meet, compete, negotiate, overlay one another, mesh, coexist peacefully, or remain at odds in *Fóstbrœðra saga* and other such traditional narratives we read.

To return to the comment by Margaret Atwood with which we started – that is, that knowing who the author of a story is affects the way we read it – we must ask: what does this mean when the author of the narrative in front of us is the distributed author? My short answer to this question would be that distributed authorship calls for distributed reading. This means, for example, resisting the urge to choose a particular position on the hermeneutic pendulum[58] – at whose one extreme point we might find Þorgeirr the noble retainer of a saintly king and on the other Þorgeirr the sociopathic committer of 'senseless violence' – in order to pay closer attention to the tensions arising between these 'Þorgeirrs' and the varied roles they are required to perform in response to the numerous, diverse, sometimes even contradictory factors involved in negotiating communal identity. It means considering this complex character in relation to other saga heroes trying to curb their fiery tempers (e.g. Grettir the Strong, Víga-Glúmr, Víga-Styrr, etc.), heroes to whom the 'no reaction' formula is also often applied as they tread the narrow path between personal freedom and social responsibility, for finding the fine balance between these opposites must have been of great importance in a society keen

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57   Cf. Ranković 2007, pp. 299f.; also: Ranković / Ranković 2012, pp. 56–58.
58   Cf. Ranković 2017, p. 375.

to distinguish between feud as a means of enforcing law and justice on the one hand and revenge as a mere venting of personal anger on the other. It also means not dismissing the sagas' formulaic features and narrative patterns as clichés, but rather investigating whether, in between their more iterative and experimental usages within the corpus, we might gleam moments of deep pondering, of a community trying to make up 'its mind' about an issue, social practice, or aesthetic convention.

By their nature, short answers rarely prove to be satisfying. The long answer, however, warrants at least a separate study, though, in the 'network spirit' of the present chapter, working it out is bound to be a communal scholarly effort.

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Gudrun Bamberger

A Theory of Early Modern Authorship
Dealing with Accountability in 16th-Century German Prose Novels

Abstract

In 16th-century vernacular literature, authorship is not yet as clearly defined as in later centuries. It is still characterised by the presence of degrees of authorship and makes use of the various concepts of anonymity. Authority and the fictional status of a work are discussed whenever instances of authorship are mentioned in the text. This practice, of course, comes with consequences for the text itself. This chapter will focus on one outstanding example of dealing with authorship: the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* (1587). Though it is a work of imaginative literature, it integrates factual sources with literary invention. The text does not explicitly discuss the circumstance that its parts have been taken from somewhere else and transformed into something else. It does, however, try to emphasise its origin with a single author, namely the protagonist himself.

1. Introduction

The term 'author' has long been considered a liminal if not an unnecessary category in literary scholarship until recently when its return was proclaimed.[1] Although there have been many approaches to defining the function of the author within literary theory, there have been just as many rejecting this path altogether. For instance, Bernard Cerquiglini claimed that authors in the sense of poets who regarded their work as their intellectual property and saw themselves as the originators of a specific text created solely by themselves did not exist in the Middle Ages.[2] More recent research has focused on characteristics referred to by medieval authors themselves when highlighting their identity as writers. These studies are mainly interested in the procedures named by authors engaged in text production and reproduction. Medieval and early modern textuality is characterised by the reuse, re-composition, and rewriting of the known.[3] This does not mean, however, that there cannot be novelty beyond the already known.

1   Cf. Stougaard-Nielsen 2019, p. 270.
2   Cerquiglini 1989, p. 57; see also Plotke 2012, pp. 344f.
3   Cf. Worstbrock 1999.

This chapter will attempt to describe the concepts of authorship and literary work as the result of relational practices within the text. I aim to show that positions like Michel Foucault's "L'auteur n'est pas une idée médiévale"[4] are not quite true. Although the chapter deals with cases of authorship in the 16th century, I will also refer to their prerequisites in medieval culture and literature. In both periods, ideas of originality did exist even though they differed from later concepts, such as that of, for example, German Classicism.[5] I will indeed try to provide a brief overview of the historical events that led to a very special case which will be the centre piece of the chapter. The main example will be the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, the first precursor of Goethe's famous tragedy *Faust.* This earliest version of the story about the scholar who made a pact with the devil was published in 1587 and had run through 21 editions by the end of the century, not to mention all the remakes and translations that were to follow. The *Faustbuch*, as it is usually called, contains a strange mix of tales – ranging from Faustus' studies in Wittenberg and his 24-year contract with the spirit Mephostophiles to his magical escapades around the world and his violent death and damnation.

Beginning in the 19th century, researchers were eager to identify the author of this sensational story, which had been published anonymously. The main goal was to give a name to the person who had transformed the legend into a novel,[6] but there were also discussions about certain features, such as the author's presumable religious denomination,[7] the use of dialect, the educational background, and so on. As a further step, researchers explored the aesthetics of the text, which they agreed were of little value.[8] They criticised the person responsible for only adding in incongruent bits and pieces of already existing texts of very heterogeneous provenance, displaying a lack of coherence and logical structure.[9] In consequence, the author of the *Historia* was referred to as the compiler rather than the author.[10] The most interesting part when it comes to the authorship of the *Historia* is that the writer of the preface does not want to be mistaken for the overall author. He makes various attempts to reveal his sources and expose the actual author, i.e. the person who lived through the events, put them down in writing, and also serves as the narrator.

There seems to be more than one narrator in the main story, though Faustus serves as the focaliser whenever he experiences mostly horrific things; in some cases, he even describes those events himself in letters or diary entries, while in other cases there is a

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4   Cerquiglini 1989, p. 25.
5   Cf. Dunn 2019, p. 239.
6   Cf. Baron 1978.
7   Cf. Müller 2014.
8   Cf. e.g. Könneker 1967; Könneker 1990; Münkler 2011b.
9   Cf. Münkler 2011a.
10 Cf. Scherer 1884, p. 13; Roloff 2003, p. 75.

predominantly heterodiegetic-extradiegetic narrator.[11] To be more precise, there are at least five main voices: The first one is the publisher who does not wish to be mistaken for the author. This is the most influential voice to emphasise that the following text is somehow dangerous and in no way as prestigious as it was usually for writers of prefaces to claim when advertising their own writing and publishing activities. The second voice is Faustus himself, introduced by the first voice as a villain of the most reprehensible kind. He is referred to as the actual author and the person who, through his behaviour, created the whole situation and the setting, and who documented the events of his life in writing. This arrangement already creates a problem: there was a historical person by the name of Faust who lived in the 1530s and who, in 1587, must have been dead for decades.[12] His name was not Johann, as he is called in the *Historia*, but Georg. Furthermore, several short narratives and legends of the magician Faust already existed and had been circulating in the German-speaking world for decades. Thus, the protagonist appears as simultaneously historical and fictional. Thirdly, there is the devil, who also has some dialogue, speaking in a tumultuous way; more interestingly, though, he himself seems to try to convince Faustus that dealing with the devil is wrong. The fourth voice is that of someone commenting on the narration in the margins; this voice might be identical with the first one. The fifth voice is a heterodiegetic-extradiegetic narrator who once again addresses the readers directly, warning them not to follow Faustus' example. This narrator also introduces the parts written by Faustus himself:

> Diese geschicht hat man auch bey im funden / so mit seiner eygen Handt concipiert und auff-gezeichnet worden.[13]

> This record was also found among his possessions, having been composed and penned by his own hand.

2. Historical Premises of 16th-Century Writing

There are a few premises to mention when discussing authorship with reference to the *Historia*. Furthermore, there are preconditions of a socio-historical and media-historical nature. Even though the influence of the printing press has been discussed critically again and again in recent years, and Marshall McLuhan's idea of the 'Gutenberg Galaxy'[14] has been subject to revisionary claims,[15] the availability of book printing

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11 Cf. Münkler 2011b, p. 216; see also: Münkler 2011a.
12 Cf. Baron 2019, p. 15–48.
13 Historia von D. Johann Fausten, p. 91. All translations are my own, unless stated otherwise.
14 McLuhan 1962.
15 Cf. Kaspar 2016; Wagner-Egelhaaf 2014, p. 358.

technology changed the preconditions and paths of literary production between the invention of the printing press and the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War. The literary milieu as shaped by printed books presents different challenges to its participants in terms of both production and reception than the world of serially produced manuscripts. Authors of printed books knew their audience less than the authors of medieval court poetry whose works were geared towards a specific audience and sometimes created for a specific event.[16] Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen explains that in 19th-century literature the "narrational subject was generally associated with the voice of the actual author, which was made accessible to the reader through the literary work".[17] It was later in that century that a kind of distancing took place in narrative conventions which transformed the narrating voice into an impersonal entity.[18] Printing appears to have had a similar effect in the period when it became more established, which was the case around 1500.

Because of a mistrust of book printing on the part of church and state, the person responsible for a text also had to be named in the context of confessional debates. The Edict of Worms of 1521 had considerable influence over the regulation of the book market; on the one hand, preliminary censorship and a catalogue of penalties were introduced, and, on the other, the Final Recess of the Augsburg Diet in 1530 required every published book to include the full name of the printer and the place of printing in the title page.[19] Thus, everybody had to seek official permission to print before publishing, which again meant that there was a review process in every case, which in its turn sometimes led to revisions and rejections. However, some printers falsified imprints in an attempt to avoid the possible legal consequences of not following the required process, which could extend even to capital punishment.[20] In the case of the *Historia*, the printer, and thus a person who bears some sort of responsibility, is identified, while the author remains unknown.[21] Another possibility for a printer to overcome denominational difficulties was to change location. Johann Spies, the printer of the *Historia*, moved from mostly Catholic Heidelberg to Frankfurt because of his Protestant publishing program.[22] Despite his predominantly theological repertoire, the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* is his only publication worth mentioning that is not – in the strict sense – a theological text.

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16   Cf. Müller 1999.
17   Stougaard-Nielsen 2019, p. 271.
18   Cf. Stougaard-Nielsen 2019, p. 271; Haferland (2011, p. 63) describes the same for the situation around 1200.
19   Cf. Janzin / Güntner 2007, p. 179.
20   Cf. Janzin / Güntner 2007, p. 179; Kruse 1987, pp. 7f.
21   Kraß (2010) suggests that the printer might be the author.
22   Cf. Füssel / Kreutzer 1988, p. 182.

Over the course of the 16ᵗʰ century, however, the practice of mentioning the author's name became a convention, which meant that anonymity, customary until then, was now the exception.[23]

However, these statements concern only one part of the literary world, i.e. vernacular texts. Recognisability was already the established custom within the literary tradition of the Latin *poetae doctae* in Antiquity.[24] This practice, which was associated specifically with the Latin language, was not revived only in the course of the Renaissance; it had actually been handled the same way throughout the course of centuries, encouraged by the circumstance that these texts remained largely stable and that their origin with a specific author was emphasised in transmission as a marker of their authority. This connection between authorship and authority (*auctores*) endured throughout several historical periods, including the Renaissance, whose literature was greatly influenced by ancient literary conventions.[25]

The texts in question were all conceived by multiple authors with various degrees of authorship,[26] especially the vernacular ones, which are often equipped with images and have gone through several production steps, with editors, translators, scratchers, woodcutters, authors, and all those involved in the printing process contributing to the production.[27] This has several consequences: it is not obvious who bears overall responsibility. The category of the author must thus be examined in detail and sometimes it ought to be understood as a function discharged collectively by a number of people. This multi-layered form of responsibility is the result of the intertextual interaction of sources and the editing process.

Authorship is a central category in the analysis of early modern novels, even if the writer remains unknown, so that author-narrators must be regarded as a specific realisation of authorship in this historical context.[28] According to my definition, author-

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23 Cf. Bamberger 2018, p. 38; Pabst 2011; Hellgardt 1998, p. 50.

24 Cf. Bezner 2005, p. 210: "Vor allem aber wird die Diskussion über den Autor seit dem 12. Jahrhundert – einschlägig ist hier Abailards 'Sic et Non' – gerade von dem Bemühen motiviert, möglichst präzise den 'Eigenanteil' des Verfassers herauszupräparieren oder isolieren zu können und vom Fremden zu differenzieren [...]." ('Above all, however, the discussion about the author since the 12ᵗʰ century – Abailard's 'Sic et Non' is especially relevant here – is motivated precisely by the effort to extract or isolate the author's own contribution as precisely as possible and to differentiate it from that which has a different origin [...].').

25 Cf. Plotke 2012; Curtius 1948, pp. 503–505.

26 Cf. Bamberger 2018, pp. 38–48, esp. p. 39.

27 Cf. Grafton 2011, pp. 1–3.

28 "[S]eit der Renaissance war es von Bedeutung, daß über sie [Autoren, G. B.] Texte als Einheiten zu beglaubigen waren." (Kleinschmidt 2007, p. 179, 'Since the Renaissance, it has been important for texts to be authenticated as cohesive units by mentioning their authors.') Holger Runow, on the other hand, problematises the terms mentioned with regard to their historical validity using a concrete example: "Was also etwa das 'Werk' des 'Autors' Walther von der Vogelweide oder

ship takes place as soon as there is textual evidence of an acknowledged and enunciative accountability.[29] This does not necessarily mean that a physical author backs their writing by commenting on it in the role of a person of interest. Moreover, this definition is taken from a rhetorical tradition in which the orator functions as the one who is responsible for a convincing text by integrating certain phrases or appearing as a mediator on a textual level.

This development of different forms of authorship, or rather, degrees of authorship, results from a range of tensions inherent in the literary system. Medieval and early modern creators of literature of all kinds found themselves caught up in a number of complex relationships: that between Latin and the vernacular, spiritual and secular, written and oral, pragmatic and poetic texts and discourses;[30] due to this situation, authorship in the Middle Ages and early modern period is a highly debatable category. Thus, authorship always presents itself as an object of historical reflection, certainly problematic but not as controversial as in modern literary discourses; therefore, it always has to be considered anew in its various iterations.[31] The following is a brief overview of the historical development and contexts of the above-mentioned categories and their functional determinations with reference to prose novels. The historical phenomena of 'author' and 'work' can then be narrowed down to a further reference level which can be explained in more detail: I would like to call this a 'policy of oeuvre' as proposed by Steffen Martus,[32] which can refer to both authorial staging and the author's intentions when creating a piece of art which is not, however, necessarily meant to produce affordances for the reading process. The author, however, is aware that they can only offer a range of possible meanings which may or may not be perceived by the reader depending on the literary communication that is taking place. This is a concept that can easily be modified and accentuated in the context of early modern prose works.

In order to characterise the specific connection between textuality and authorship, Gérard Genette can be taken as a modern starting point, since he provides a detailed overview of paratextual phenomena to which he adds the author.[33] His approach is similar to Martus' concept, as witnessed by the inclusion of the person of the author, whose name in itself signifies a systematic attribution of roles that are of importance

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Reinmars des Alten ist, kann historisch je unterschiedlich bewertet werden [...]." ('Therefore, it is possible to give different answers to the question as to what constitutes the 'works' of the 'author' Walther von der Vogelweide or of Reinmar the Elder depending on historical context [...].') (Runow 2014, p. 53). Especially in *Minnesang*, it is problematic to name an author because tunes are reused over and over, which makes it hard to tell where and when they originate.

29 Cf. Dunn 2019, p. 237.
30 Bleumer 2015, p. 15.
31 Cf. Bleumer 2015, p. 15.
32 The German term is "Werkpolitik" (Martus 2007).
33 Genette 1997a, p. 37.

for the text.[34] Another level is the historical handling of the author as an entity within textual structures, which is very common in early modern narrations.

The article 'Author' in the encyclopaedia *Der Neue Pauly* outlines a connection between genre and authorship. Hellenistic poets stylised themselves as priests (*hiereus*) or seers (*vates*), while prose writers claimed to inform their audience truthfully about their chosen object.[35] Nevertheless, prose writers were not held in greater esteem, since lyrical poets fulfilled a more important defining function for the self-conception of their community through panegyrics, political tragedies, and the like. The constant immanent, identity-winning, or polemical confrontation of the authors with their own traditions in the pursuit of historical literary self-reflection was a prominent feature of both Greek and Latin antiquity.[36] Both traditions survived into the 16th century, which valued originality less than imitation.[37]

After having provided a brief outline of the development and conventions of the prose novel, I will now discuss medieval authorship. In the Middle Ages, literature was often of a semi-oral character and intended for performance, which ensured that the public knew the authors even if they were not explicitly named, as the audience was able to see the reciter of the text.[38] Within oral traditions of poetry, therefore, there is no conscious difference between author and reciter. In an oral reading, the reciter embodies the collective memory of his listeners through its particular and current performance.[39] Since a certain degree of familiarity is established between performer and audience through the performance, there is no need for an introduction by name. The author's name is thus neither concealed, encoded nor ignored but is present in the person of the reciter without any special mention.[40] This is by no means an assertion that the Middle Ages knew no authorial consciousness or a phenomenon such as hidden authorship.[41] If a text misses the author's name, this can put them in danger of falling victim to the *damnatio memoriae.* With the Latin poetry of the Middle Ages, the author is named in the vast majority of cases, in keeping with the continuity of the literary conventions of ancient poetry.[42] In fact, it is only since 1500 that intended anonymity has been possible when it comes to written works, since it was only then

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34   Cf. Chartier 1994; Pabst 2011, p. 8.
35   Cf. Renger / Schmitzer 2006; Schlaffer 2005.
36   Renger / Schmitzer 2006.
37   Cf. Müller / Robert 2007, p. 7.
38   Cf. Müller 1999, p. 150; Haferland 2011, p. 62.
39   Cf. Haferland 2011, pp. 62f.; for types of cultural and collective memory see Assmann 2007, pp. 11–44; and Assmann 2013.
40   Cf. Hellgardt 1998, p. 50.
41   Cf. Flood 1998; Multhammer 2015.
42   Cf. Curtius 1948, pp. 503–505.

that the title page appeared as the chosen place for the name of the author.[43] Earlier media included no comparable features, which meant that the question of the author was subject to different conditions. Considering authorship (Latin / vernacular) also means dealing with material conditions and historical settings such as the two separated spheres of writing.

3. Authorship in the 16th Century in Vernacular Contexts

Various forms of authorship can be observed when it comes to 16th-century German vernacular novels. The first edition of *Fortunatus* of 1509 was not only passed down anonymously but also – as the colophon shows – published and printed for the marksmen's festival in Augsburg that year, a major event of the city. As evidenced by the paratext, the text was put on the market precisely for that occasion.[44] We also know that "Johannßen heybler Appotegker"[45] (i.e. 'the apothecary Johann Haibler')[46] ordered the novel to be written and that Johann Otmar printed it in Augsburg. Despite the availability of this information, research has always endeavoured to identify the author. For this purpose, the dialect and dialectal colouring of the narrative were examined and South-Eastern Germany, namely Augsburg or Nuremberg, were identified as possible places of origin.[47] *Fortunatus* is an early prose novel closely related, on the one hand, to medieval narrative practices and the more recent medium of the incunable with its new possibilities on the other, insofar as it evokes procedures of orality: "NVn habend ir vor gehőret"[48] ('As you have just heard'). Although popular literature had been predominantly conceived in writing since the 13th century, it was also sometimes presented orally as late as the early modern period.[49] This means that literary production was, to some extent, constantly focused on oral performance, as evident from transitions that do not refer to a quiet reading but to some kind of audio-visual presentation.[50] Nevertheless, it might be argued that those texts which went into print actually still made use of markers of oral performance. *Fortunatus* has also been described as belonging to the

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43   Cf. Haferland 2011, p. 53.
44   Cf. Henkel 2013, p. 155.
45   Fortunatus, p. 585.
46   Cf. Sachse 1955, pp. 5–7; Müller 1990, p. 1156. Huschenbett (2001) advocates for a connection with Augsburg as a printing location.
47   Cf. Kästner 1990, pp. 272–292.
48   Fortunatus, p. 426.
49   Cf. Müller 2010, p. 112: "Zwar sind die frühen Erzählprosen meist noch ausdrücklich sowohl zum Lesen-Hören wie zum Selbst-Lesen bestimmt, aber die Einzellektüre ist im Vordringen." ('Although early prose narratives were usually still explicitly intended for both reading-by-hearing and reading in the narrow sense, the latter, i.e. individual reading, was becoming increasingly common.').
50   Cf. Müller 1999, p. 150.

constitutive anonymity of the Middle Ages, as were the *Lalebuch* (1597) and the *Ulenspiegel* (1510/1511) – both chapbooks focussing on pranks.[51] However, this hypothesis must be questioned, since it ignores at least two essential differences. Firstly, these texts are genuine creations without foreign-language precursors and in this respect their status is different from that of medieval German texts, which were most commonly adaptations, predominantly of French, Latin, or Italian precursors. These differences obviously have a bearing on the role of the person responsible. Furthermore, the fictional embedding of the *Lalebuch* is by no means comparable to the tacit omission of the author's name in medieval texts. The title page suggests that the book was published in Laleburg, home of the Lalen, the protagonists of the stories, who are utterly stupid. The colophon of the *Lalebuch* as well as the staging of the title are integrated into a fictitious context and thus follow another purpose.[52] The *Lalebuch* therefore fakes its embeddedness in real life, which emphasises the nonsensical nature of the narrative while at the same time drawing attention to the implicit truth of the content, for everyone – according to the narration – can become a Lale.

Between the publication of *Fortunatus* and the novels by the Alsatian Jörg Wickram (ca. 1505–ca. 1562), printed between 1554 and 1557, developments in religious policy occurred in the context of the Reformation which led to the prohibition of all kinds of writings critical of religion in both denominations. The Recess of Augsburg in 1530 decreed that, officially, only writings which provided information about the name of the printer, the place of printing, and the year of publication could be licensed for printing. Forty years later, the Recess of Speyer added the obligatory indication of the author to these decrees.[53] Therefore, it is not surprising that the title pages of the *Knabenspiegel* (i.e. *Boy's Mirror*, 1554), *Nachbarn*-Roman (i.e. *Neighbour*-novel, 1556) and *Goldtfaden* (i.e. *Golden Thread*, 1557) contain the name of an author. What is striking, however, is how Wickram deals with his authorship, using a strategy which may be described as targeted (self-)staging.[54] Wickram represents a (new) type of author / narrator who inscribes himself in his texts and comments on them extensively. The many reflective remarks in the entire work form a pattern that justifies the assumption of Wickram claiming ownership of his poetry. He designed his work in a signature way and communicates his ownership claims through the text itself.[55] What is probably his most unique staging of authorship takes place in the *Dialog Von einem ungerahtnen Son* (i.e. *Dialogue of an Unruly Son*, 1555). Although the title page gives no indication of the author and a colophon is missing, two interlocutors, Georgius (Wickram) and Casparius (Caspar Hanschelo),

51   Cf. Haferland 2011, p. 59; cf. Ein kurtzweilig Lesen von Dil Ulenspiegel.

52   Cf. Das Lalebuch, p. 3. On the title it says: "Gedruckt zu Laleburg / Anno 1597".

53   Cf. Pabst 2001, p. 11.

54   Cf. for concept and term: Jürgensen / Kaiser 2011; Bremer 2011.

55   Wåghäll Nivre 2007, p. 106.

appear, discussing the content and presentation of the *Knabenspiegel / Boy's Mirror*, of which Gregorius is said to be the author. In the role of the literary character Georgius, the historical author Wickram provides information about the text's origin and occurring motives, fictitious sources, imagination, and the possibilities of fiction; he also explicitly mentions his intention to make a statement as an author. He wants to be seen and recognised as the author of his novels. This positive approach towards authorship cannot be found in the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten.*

4. *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*

The situation regarding authorship is definitely a lot more complex in the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten.* In the preface, the editor Johann Spies tries to emphasise the historical truth of the narrative on the one hand and to distract from himself as an author on the other, instead presenting his work as a compilation of ego-documents and posing as the person who merely took care of the publication.[56] The preface provides a network of purportedly authentic testimonies, suggesting the historically documented existence of the protagonist, a strategy which plays into the scenario of his diabolical machinations. At the same time, this creates a kind of historical distance between the editor, the reader, and the narrative. The legend of Faust was already widely known by the time of its publication – the historical Faust lived sixty years prior to the novel.[57] By certifying the authenticity of the documents brought together in this narrative, the author of the *Historia* generates two diametrically opposed poles: on the one hand, authenticity is a guarantee of narrated truth, as the title 'Historia' suggests,[58] and on the other hand, the sources originate with a notorious liar and deceiver whose allure is largely based on his artful way with words.

As I have mentioned before, the paratexts are of great importance for the question of authorship: the title page of the *Historia* already has a lot to tell us about the literary status of the novel and about possible persons responsible for the whole story. The title suggests the staging of the narrative as an (auto)biography, "even though the term 'autobiographical' is problematic because it implies a sense of self-writing that does not lie within the scope of the medieval tradition".[59] D. Fausten's magic arts may be highly deceptive, but their documentation is just as authentic, which thus displace in

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56   Historia von D. Johann Fausten, p. 833.
57   The historical Faust caused a sensation at the beginning of the 16th century and is already mentioned in Luther's *Table Talks* and in Trithemius' correspondence. The episode around Emperor Charles V occurs before his renunciation of the further regency in favour of his son Philipp II in 1556. Cf. Trithemius: Epistolae familiares, pp. 312–314; Luther: Kritische Gesamtausgabe.
58   Cf. Bamberger 2020, p. 89f.
59   Von Contzen 2018, p. 66.
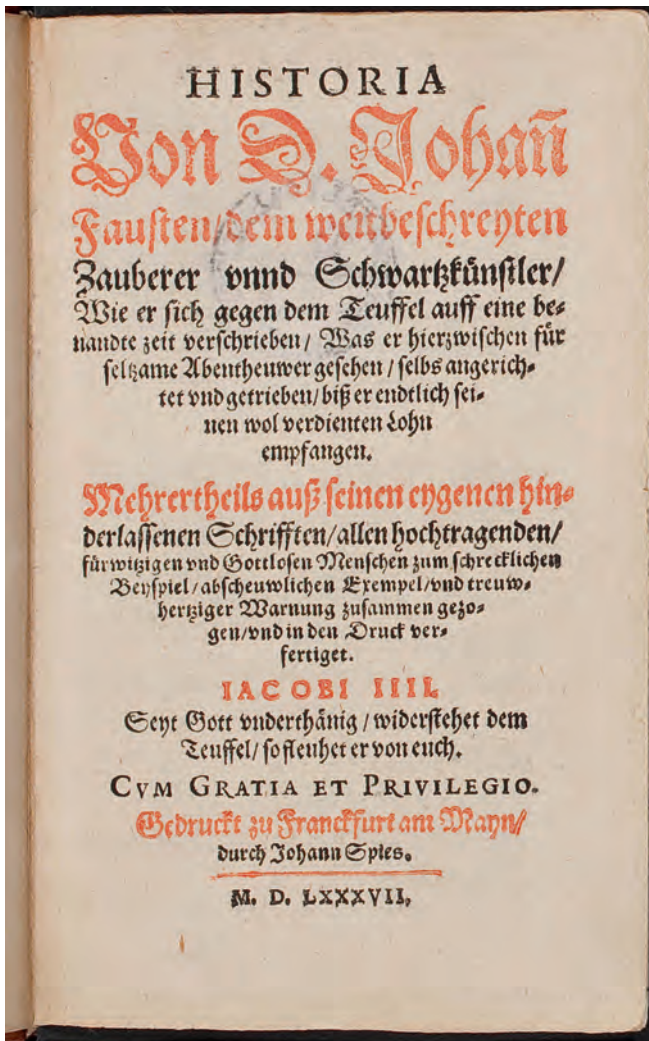
Fig. 1: Historia von D. Johann Fausten. Frankfurt am Main: Johann Spies 1587, Titel [VD16 F 943]. Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, Sig. A: 56.3 Eth.

the knowledge of several genres and precursors. The whole title is: *Historia Von D. Johann Fausten / dem weitbeschreyten Zauberer vnnd Schwartzkünstler / Wie er sich gegen dem Teuffel auff eine benante zeit verschrieben / Was er hierzwischen für seltzame Abentheuer gesehen / selbs angerichtet vnd getrieben / biß er endtlich seinen wol verdienten Lohn empfangen. Mehrertheils auß seinen eygenen hinderlassenen Schriften / allen hochtragenden / fürwitzigen vnd Gottlosen Menschen zum schrecklichen Exempel / vnd treuwhertziger Warnung zusammen gezogen / vnd in den Druck verfertigt.* Thus, the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* is the story of the most

famous magician and necromancer; how he sold himself to the devil for a certain time and how he saw, instigated, and pursued strange adventures until he finally received his well-earned reward. Most of it compiled from his own bequeathed scripts as a terrible example for all conceitedly presumptuous and godless people and as a well-meant warning compiled and prepared for printing.

The title refers to another instance of accountability that lies within its range of textuality by indicating its fictional origin, which can be deduced from the fact that the protagonist is presented as the writer of his own story. At the same time, since it is a paratext in the narrowest sense, the framing that leads into the book and text within,[60] it is not quite a part of the story itself and thus might promise to contain some sort of factual truth. The title page is divided into two parts, first the typical summary, and the second, more unusual, part containing publishing information. It is quite common for title pages to include such details as long as there is some kind of unusual information to be imparted, for example if the text is a translation or an abbreviated or extended version of material that is already well known. The graphic element of a line separating the two parts highlights the second part. This part, which also emphasises the purpose of the text – providing an example and warning to those prone to hubris – is followed by a reference to the only authority that should matter to the reader: The Holy Bible. The typographical order, however, highlights the assertion that the main source of the novel is Faustus' own writing.

The superordinate text level and the individual chapters contain proofs of authenticity which serve to establish the origin and the fictional status of the action and thus become poetic markers. Faustus appears several times as the person responsible for the written text:

> Diese Historiam vnd Geschicht / was er in der Helle vnd Verblendung gesehen / hat er / Doct. Faustus / selbs auffgeschrieben / vnd ist nach seinem Todt solch schreiben in einem Zettel / seiner eigenen Handtschrifft / vnnd in einem Buch verschlossen liegendt / hinder jm gefunden worden.[61]

> The story and narration of what he saw in hell during his delusion was written by Dr Faustus himself and found written in his own hand on a slip of paper hidden inside a book which was found lying behind him after he died.

The chapter of his journey to hell begins with him sitting in a chair carried by demonic creatures. They appear to fly up a mountain just to enter it and descend inside. Because of the rapid speed at which the chair is going down, Faustus loses consciousness. Upon waking, he sees flames and horrible animals coming towards him and hears unfamiliar

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60   Cf. Wirth 2009, pp. 167f.; Genette 1997b, p. 11.
61   Historia von D. Johann Fausten, p. 896.

noises. He sinks deeper and deeper into the infernal space and, before he returns, he faints again. The next thing he is aware of is finding himself in bed not sure of what has happened to him during the night:

> In solchem Wohn kommt in der Nacht D. Faustus widerumb zu Hauß / Weil er nu seithero auff dem Sessel geschlaffen / wirfft ihn der Geist also schlaffendt in sein Bett hineyn. Als aber der Tag herbey kam / vnd D. Faustus erwachte / das Liecht deß Tages sahe / ward im nit anders / als wann er ein zeitlang in einem finstern Thurn gesessen were. [...] D. Faustus im Bett ligent / gedachte der Hellen also nach / Einmal nam er gewißlich für / er were drinnen gewest / vnd es gesehen / das ander mal zweiffelt er daran.[62]

> In such a state of delusion Faustus returned home at night. Because he was asleep on the armchair the spirit threw him fast asleep onto the bed. But when day began to dawn, and Faustus woke up and saw the daylight, he felt as if he had been in a dark tower for some time. [...] Lying in bed, D. Faustus thought about hell; one time he was sure to have been inside and to have seen it, the other he doubted it.

Although the chapter's introduction claims this document to be the one actually discovered with him when Faustus was found dead, there are two narrators at work here, framing Faustus' experiences. On the one hand, there is the narrator already familiar to the reader from the introductory part, who issues warnings and emphasises the deceitful nature of the story; on the other, there is the voice of marginal comments, who also refers to Faustus as a liar and victim of his own imagination.

The description of Faustus' experiences during the terrible journey is highly detailed. Hell becomes tangible – just as in Dante's *Divina commedia*, there are different layers in which different sinners face their respective punishments. Hell as presented here seems to be characterised by social division. Faustus meets people like himself but also kings and popes while he is drawn deeper into the diabolical structure of hell. Despite the clarification in the marginalia and by the narrator that this is a deception, the journey to hell is all too real for Faustus in terms of the experience of fear. The two textual authorities, Faustus and his perception on the one hand and the narrator and his interpretation on the other, are diametrically opposed.[63] If Faustus is the author of his story and telling the truth about his experiences, the fearful reader has a chance of learning a theological lesson by re-experiencing Faustus' horror.[64] However, if the narrator, who actually wants to produce precisely this effect in the reader, is right about the deceitful nature of Faustus the writer, he is undermining his own point.

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62   Historia von D. Johann Fausten, p. 895.
63   Cf. Robert 2016.
64   Cf. Bamberger 2018, p. 280.

The following chapter contains the story of Faustus' journey to the stars. In his report of his stellar experiences in this environment, Faustus retells his journey to hell from a euphemistic perspective by juxtaposing the events of that journey with those of his new one. He writes a letter in which he demonstrates how purported facts, even if only fictitious ones, can be twisted in the narrative mode or, considering the letter situation, even in the mode of factual reporting. In this case, the letter poses as an answer written to a former fellow student, with Faustus serving as a first-person narrator telling his story – even though it is not actually a real-life document. In addition to Faustus' letter, there are also documents written after his death by his family and students that maintain the impression of authentic authorship. This is what is said at the end of the novel:

> Sie fanden diese deß Fausti Historiam auffgezeichnet / vnd von jhme beschrieben / wie hievor gemeldt / alles ohn sein Ende / welches von obgemeldten Stundenten vnd Magistris hinzu gethan / vnnd was sein Famulus auffgezeichnet / da auch ein neuw Buch vom jhme außgehet.[65]

> They found Faustus' story written by himself as has been said before just without the ending which was added by his students in addition to the parts written by his assistant who will also be the author of a new book.

This setup provides a plausible explanation as to why Faustus' end can be related although he, being dead, is in no position to do so himself, but reference is also made to the book by and about Wagner, Faustus' assistant, which is the sequel to the *Historia*. Within the narrative, Wagner is assigned the role that is ascribed to an unnamed friend from Speyer in the preface to the publisher's novel, named as the source of the documents on Faustus.[66]

In his first preface, the publisher Spies also stages the legitimation of the publication by not only naming the motives but also tracing the path the collection had taken until it reached him. By reporting how the traditional material of an oral tradition and autobiographical testimonies contributed to the compilation of the novel, he also traces the presumably fictitious course of its genesis. He refers to a process of creation that corresponds to a biography, because the editor documents the various steps in the development of the *Historia* from the historical figure to the rumours about his use of magic and the eventual printing of the novel. He explains his approach as a printer:

> hab auch nicht vnterlassen bey Gelehrten vnd verständigen Leuten nachzufragen / ob vielleicht diese Histori schon allbereit von jemandt beschrieben were / aber nie nichts gewisses erfahren können / biß sie mir newlich durch einen guten Freundt von Speyer mitgetheilt vnd zugeschickt

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65   Historia von D. Johann Fausten, p. 979.
66   Cf. Historia von D. Johann Fausten, p. 833. Cf. Kraß 2010, pp. 225–227; Robert 2016, p. 376.

worden / mit begeren / daß ich dieselbige als ein schrecklich Exempel deß Teuffelischen Betrugs / Leibs vnd Seelen Mords / allen Christen zur Warnung / durch den öffentlichen Druck publicieren vnd fürstellen wolte.[67]

I did not fail to ask scholars and knowledgeable people whether the history had already been published, but couldn't find out anything definite until most recently, when a good friend from Speyer told me about it and sent me [a copy] so I could print and show this terrible example of demonic betrayal, the murder of the body and the soul as a warning to all Christians.

As Spies explains how a novel like this one is produced, he stresses that he is only the printer, no more. All his efforts, he claims, were only undertaken for the purpose of educating people and reacting to a request made by others that the story ought to be made public. He has even, he says, consulted experts; not because of the theologically doubtful content, but to make sure that the story has not been published yet.

In consequence, Spies has been identified as the person responsible for the *Historia*. The names of the two main characters Faustus and Mephostophiles seem to justify this. Faustus bears the same first name as the printer, although his historical model was not named Johann but Georg, and the printer's surname is found in "MephoStoPhIlES [!]".[68] The source cited in the printer's preface must therefore be considered fiction.

The text itself, however, wants to prove the opposite: The narration does not end with Faustus' death but with an explanation of how all of his stories were collected and complemented by the addition of an ending, which was written as a testimony by Wagner, the closest of Faust's students. Furthermore, the above-quoted passage declares the topic and the historical figure of Faust to have been very popular by the time Spies printed the book.[69] Even Philipp Melanchthon, one of the most influential Reformation scholars, mentioned Faust the magician in his sermons.[70] The integration of the story into an educational religious context underlines Spies' intentions and the justification of the project.

Although concepts like the implied author may be controversial, in this case it is at least very useful to think about the role of the author and separate it (a) from the narrator as textual authority and (b) from the voice in the paratexts. There are, however, phenomena of intersecting textual levels when it comes to naming sources and constructing something like immanent authorship and accountability, which once again have a strong influence on how the narrator designs the presentation of the content. It could be argued, of course, that it is the author who creates the narrator in the first place, but these two concepts tend to overlap in the actual text.

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67   Historia von D. Johann Fausten, p. 833.
68   Robert 2016, p. 376.
69   Cf. Baron 1982; Baron 1985; the individual articles in Baron 1991; and recently Baron 2019.
70   Cf. Sommer 2009, p. 113.

5. Dealing with Sources

Apart from the statements which can be traced back to a specific author and concern the area of responsibility, plenty of sources were used in the writing of the *Historia*, some of which were incorporated into the narrative without a great deal of literary mediation. Passages from the *Schedel'sche Weltchronik* (1493) are merely copied without further literary effort, so that the travel route of the protagonist follows exactly the route of the *Weltchronik*. Clearly, the intention was not to provide topographically accurate information, but to charge the segment with especial significance. In addition, the text is informed by areas of knowledge from very different types of text, including religious tracts. One of those tracts is the collection of Martin Luther's *Tischreden* ('Table Talks'), more specifically the edition by Johann Aurifaber (1566). With regard to the question of authorship, this means that we are dealing with three instances of authority. Firstly, there is Aurifaber, who wrote down the Martin Luther's speeches and sermons, and arranged them in a very particular way which he describes and legitimises in the preface to his edition.[71] Aurifaber claims that the true authority is (secondly) Martin Luther, the actual author of the words, who, for his part, is eager to highlight the importance of the written Biblical word. The third authority is the author of the *Historia*, who paraphrases, reuses, and copies this version of Luther's wording. According to Marina Münkler, the dinner speeches as given in Aurifaber's edition were of outstanding importance as an intertext of the *Historia*.[72] Münkler assigns the *Tischreden* to the group of 'heterologous precursors', which, in contrast to 'homologous precursors' (such as collections of examples), are characterised by the fact that they do not have a specific connection to Faustus or to the stories of other magicians.[73] Heterologous texts such as Hartmann Schedel's *Weltchronik* provide the narrative world (e.g. Faustus' World Journey) akin to a stage set, but have no part in the narrative structure and in the plot. However, this distinction presupposes a clear separation of fictional and factual texts, which is not common in early modern literature.[74] Recent research on Martin Luther's fable-writing supports this view,[75] because it operates on the basis that everything that is possible is true, an approach which abolishes the strict separation between fiction and reality in favour of the usual principle of *prodesse aut delectare*.

Thus, the author becomes conceivable as a mediator[76] who deals with different materials, topics, and fields of knowledge which either belong to the sciences or have

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71 Cf. Klitzsch 2020; Stolt 2014, col. 138.
72 Münkler 2011b, p. 79.
73 Münkler 2011b, p. 70.
74 Moreover, there is a tendency towards encyclopaedic writing: cf. Herweg / Kipf / Werle 2019; Eybl 1995.
75 Cf. Bamberger 2019.
76 Bezner 2005, pp. 206f.

passed into cultural memory. And this is where things get complicated: the editor, who in the case of the *Historia* is so keen on rejecting authorship, does not mention these identifiable sources precisely so as not to jeopardise the construct of a reasonably coherent narrative. This approach provoked controversial reactions: the *Historia* had made use of the text *Christlich bedencken vnd erjnnerung von Zauberey* (i.e. 'Christian Thoughts on and Remembrance of Magic'), which had been first published in 1585 by a professor at the university of Rostock, Augustin Lercheimer (a.k.a. Hermann Witekind, 1522–1603).[77] This text contained some passages on Faust and his work in the context of the 16th-century witch-hunt.[78] The aim of Lercheimer's text was to argue for the innocence of the accused women. That this endeavour was not without problems is shown by his usage of a pseudonym. His approach was to use polemics against magicians like Faust as a rhetorical strategy which deviated from but complemented logical and empirical demonstration.[79] He does not refer to authorities as was usual in academic literature,[80] but tells stories that were highly popular around the 1580s. It is not surprising that his text was reused almost immediately and found its new purpose in a literary context.

In 1593, Lercheimer published the reply to the *Faustbuch* in his new version of the *Christlich bedencken*:

> Hie muß ich auch von eim zauberer / der nicht herrlich aber doch berhümpt / vom Johans Fausten etwas weitläufig meldung thun / dazu mich verursachet ein Buch / das von jhm ein lecker / er sey wer er wolle / newlich hat außgeben / damit fürnemlich die Schule vnd Kirche zu Wittemberg geschmehet vnd verleumbdet. Saget saß der Faust sey bey Weimar vnnd Jena geboren / zu Wittenberg erzogen / instituiert / Magister artium vnd Doctor Theologiae gemacht: habe daselbst in der Vorstatt beym eusseren Thor in der Scheergassen Hauß vnd Garten gehabt: sey im Dorffe [R] immlich ein halbe meile von Wittenberg vom Teufel erwürget in beyseyn etlicher Magister / Baccelarien vnd Studenten am Karfreitage. Diß alles ist bößlich vnd bübelich erdichtet vnd erlogen: wie er dann auch / der Lecker / seine lügen vnd vnwissenheit damit entdecket daß er schreibet Faust sey bey den Graven von Anhald gewesen vnd hab da gegauckelt / so doch dieselbige Herren nun über 500 jar Fürsten vnd nicht Graven sind: den Faust aber hat der teufel erst vor 60 jaren geholt. Wie reimpt sich diß?[81]

> I have to go into further detail about a magician who is not glorious but famous, that is, Johann Faust. A book has compelled me to do this, which a villain has recently written about him, whoever he may be, with which he has slandered and defiled the university and church of Wittenberg. He says that Faust was born near Weimar and Jena, raised and educated in Wittenberg, where he

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77 He taught Ancient Greek at Heidelberg before coming to Rostock, because he had to escape from the Lutheran Louis IV, who did not appreciate a Philippist such as Witekind teaching at university. Cf. Sommer 2009, pp. 111–122, esp. p. 115.

78 The *Historia* itself plays an important role in witch trials: see Baron 1992.

79 Cf. Baron 2009, p. 9.

80 Cf. Baron 2009, p. 9.

81 Lercheimer: Christlich bedencken, pp. 88f.

became a Magister Artium and Doctor in Theology: but I myself have lived in the suburb close to the outer gate, in Scheergasse, in a house with a garden. He [Faust] was said to have been strangled by the devil in the village of Rimmlich half a mile from Wittenberg in the presence of quite a few scholars and students on Good Friday. All of that is a malicious and malevolent lie and fiction. The villain exposes his own lies and ignorance by claiming that Faust had performed his magic with the Counts of Anhalt, though those honourable men have been princes rather than counts for over 500 years now, whereas Faust was taken by the devil only sixty years ago: how does that compute?

This critical resumption of the topic of Faust has much in common with a book review: it summarises a paragraph of the *Historia* before going into details about the mistakes that Lercheimer accuses the other author of. The author of the new book is said to be unknown. Anonymity is no longer an exclusive aspect. But the attribution reveals Lercheimer's evaluation of the new plot and his thoughts about the author's intention: He calls the author 'lecker', a term which the *Frühneuhochdeutsches Wörterbuch* translates as meaning parasite, dawdler, hypocrite, chatterbox, rascal, crook, or villain.[82] Lercheimer strongly supports this opinion, as he uses this term twice. Furthermore, he refers to two institutions at danger of being brought into disrepute through their association with this work: the University and the Church of Wittenberg, both of which were also connected to the reformers Luther and Melanchthon, who could thus be implied by extent. For Lercheimer, the narrative turns out to be a lie that can be countered with facts based in historical accuracy and his own first-hand knowledge of the involved locations, so that, for him, the value of fiction is not a relevant category at this point. On the one hand, this may be due to the fact that he saw his own text used in the *Historia* and suspected that book to have the same intention as his own, i.e. that of making a statement – rendered more credible through the inclusion of facts – about pacts with the devil in general but not necessarily arguing against such practices. Another interpretation is far more plausible, however: that this polemical discussion was intended by Lercheimer to defend himself against the parts with factual content and against the further copying of his thoughts and arguments in a fictional context. Later on in his 'review', when he names Luther and Melanchthon explicitly, it emerges that he is upset by the integration of his own work into another:

> Andere eitelkeit / lügen vnnd Teufelsdreck des Buchs / lass ich vngereget: diese habe ich darumb abgezeigt / daß michs sehr verdreußt vnd betrübet / wie viele andere ehrliche Leute / die wolverdiente hochrhümbliche Schule / die selige Männer Lutherum / Philippum / vnd andere dermassen zu schenden: darumb daß ich auch etwan dort studiert habe.[83]

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82 In German: "Schmarotzer, Tagedieb; Heuchler; Schwätzer; Schelm, Gauner, Bösewicht" (https://fwb-online.de/lemma/lecker.s.0m, last accessed 1 March 2021).
83 Lercheimer: Christlich bedencken, p. 92.

I won't talk about the further voidness, lies, and satanic filth of the book. The other things I have mentioned because it makes me sad and sorrowful how many other honourable people, the famous and prestigious University, and blessed men like Luther, Philipp [Melanchthon] and others are sullied in this way: because I also studied there myself.

He strongly identifies with these thoughts and is noticeably upset with the potential trouble created by the *Historia.* There is a strong possibility that readers could have linked Lercheimer with his text and the *Historia* with Lercheimer's text. The misunderstanding of his own writing which this new story might have produced is the reason for Lercheimer's upset.

6. Conclusion

The *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* not only deals with the boundaries of fictionality but also with the establishment of a metatext on questions of authorship on various levels. As an outstanding example of 16th-century prose literature, it integrates factual sources with literary invention. The text does not explicitly discuss the circumstance that its parts have been taken from somewhere else and transformed into something else. It does, however, try to emphasise its origin with a single author, namely the protagonist himself. The text presents itself by showing an enunciative character of authorship. At the same time, it exclusively points towards an understanding of accountability. The contemporary reaction of one of the writers whose texts were used as a source for the *Historia* highlights the uncertainty involved in this approach towards a special type of authorship.

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Matthias Bauer and Angelika Zirker

Shakespeare's Medieval Co-Authors

Abstract

In *Pericles* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, William Shakespeare and his collaborators invoke their medieval sources: John Gower and Geoffrey Chaucer. Their presence in the plays is so uncommon and explicit that they appear as Shakespeare's co-authors; and the way in which they are presented reflects on the notion of diachronic collaborative authorship. Gower in *Pericles* is both an author of the past and a present-day reader who becomes an author in the performance of an old story. He does so by having the audience join him in imaginatively turning the narrative into the events on stage. Gower's overcoming historical distance and returning to life is both a reconfiguration of imitation as co-authorship and a reflection on co-authorship as a collaborative effort in which the one participant will realise what the other has conceived and told, without being solely responsible for the outcome. Chaucer in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is at once the solitary genius at the origin of the story (which he wasn't), feared and praised in the prologue, and the author with whom the two contemporary co-authors enter into a diachronic collaboration. While this image of progeny and descent may evoke the fear of decline, it also serves to conceptualise co-authorship in terms of mutual inheritance, giving and taking, as represented by the relationship of Palamon and Arcite. The play suggests that collaboration as inheritance is a more lasting version of poetic creation than rapturous inspiration.

Keywords

William Shakespeare, *Pericles*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, John Gower, Geoffrey Chaucer, Imitation as Co-Authorship, Diachronic Collaborative Authorship

1. Introduction

While Shakespeare, in all his plays, draws on a wide range of classical and medieval as well as (more or less) contemporary authors, he explicitly refers to and evokes only two of them, both medieval: John Gower in *Pericles* (1609, co-authored perhaps with George Wilkins) and Geoffrey Chaucer in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613, with John Fletcher).[1] In

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1 "Like *Pericles*, but unlike any other Shakespearean play, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* openly acknowledges its chief source at the start" (Potter 2015, p. 50). Accordingly, it is not quite correct that *Pericles* is the only play which emphasises that the "enacted play emerges from an old story" (O'Connell 2002, p. 221; cf. Dymkowski 2007, p. 237).

Pericles, Gower is restored from death ("resurrected"[2]) – "From ancient ashes Gower is come" (1.0.2) – and eight times enters the stage as Chorus. He does so in order "To sing a song that old was sung" (1.0.1), i.e. he presents himself as the one in charge of the new performance of an ancient piece. He is thus placed in a privileged position in comparison to other renewers of the Apollonius story, such as the Elizabethan Laurence Twine.[3] In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the Prologue states how "Chaucer, of all admired, the story gives" (Pr. 13) – thereby ignoring (strategically, one may wonder) various other sources of the story reaching back to classical Greek and Roman literature, including Euripides' *Suppliants*, Seneca's adaptations of Euripides, and Statius' *Thebaid*[4] – and notes that it would be "too ambitious to aspire to him" (Pr. 23). Rather, the Prologue fears that the play ("this child", Pr. 16) will "shake the bones of that good man / And make him cry from under ground" (Pr. 17–18), i.e. literally make him turn in his grave (or interrupt the play from the cellarage of the theatre, like Hamlet's father).

Shakespeare hence does not just use sources as he always did but, in each of these plays, gives one of those sources a name; in one case, he even has the author of his source appear as a character on the stage,[5] and, in the other case, addresses him explicitly. This is exceptional and deserves further comment. While Shakespeare's interaction with and reference to the two writers has been observed frequently,[6] we think it makes sense to go a step further and call them his (and his collaborators') medieval co-authors. We feel justified in doing so by showing that the specific ways in which he makes use of and refers to them reflect on the notion of collaborative authorship. In particular, we hope to show that (a) the authors from the medieval past give evidence to the fact that co-authorship was not just a matter of a contemporaneous collaboration but that there was also an idea of diachronic co-authorship connected with the practice of one author's taking up another's story, and (b) that this reflection on diachronic co-authorship is one of the few examples of Shakespeare's explicitly reflecting on co-authorship at all, even though collaborative playwriting was a common practice in his time. The presentation of diachronic co-authorship may thus tell us something about how authors

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2   Gieskes 2009, p. 94.

3   Cooper 2004, pp. 106 and 108.

4   See also Potter (2015, p. 50), who notes that, "[t]hough the Prologue gives no indication that Chaucer was indebted to others for his story, the dramatists would certainly haven known the *Thebaid*, if only because of John Lydgate's Siege of Thebes, a retelling of Statius, which was first added to Chaucer's *Works* in Stowe's edition of 1561 and reprinted by Speght in his 1598 edition (revised in 1602)". For the classical as well as late medieval sources of Chaucer, including Boccaccio's *Teseida*, see Potter 2015, pp. 45–47.

5   The immediate model for having Gower come back to life may have been Robert Greene in *Greenes Vision* (1592), who resurrects him for a debate with Chaucer on the value of literature; see Cooper 2004.

6   See, e.g., Cooper 1998; Driver / Ray 2009; Gieskes 2009; Johnston 2010; Sprang 2011; Tiffany 2015.

(and their works) of the past may become creative partners in the present, and how the poetics of co-authorship as it emerges from both plays may be informed by evoking and presenting authors from the past. We suggest that this is possible because co-authorship is presented by Shakespeare (and company) as a process of giving and taking.

2. "Our imagination": Gower and the Audience as Co-Authors of *Pericles*

In the first chorus (the prologue) spoken by Gower, we are introduced to the idea of the author as a reader (and vice versa) of an ancient story. This is at least what the ambiguous first line of the play conveys: Gower has come back "To sing a song that old was sung"; i.e. he now sings a song (again) that was sung in his own time, or he sings a song that even in his own time was an old one. He thus sets the tone for the current enterprise, which is to make present again a performance of his own time or to perform a song that belongs to an earlier time than his own. The difference might seem slight, but we nevertheless regard it as important since it shows two sides of Gower's role as a (co-) author in *Pericles*: he is both an author of the past and a reader who becomes an author in the performance of an old story. In the first role we (together with the original audience of *Pericles*) receive him as a voice of the past, as an authoritative,[7] venerable figure who may have to tell us a story still (or again) worth listening to. In the second role we receive him as a voice who has adopted a story of the past and becomes a model of Shakespeare's (and his co-author's) present enterprise. Distance and proximity, authorship and creative reception through performance thus come together; in the very first line of *Pericles*, Gower's words indicate that this play has much to offer as a source for the poetics of authorship. And the fact that he is chosen as a single voice to represent the authorship of the play ironically reflects more strongly than any other device could have done its collaborative nature; as Dymkowski has noted,[8] we witness a process from the monologic "song" of the beginning to the emphasis on "our play" at the end (Epilogue 18).

Shakespeare (and Wilkins) are not unique in putting the author of the source text on stage as a Chorus; as Hoeniger[9] and others have pointed out, a few years earlier Barnabe Barnes had done so in *The Devil's Charter: A Tragedy Containing the Life and Death of Pope Alexander the Sixth* (1607).[10] The author of Barnes' main source, Francesco Guicciardini, "opens and closes the play, and appears at the end of each act as a commenta-

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7   For Gower, see e.g. Lynch 1993 and Cooper 2004, for Chaucer, see e.g. Cooper 1998 and Teramura 2012.
8   Dymkowski 2007, p. 247.
9   See his introduction to the (second) Arden edition of *Pericles* (Hoeniger 1963, p. XXI).
10   The example of *The Devil's Charter* and *Pericles* was then imitated by John Heywood, who had Homer as Chorus of *The Golden Age*, *The Silver Age*, and *The Brazen Age* (Hoeniger 1963, p. XXI). For other author-figures as presenters in Renaissance drama, see Eggers 1975.

tor".[11] He also introduces dumbshows in a manner similar to Gower.[12] The main difference, however, lies in the fact that Guicciardini largely abstains from any poetological comment. We do not learn from him about the nature of the play as a work for the stage as we do from Gower. By contrast, Fame, the Chorus figure in *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers*, a collaborative play to which Wilkins probably contributed, is similar to Gower in adding self-reflexive statements such as the shortening of time and space.[13] The source of the metatheatrical statements in both plays, however, is Shakespeare's *Henry V*, whose anonymous Chorus figure reflects on the freedoms of the stage concerning action, time, and space, as well as on the function of the audience who are to flesh out what they have heard and seen in their imagination. For example, the injunction of the Chorus in *Henry V*, "On your imaginary forces work" (Pr. 18) is echoed by Gower in *Pericles*: "In your imagination hold / This stage the ship" (3.0.58–59). Hoeniger remarks that the similarities to the Chorus of *Henry V* are much stronger from Act 3 of *Pericles* onwards, when Gower starts to appeal to the audience.[14] This may be linked to the assumption that Shakespeare was less involved in the writing of the first two acts[15] but it also coincides with the process of Gower becoming more and more aware of the audience's collaboration. Thus, while he speaks of "your imagination" in Act 3, he switches to "our imagination" in 4.4.3. Even though he immediately afterwards switches back to addressing the audience in the second person ("By you being pardoned", 3.0.5), "our imagination" does not make sense as his or the actors' alone. When he speaks of "Making to take our imagination / From bourn to bourn, region to region" (4.4.3–4), he describes the imaginative travel that is the result of the "Making", i.e. both the theatrical pretence as well as the poet's (i.e. maker's) effort.[16] From Malone onwards, "our" has often been replaced by editors with "your" in order to eliminate the extrametrical syllable from the line and make it agree with the earlier reference to the imagination of the audience.[17] Gossett plausibly keeps "our" as an "inclusive plural"; a decision that can be undergirded by pointing out that Gower, the poet from the medieval past, now regards the present audience as his co-authors or co-makers. They are in the privileged

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11   Gossett (2004, p. 76) in her introduction to the (third) Arden edition of *Pericles*. The play is quoted from this edition.

12   Hoeniger 1963, p. XXII.

13   Hoeniger 1963, p. XXIII, referring to *Pericles* 4.4.1 ("Thus time we waste and long leagues make short") and "Time now makes short their way" (D^v in *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers*).

14   Hoeniger 1963, p. XX.

15   Gossett 2004, p. 66.

16   The (etymological) notion of the poet as a maker is foremost in the poetological consciousness of Early Modern England. See, e.g., the opening sentence of George Puttenham's *The Art of English Poesy* (1589, p. 93): "A poet is as much to say as a maker."

17   See Gossett's (2004) note on 4.4.3.

position of joining the author and actors in imaginatively creating the play and of being its judges; only in the latter role do they assume a distinct standpoint ("you").

Gower (and Shakespeare through him) thinks in terms of co-authorship from the first, when he announces: "I tell you what mine authors say" (1.0.20). He is Shakespeare's model in appropriating his sources as "his" authors, and in so doing joins them when he transmits the story to the present audience. In the course of the play the audience is made to join the group of authors. Authorship is considered plural and diachronic, as there is not only a past author invoked by the present authors of the play but also a present audience invoked as the future co-creative partners by the past author, who is in turn the reader-turned-co-author of earlier authors.[18] Critics have wondered if what Gower does is the same as what is envisaged by the Chorus in *Henry V*, emphasising "the audience's role in sustaining the play imaginatively"[19] or rather "to stand back and watch"[20]. We have seen that this is not mutually exclusive. Whereas Gower, at the end of his first speech, gives the play to the audience to watch critically ("to the judgement of your eye", 1.0.41), he then goes on to ask the audience more and more for its engagement in the action. We would therefore like to offer a suggestion that goes beyond this alternative in taking up another dimension concerning Gower's relation to *Pericles*. In the manner of the Chorus of *Henry V*, Gower indeed invites and entices the audience to participate in the realisation of his song or story. At the same time, the play as we watch it *is* such an imaginative realisation. Co-authorship manifesting itself in the transformation of story into play[21] coincides with co-authorship in the reception, i.e. in the process of making what we hear or read come alive before our mental eyes. The author(s) of *Pericles* thus hides behind the presentation of an ancient and a present co-author: the storytelling Gower and the imaginative listener. He becomes the anonymous agent who makes the story act out itself, or as Gower puts it: "And what ensues in this fell storm / Shall for itself perform" (3.0.53–54). The play, as we watch it, is a story assuming a life of its own in our imagination, or so we are made to think.

By evoking Gower as a medieval co-author, Shakespeare both obscures and reveals the function of the playwright as the one who enables and directs the active participa-

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18   See Copeland (1991), for whom both Chaucer and Gower (ch. 7) are examples of hermeneutic re-
      flection (in the form of what she calls secondary translation, pp. 6f.) becoming a source of *inventio*,
      a concept she traces back in particular to Augustine (see ch. 6).
19   Dymkowski 2007, p. 244, citing Eggers 1975, p. 439.
20   Dymkowski 2007, p. 244, citing Knowles 1983, p. 16.
21   As Cooper (2004, p. 107) points out, Gower's "continuing interventions [...] serve as a continuous
      reminder that we are watching the dramatisation of a story: a story told with such conviction that
      it acts itself out in front of our eyes, as in Peele's *Old Wives Tale*, or, for more recent examples, the
      television *Bagpuss* of Oliver Postgate or Anthony Minghella's *The Storyteller*. It is a method on the
      cusp between naivety and sophistication, primitive make-believe and modernist self-reflexive-
      ness."

tion of the audience. Through the playwright, the old story becomes part of our imagination, and we become part of the story. *Pericles* stages the transformation of *diegesis* into *mimesis* through a series of dumb shows which serve the double effect on the audience described above: they turn them into onlookers that critically observe what is shown to them, and they materialise the images evoked in the minds of the listeners by Gower's story. The dumb show is both old and new: it was introduced in one of the earliest English tragedies, *Gorboduc* (1561), but it is not medieval,[22] and it is closely related to the elements of masque and pageant fashionable at the time of Shakespeare's late plays. In *Pericles*, the three dumb shows are inserted into Gower's narratives and lead up to the dialogic presentations on stage. They both illustrate Gower's words, are explained by them and thus represent an intermediate stage between the telling of a story and its full realisation on stage (and in the listeners' minds) with its complete integration of words, music, and visual effects. The first dumb show, presented at the beginning of the second act, is still very much like an illustration inserted into a text.[23] Gower announces that the audience will see Pericles receiving news that run counter to his well-respected life at Tarsus (2.0.15–16), then we see the letter delivered in the dumb show, and afterwards (or partly simultaneously) Gower explains its content and the unlucky outcome of Pericles' attempt to return home (his shipwreck). This is similar in the third act (dumb show after 3.0.14), when Pericles again is called home after a moment of happiness (winning Thaisa's hand) and a shipwreck ensues that leaves Thaisa (apparently) dead. As in Act 2, an ekphrastic stage direction interrupts Gower's speech in the Quarto text, but it is more closely integrated into Gower's interaction with the audience. While in Act 2, Gower just stops speaking ("what need speak I?", 2.0.16), he now prepares for the dumb show by delivering a verbal picture of the peaceful household at night ("The cat with eyne of burning coal, / Now couches from the mouse's hole", 3.0.5–6). The audience is even facetiously invited to imagine in detail what happens during the "time that is so briefly spent" (3.0.12) by Pericles and Thaisa in their wedding night. Shakespeare here pokes fun at himself by alluding to the Chorus of *Henry V*:[24] Whereas, in the former play, the audience was told to "eke out our performance with your mind" (3.0.35), they are now asked to flesh out a performance that cannot be shown on stage ("With your fine fancies quaintly eche", 3.0.13). Gower's phrase not only refers back to the event in which "A babe is moulded" (3.0.11) but also to the dumb show that follows, which this time will be more clearly synchronised with his words ("What's dumb in show I'll plain with

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22   See, e.g., Hunt 2012 for the functions of the dumb shows in *Gorboduc*.

23   This is different from the dumb shows in *Gorboduc*, which, together with the verbal explanations that are similar to the *subscriptio* of an emblematic *pictura*, carry symbolic meanings concerning misgovernment and its consequences. By contrast, the dumb shows in *Pericles* are visualisations of the narrative.

24   See Gossett's (2004) note on 3.0.13.

speech", 3.0.14). The dumb show then displays what we imagine when we listen to what Gower tells us (e.g. the bringing of letters from Tyre, 3.0.24). This mutual production is continued in Act 4, when the third major catastrophe in Pericles' life, the (apparent) death of his daughter, is also marked by a dumb show.

This is the moment when the audience is fully integrated as a co-creator of the play by Gower's speaking of "our imagination" (4.4.3). Even the appeal to the judgement of the audience, while establishing a certain distance, contributes to this integration, since the audience is to pardon the fact that everyone is speaking the same language in all the different places of action. This curious linguistic fact is of course due to the audience in the first place: it is the audience who imagine the characters speaking a language they understand. The authors produce a play their audience may comprehend in order to enable their participation; this is achieved when the narrative is supplemented by an ekphrasis and dumb show, and the moving picture that may still be a "foul show" of all too imitative, "borrowed passion" (4.4.23–24) then fully comes to life in dialogue.[25]

Similarly, the 'translation' of Gower's somewhat antiquated language and verse form (rhymed tetrameters) into prose and blank verse dialogue can be understood as a realisation of the imaginary performance produced by the story in the minds of the audience. Gower "stand[s] i'th'gaps" to teach the audience "The stages of our story" (4.4.8–9); even though this might sound to the modern reader like an anticipation of Wolfgang Iser's reader-response criticism with its notion of narrative gaps,[26] the difference is that the gaps are not just left to the imagination of the audience. On the contrary, the gaps are left by what is not imagined by the audience and, accordingly, not shown on stage. The increasing integration of the audience into the production process by Gower also shows in the line before the third dumb show: "Your ears unto your eyes I'll reconcile" (4.4.22). Before the first dumb show he had just stopped talking, and before the second he had announced his explanation; now he hopes to achieve a full synthesis of what the audience think, see, and hear. (If we assume[27] the first two acts to be written by Wilkins and the other three by Shakespeare, this careful progression is evidence of their intense collaboration.) A few lines before he has made clear that physical reality may be the product of thought: "think his pilot thought" (4.4.18), he says to the audi-

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25 See Plett (2013, p. 263) for ekphrasis, monologue, and dialogue as forms of an increasing theatrical *evidentia*, which draws the audience into the subject and action. Plett goes on to point out that the *enargeia* (or visualisation) taking place in prose texts such as Erasmus' *Colloquia* by means of dialogue produces images of the mind that simulate actual presence. *Pericles*, we suggest, stages this very process and presents the "actual" figures on stage as realisations of the listeners' imagination.

26 See Iser 1974, e.g. p. 38.

27 See Gossett (2004, pp. 62–70) for the history of and arguments for this attribution. Not every critic has been convinced; cf. Cooper 2004, p. 106: "However the text of *Pericles* evolved, its Gower would be Shakespeare's own, and the play therefore indeed, as its Cambridge editors describe it, 'the product of a single creative imagination'."

ence. "Thought" is a passive participle here, expressing the rapid speed with which Pericles sails to Tarsus. We are to imagine that the pilot was imagined to Tarsus while he actually went there. This is exactly what takes place in the realisation of Gower's story by the audience; the proof of their thoughts making things happen is the evidence of the stage. Similarly, it is the audience's "fancies' thankful doom" (5.2.18–19) that makes it possible for Pericles to come to Ephesus.

The sea journey, the central motif of action in *Pericles* and a traditional poetological metaphor,[28] is thus tied into the reflection on collaborative authorship. We will see below that the production of a performance with the help of the audience is compared to the collective effort of a ship's crew in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. The sea journey concerns the notion of temporal and spatial progression by means of "thought" and imagination, i.e. our "transportation"[29] as well as the creation of what we are transported by through our imagination. The collective effort of the performance is accordingly based on individual acts of collaboration. Each member of the audience imagines the journey as a sequence of scenes; the audience co-creates it collectively. In *Pericles*, with its characteristic diachronicity of collaborative play-production, the sea journey is joined by another motif of poetological reflection: the coming (back) to life. The strength of this motif is enhanced if we remember that *Pericles* was first printed (under Shakespeare's name) in the same year as Shakespeare's *Sonnets* (1609), in which both the reader's contribution to the realisation of the poetic creation and diachronic co-authorship are addressed. Both aspects are linked to the life (or return to life) of the poem and its subject. It is the eyes (e.g. Sonnet 18, 55) and breath (Sonnet 18, 81) of the performing reader in which "this" (i.e. the work, Sonnet 18, 55) and the addressee "shall live" (Sonnet 81). In Sonnet 81 in particular the diachronic dimension comes in. As a counterpart to Gower's coming back from the grave and transcending a gap of several centuries, the speaker of Sonnet 81 envisages a future in which a poetic performer will recall from the dead the present addressee:

> And tongues to be your being shall rehearse
> When all the breathers of this world are dead;
> You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen)
> Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men.   (ll. 11–14)

28   Prominent are storms and shipwrecks that prototypically mark the nature of dramatic genres as well as the nature of the lyric as the expression of the soul in crisis. As an example of the former, see Thomas Heywood's definition in his *An Apology for Actors* (1612, Fᵛ): "Tragedies and Comedies, saith *Donatus*, had their beginning *a rebus divinis*, from divine sacrifices, they differ thus: in comedies, *turbulenta prima, tranquilla ultima*, in tragedies, *tranquilla prima, turbulenta ultima*, Comedies begin in trouble, and end in peace; Tragedies begin in calms, and end in tempest." As an example of the latter, see Wyatt's sonnet "My galley charged with forgetfulness" (Wyatt: The Complete Poems, p. 91).

29   For a survey of interdisciplinary approaches to the psychological effect of narrative transportation, see Laer et al. 2014.

The *apo koinou* construction of line 11 suggests that future tongues ("tongues to be") will stage the life of the addressee ("rehearse"), and that tongues will rehearse in order to become the life of the addressee ("to be your being"). The punning "rehearse" links the theatrical practice and the recall from the dead (hearse).[30] The return from death is a key metaphor of literary imagination[31] that combines author, actor, and reader / spectator as a creative team and enables us to see that the past writer is not just the provider of a source used by the present one but actually comes to life. *Pericles* both shows and reflects on this process by having Gower coming "From ashes" (1.0.2) for the time of the performance ("like taper light", 1.0.16) and triggering the process of creative imagination in which the heard story is transformed into a play. Thaisa's return to life in 3.2 through the power of music mirrors the literary process in an aesthetic pun that corresponds to "rehearse" in Sonnet 81: "The music there! I pray you, give her air" (3.2.90). The breath of the performing readers[32] that make the subject come to life corresponds to the air in the physical and musical sense that is given to Thaisa.

In his final speech, Gower as Chorus sums up the story as he perceives it: as a morality play in which good and evil, represented by Pericles, Helicanus, and Clerimon on the one hand, and by Antiochus and his daughter and by "wicked Cleon and his wife" (11) on the other, meet with their deserved outcome. This emphasis agrees with the established view of Gower as a moralist, "moral Gower" as Chaucer had called him at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*.[33] Gower does not repeat the intended profit for the audience which he had emphasised in the Prologue. The audience is to be delighted by the play ("To glad your ear and please your eyes", 1.0.4) but it is also to have a beneficial effect on them: it is "to make men glorious", i.e. to inspire a wish for (spiritual) glory. This is, as Hoeniger points out, "the basic aim of the Legends of the Saints and of the miracle plays derived from them".[34] Accordingly, beginning and ending of the play evoke two characteristically medieval dramatic genres.[35] By framing *Pericles* in such a

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30   The expression also refers to the retelling (repeating, recounting, reciting) of an earlier author's work; see Copeland (1991, p. 196) on Chaucer's use of the term in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*. Below, we quote Chaucer's use of it in *The Canterbury Tales* (II. 88–89).

31   See, e.g., the various articles in the special issue of *Connotations* on the topic *Restored from Death*: https://www.connotations.de/special-issue/restored-from-death/ (last accessed 1 March 2021).

32   As Brown (1999/2000, p. 38) points out: "The 'monument' of the poem has no life in itself. It comes alive only when someone responds to its words and reads them. Once everyone now alive has died, only when a person speaks the words, responding to their cues for understanding and feeling, will some one [sic] become aware of the life it commemorates."

33   Chaucer: Troilus and Criseyde, V. 1856. See Cooper (2004, p. 100) for Chaucer's influential epithet.

34   Hoeniger 1963, p. LXXXVIII.

35   Hoeniger (1963, p. LXXXIX) points out the similarity "between the saints' legends and the romance of Apollonius of Tyre. They are both biographical romances". As a parallel to *Pericles,* Hoeniger cites the Digby play of *Mary Magdalene* (p. XC). The fact that the Christian divine intervention in

way, however, Shakespeare (and Co.) reminds us of the difference and distance over-come in the process of re-presentation that takes place when the story is turned into a 17th-century play. "*Et bonum quo antiquius eo melius*", as Gower says in 1.0.10, "the older a good thing is, the better".[36] The antiquity of the story is a sign of its quality, as it can be shown to be alive in the play. Still, the very nature of the story with its opening theme of "monstrous lust" (Epilogue 2) makes such a temporal distance opportune. After all, Chaucer not only spoke of the "moral Gower" but had his Man of Law reject writers who recounted stories of incest.[37] The story of Antiochus in particular is "so horrible a tale for to rede"[38] that he vows, "Of swiche unkinde abhominacions, / Ne I wol noon reherce, if that I may".[39] Accordingly, the evocation of Gower as the medieval co-author of this tale could serve to "de-present" it as much as to make it present. Shakespeare, with this end in view, has Gower distance himself from the story by making him exclaim: "Pardon old Gower: this 'longs the text" (2.0.40). Even though Gower thus somewhat contradicts his own claim that the older story is the better one (1.0.10), he represents an ambivalence that can be traced back to the *Confessio Amantis* itself, where the commentator figure of Genius, the Confessor plays a similar role as Gower in *Pericles*.[40] Book 8 with its predominant *exemplum* of the Apol-lonius story begins with a Latin warning against finding an ancient vice useful in the present.[41] It is followed by a history of incest delivered by Genius (ll. 1–163), which serves to show that, while the practice was a necessity at the time of Adam and Eve and Noah, it was overcome with the birth of Christ (l. 141). The relation of past and present is therefore part of the story's framework itself, and, even though Amans, who is instructed by Genius in shunning forms of love "unbesein / Of alle reson" (ll. 153–154), rejects the idea that incest might apply to him ("So wylde a man yit was I nevere", l. 171), its very position as the last and crowning example of "loves rage" (l. 150) shows that it cannot be comfortably called a matter of the past. Even while *Pericles* goes beyond the issue of incest, its disturbing events are both distanced and

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Mary Magdalene is replaced by Diana in *Pericles*, however, is not necessarily "one step further in the process of secularization," as Hoeniger claims (p. LXXXIX). Showing the amalgamation of classi-cal and Christian virtues in a world of Greek and Roman gods does not indicate an emphasis on secularisation.

36 Gossett 2004, p. 172, n. 10.

37 See Cooper 2004, p. 100. For the history of the treatment and evaluation of stories of incest, see Archibald 2001.

38 Chaucer: Canterbury Tales, II.85

39 Chaucer: Canterbury Tales, II.88–89.

40 Copeland (1991, p. 205) points out that in *Confessio Amantis*, the figure of Genius "allows the author to co-opt the role of exegete for his own text, but to carry it out under cover of certain rhetorical tropes, personification, allegory, and irony".

41 Gower: Confessio Amantis, p. 153.

made present through Gower's co-authorship.[42] But so are the miraculous preservation and return to life.[43]

3. "Chaucer the story gives": Medieval Co-Authorship and Family Relations in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*

In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, Shakespeare's medieval co-author Chaucer is invoked in the prologue:

> New plays and maidenheads are near akin:
> Much followed both, for both much money giv'n,
> If they stand sound and well. And a good play,
> Whose modest scenes blush on his marriage day
> And shake to lose his honour, is like her
> That after holy tie and first night's stir
> Yet still is modesty, and still retains
> More of the maid, to sight, than husband's pains.
> We pray our play may be so, for I am sure
> It has a noble breeder and a pure,
> A learnèd, and a poet never went
> More famous yet 'twixt Po and silver Trent.
> Chaucer, of all admired, the story gives;
> There, constant to eternity, it lives.
> If we let fall the nobleness of this,
> And the first sound this child hear be a hiss,
> How will it shake the bones of that good man
> And make him cry from underground "O, fan
> From me the witless chaff of such a writer
> That blasts my bays and my famed works makes lighter
> Than Robin Hood!" This is the fear we bring;
> For, to say truth, it were an endless thing
> And too ambitious, to aspire to him,

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42 While in *Confessio Amantis* the figure of Genius emphasises the difference to Gower's source material in the very act of representing it (see Copeland 1991, p. 203), Shakespeare goes a step further in identifying the commentator-presenter with the source author himself. In this way, Gower becomes a co-author in the present. Instead of translation as displacement, which is postulated by Copeland (1991, p. 202) for Chaucer, Gower, and others, *Pericles* presents translation and adaptation as cooperation.

43 We agree with Sprang (2011, p. 122) that "Gower functions both as a mediator and separator" between the past and present; still we think that this double function is not so much marked by antiquarian attraction on the one hand and a "privileged perspective on the workings of fate within God's providence" on the other. If anything, it is the very trust in a miraculous providential outcome for which the medieval co-author is shown to be responsible.

Weak as we are, and, almost breathless, swim
In this deep water. Do but you hold out
Your helping hands, and we shall tack about
And something do to save us. You shall hear
Scenes, though below his art, may yet appear
Worth two hours' travel. To his bones sweet sleep;
Content to you. If this play do not keep
A little dull time from us, we perceive
Our losses fall so thick we must needs leave.
Flourish. [*Exit.*]   (Pr. 1–32)

The prologue opens with a somewhat strange metaphor that serves to compare the "new play[...]" with a virgin just before and after marriage,[44] and the first night at focus. The play is initially depicted as the husband ("*his* marriage day", l. 4, emphasis added), with the pronoun probably going back to Latin *ludus*,[45] who blushes at the thought of the first night with his bride. The play is accordingly personified, and this personification gets married and blushes (in a manner reminiscent of Adonis[46]) at the prospect of its first performance. The hope is, thus the Prologue, that the play will still retain "more of the maid, to sight" (l. 8), that it will keep its freshness, given that it has a "noble breeder and a pure" (l. 10). It is at this point that Chaucer[47] is invoked, whose fame and constancy to "eternity" (l. 14) is commented on for the following five lines. The fear is that the play and its performance will fail, that the audience may "hiss" (l. 16), and that it will make Chaucer turn in his grave. Potter, in her introduction to the latest Arden edition of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, reads this as the awareness of the authors, i.e. Shakespeare and Fletcher, of the "riskiness of the enterprise" when entering upon a literary tradi-

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44 Before the marriage topic is introduced, the money given for a virgin evokes the image of a figure like Mariana in the brothel in *Pericles*, of whom the Bawd says: "Such a maidenhead were no cheap thing, if men were as they have been" (4.1.54–55).

45 To use the third person singular pronoun to refer to a play is topical; see, for example, the Walter Burre's Letter preceding Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1613, p. 3): "SIR, this unfortunate child, who in eight days (as lately I have learned) was begot and born, soon after was by his parents". See also Potter's (2015, p. 138, n. 19) note and her reference to the confusion of "parents" and "Author" in the early editions of that play as pointed out by Masten (1992, pp. 346–348).

46 At the very beginning, Adonis is introduced as "rose-cheeked" (Shakespeare: Venus and Adonis, l. 3), and he, slightly later on into the poem, "burns with bashful shame" (l. 49), with a "maiden burning of his cheeks" (l. 50).

47 The introduction of Chaucer as "pure" may be rather tongue-in-cheek: as Gieskes (2009) points out, Chaucer (as well as Gower) makes his appearance in Robert Greene's *Vision* of 1592. He is described as "a short, think, colorfully attired, and cheerful-looking person" (p. 96), whereas Gower "appears to be a stern and physically imposing figure, resembling the moralist Cato" (p. 97); see also Cooper 2004, p. 100. Overall, Chaucer is perceived to be licentious rather than pure by Shakespeare's contemporaries.

tion;[48] similarly, Cooper notes how "Chaucer here is given authoritative status comparable to Plutarch in Shakespeare's Roman plays (though Plutarch is never accorded an encomium)".[49] The reference to Chaucer in the Prologue has, consequently, been read as an apology for the play's "inferiority to Chaucer",[50] expressive of "a fear not only of physical exposure but also of literary desecration".[51]

And yet the invocation of Chaucer is not limited to fear and awe alone. Not only does the thought of the play "shak[ing] the bones of that good man" (l. 17) appear like a comical reference to the name of one of the play's co-authors; the whole setup of the prologue, starting with the bawdy metaphor, allows for a less serious reading, too.[52] With the play retaining "more of the maid", the gender roles in the marriage scenario suddenly appear to be switched, and the "writer" (l. 18) becomes the husband, with the play, now as "story", being the maid;[53] the fear is that he and the company, who are one, will dishonour the maid, that is the story "give[n]" by Chaucer, who thus becomes the father in an overall constellation which resembles a marriage ceremony,[54] with the 'bride' (the 'virgin text') in danger to be defiled by the play and its performance (the company as husband / wife).

The prologue expounds on the metaphor of family relations, which may be linked to the title of the play focusing on "two noble *kinsmen*", and refers to the story's "noble" origin. Hence, the notion of procreation as a poetical metaphor of co-authorship is being evoked: this goes for both the diachronic continuation in time of a "story" in which Chaucer is part of the family history and father of the bride, as much as for the imaginative process being not only continued but also altered in the process, which

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48 Potter 2015, p. 66.

49 Cooper 1998, p. 189.

50 Shakespeare: Synopsis.

51 Potter 2015, p. 67. Potter (2015, p. 66) also points out that "the reference to bones is not purely comic" and refers to Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* 5.3.16–17: "Antonio, standing in a ruined cloister, considers the ironic deception of the men buried there, who 'thought it should have canopy's their bones / Till doomsday'", which may be regarded as a link to the motif of collecting and burying the bones of the Kings at the beginning in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

52 See also Teramura (2012), who comments on the prologue's ambivalence (p. 562) and its "awareness of the burden of the story's legacy" (p. 558).

53 The confusion may be deliberate; or this may just not be a very good prologue, whose authorship is being disputed at any rate: "The Prologue and Epilogue are generally left unattributed, but Sylvan Barnet, in the Signet Classic series (1963) assigns them to Fletcher" (Ledger / Merriam 1994, p. 235). See also Frey 1989; Lynch 2005.

54 See the marriage ceremony in the *Book of Common Prayer* (1559, p. 158): "Who geveth this woman to be maried unto this man?" One may even read this as a joke going beyond the play itself as Chaucer, the father of the story, gives it to two husbands at the same time, which may be read as an allusion to Fletcher and his co-author Beaumont, who, according to the early biographer John Aubrey, "lived together on the Bankside, not far from the playhouse, both bachelors; lay together [...]; had one wench in the house between them, which they did so admire; the same clothes and cloak, etc, between them" (Aubrey: Francis Beaumont 1584–1616, p. 37).

provokes the fear of him turning in his grave. This shift from focusing on the play and performance as being problematic to the story and the play becoming one in marriage (and something to worry about, similar to the first night after marriage) may be linked not only to the fear of family degeneration but also to the notion of emulation: Chaucer is the pure and noble breeder, who will remain constant to eternity, but who may now also rest: "To his bones sweet sleep" is what the prologue wishes towards its ending.[55] In the course of this opening of the play Chaucer becomes involved in genealogy; his depiction as the "father" of literature in the vernacular was topical,[56] which was most markedly represented in the title page of Speght's 1602 edition with Chaucer as "progenie".[57] The prologue thus wavers between family relations of inheritance and the individual genius, an ambiguity inherent to the notion of progeny.[58]

But more is still required, as stated at the end of the prologue, for play and performance to succeed. At the end of the day (or, rather, the play), the 'married couple' of story and writer / play will need the audience who is to "save" (l. 27) play, company, and performance with their "helping hands" (l. 26). The audience here becomes part of the collaborative process as well, physically by applauding, but also by means of their imagination, in a vein similar to *Pericles* and *Henry V*: the ship metaphor ("we shall tack about" l. 26) requires them to accept another topos of the early modern stage and embark on the "two hours' travel".[59]

It has been noted that "[c]ollaboration is 'like marriage'",[60] and we have seen that the play's prologue indeed plays with that notion; still, the question remains whether

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55 Gieskes (2009, pp. 108f.) refers to the instability of Chaucer as a text, which can be related to the various editions published during the Renaissance.

56 See, e.g., Lynch 2005.

57 See, e.g., https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw78353/The-progenie-of-Geffrey-Chaucer-Geoffrey-Chaucer and https://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/236 (last accessed 1 March 2021).

58 See Oxford English Dictionary: "progeny, *n.*" 1.a. "Offspring, issue, children; descendants" and 1.b. "*figurative*. Spiritual, intellectual, or artistic descendants; successors; followers, disciples" (https://oed.com, last accessed 1 March 2021).

59 See Berry (1982) on "examples of the play as a sea voyage" (quoted in Potter 2015, p. 179, n. 25–26), who elaborates on how "ship scenes seem to have been a feature of Jacobean and Stuart drama" (p. 8), with a "metamorphosis of stage into ship" (p. 16), and notes how, at the end of *The Tempest*, the "actor-with-platform now becomes the ship, whose life and movement depend absolutely on the cooperation of larger forces. The splendid ambivalence of 'breath' and 'hands' once more finds a use" (p. 16). McMullan 1998 explains that "[c]ollaboration – in its broadest sense encompassing both audience response and the authors' negotiation of source-materials – is both the source and the solution of the play's anxieties about textual authority" (p. 134). Potter (2015, p. 139, n. 29) refers to "travel" sometimes being emended to "travail", thus indicating "both journey and labour", which adds to the notion of audience involvement.

60 Potter 2015, p. 20.

Chaucer's having given the story and the play having been composed by two authors is all that there is regarding references to collaborative authorship in this collaboratively written play. In fact, the poetological metaphors of marriage, begetting and birth, as well as inheritance are taken up in scene two of the second act – an episode that has been read as an overt reflection of co-authorship in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.[61] Palamon and Arcite are in prison, with Arcite trying to cheer up Palamon and describing their captivity as "holy sanctuary" (2.2.71):

> Arcite. [...]   What worthy blessing
> Can be but our imaginations
> May make it ours? And here being thus together,
> We are an endless mine to one another;
> We are one another's wife, ever begetting
> New births of love; we are father, friends, acquaintance,
> We are, in one another, families;
> I am your heir and you are mine. This place
> Is our inheritance; [...]   (2.2.76–83)

Following Arcite's description of their abode, Palamon concludes that the world is "but a gaudy shadow" (2.2.103), given the wealth they find in prison based on their "imaginations": it becomes a collaborative artists' workshop allowing them to invent people ad libitum and engage in imaginary role-play – "we are father, friends, acquaintance [...] families". Their imagination results in a pro-creative act (similar to sexual procreation resulting in actual children).[62] They are productive and co-creative together because of their personal relationship and because they regard their situation as a joint and mutual "inheritance".[63] The notion of being an "heir" evokes both diachronic and synchronous co-authorship, as they conceive their spontaneous co-production as a mutual legacy and offspring: just as their story is "give[n]" by Chaucer, they give their imagined roles

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61 See, e.g., Teramura (2012, p. 570), who notes: "resonances of this speech with the nature of collaborative playwriting, an imaginative fertility between two men. The fantasy exists, if only for a moment, of circumventing the patrilineal canon with the 'noble breeder' Chaucer at the head, in favor of mutual relationship of inheritance of two peers, where reproduction is figurative, not literal". Yet, the question remains: what are they begetting? Teramura does not come up with a suggestion, e.g. to read this as a reference to literary childbearing.

62 Their co-creation in this instance goes beyond the mere "creation of imaginative spaces within confinement", as stated by Teramura (2012, p. 569).

63 In the context of this scene, esp. ll. 80–81, Potter (2015, p. 226, n. 76–79) refers to Richard II in his prison at Pomfret castle (5.5.6–11): "My brain I'll prove the female to my soul, / My soul the father; and these two beget / A generation of still-breeding thoughts, / And these same thoughts people this little world, / In humours like the people of this world, / For no thought is contented." The creation by means of the imagination also evokes the collaborative role of the audience in *Pericles* (see above).

as begetters to each other in the present. The somewhat paradoxical idea of synchronous mutual heirs also foreshadows the outcome of their story: for both of them, death is imminent at the tournament, and both are confronted with death since the one who loses will die, as decreed by Theseus (see 3.6.288–299) and known from *The Knight's Tale*; in this context they do indeed become each other's heirs, as Emilia will be left to one of them.[64] It is in death only that they will return to their state of mutuality and of giving and taking: "Give me thy last words", says Palamon (5.4.88); and Arcite answers: "Take Emilia" (5.4.90).

In the prison scene, Palamon and Arcite are moreover authors and characters alike, and this pro-creative identity helps them make their prison – as much as their imagination – a perfect space, at least for a short period of time: with the arrival of Emilia they cease to be what they were in every respect, and sexual desire replaces their loving friendship.

> Palamon. What think you of this beauty?
> Arcite.   'Tis a rare one.
> Palamon. Is 't but a rare one?
> Arcite.   Yes, a matchless beauty.
> Palamon. Might not a man well lose himself and love her?
> Arcite. I cannot tell what you have done; I have,
> Beshrew mine eyes for 't! Now I feel my shackles.
> Palamon. You love her, then?
> Arcite.   Who would not?
> Palamon.   And desire her?
> Arcite. Before my liberty
> Palamon.   I saw her first.
> Arcite. That's nothing.
> Palamon.   But it shall be.
> Arcite. I saw her, too.
> Palamon.   Yes, but you must not love her.
> Arcite. I will not, as you do, to worship her
> As she is heavenly and a blessèd goddess.
> I love her as a woman, to enjoy her.
> So both may love.
> Palamon. You shall not love at all.
> Arcite.   Not love at all!
> Who shall deny me?
> Palamon. I, that first saw her; I that took possession
> First with mine eye of all those beauties
> In her revealed to mankind.   (2.2.154–171)[65]

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64   Palamon bequeaths money to the Jailor's Daughter at his supposed death (see 5.4.31–32), but he still leaves Emilia behind, who will be given to Arcite.

65   Potter (2015, p. 232, n. 163–165) points to the closeness of this passage to Chaucer's original.

The passage about Emilia's being "all the beauty extant" (2.2.148), "a goddess" (2.2.134), and a rarity are reminiscent of Spenser's *Hymne of Heavenly Beauty* and its (Neoplatonic) correspondence of spiritual and physical beauty: The vision of this "matchless beauty" (2.2.155) is both the inspiration and the aim of the work of the imagination.[66] But with Palamon and Arcite we do not witness the praise of imaginative co-creation any longer since their common mind is no longer immune to physical reality. As Palamon says: "Never till now was I in prison, Arcite" (2.2.132). The resulting difference between spiritual "worship" and physical "love" is then fleshed out by Arcite – and the quarrel ensues that is to end with, first, Palamon's (decreed) and then his own (actual) death. The whole dialogue, however, is still ironically reminiscent of collaborative authorship and co-creative endeavours on the basis of the Neoplatonic allusion:[67] Emilia becomes like an "idea" (re-)claimed by each of the kinsmen as his own and accordingly no longer solely belongs to the realm of heirloom but to that of rapture and inspired poetic vision in the vein of Plato's *Phaedrus* (245a) and *Ion* (533d–534e); this notion is, however, immediately parodied: "I saw her first". To 'see' an idea first is, in turn, evocative of Sidney's "vates", i.e. "a diviner, foreseer, or prophet", "the first and most noble sort".[68] The idea of the *vates* and his poetic genius is much less compatible with co-authorship than evoking one's poetic ancestor.

Such a reading points toward an allegorical interpretation of the play as addressing collaborative authorship and its reflection.[69] This allegory is opened by the prologue's dwelling on the play's medieval heritage and invoking Chaucer as a diachronic co-author. At the same time, however, the relationship with the past turns out to be an ambivalent one: Chaucer's bones may now as well rest in their "sweet sleep" (Pr. 29),

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66 See, for instance, the opening stanza: "Rapt with the rage of mine own rauisht thought, / Through contemplation of those goodly sights, / And glorious images in heauen wrought, / Whose wondrous beauty breathing sweet delights, / Do kindle loue in high conceipted sprights: / I faine to tell the things that I behold, / But feele my wits to faile, and tongue to fold" (Spenser: The Shorter Poems, p. 481).

67 Both division and collaboration are iconically represented by the pentameter lines being broken up between the two speakers, and by the two speakers creating pentameter lines together, with each of the speakers alternately contributing two and three feet.

68 Sidney: An Apology for Poetry, 83.38–39 and 87.11.

69 See Teramura (2012), who is in favour of such a reading, whereas McMullan (2012, p. 131), for instance, strongly argues against it: "I do not wish to suggest here that Shakespeare and Fletcher sat down to write a metadrama of collaboration, nor do I wish to offer an (admittedly tempting) allegorical reading in which the kinsmen and their prize would mirror the collaborators and their play, since each of these interpretations would presume the very issues of intentionality and agency that the play, I would argue, puts under scrutiny; but I do wish to suggest that *The Two Noble Kinsmen* offers an alternative model for collaborative endeavour which provides for the necessarily complex relations both between the two collaborators and between the collaborators and the object of their joint labour which examines the connection between collaboration and sexuality [...]."

while the current play and performance will come into their own and give "[c]ontent" to the audience; otherwise the participants' "losses fall so thick, [they] must needs leave" (Pr. 32) and "give up acting" (*The Two Noble Kinsmen*, p. 179, n. 32). As much as the knights enter into a competition with all the dangers implied – an idea that must have seemed archaic even to Shakespeare and Fletcher's contemporaries –, the play's two co-authors reflect on these dangers of rivalry and on how it may be overcome by force of the imagination. These various relations are evoked (if not even negotiated) in the play itself: Emilia, as the idea(l) to be possessed by the individual artist, leads to rivalry and the move from mutuality and heirloom to rapture; the ensuing rupture is overcome with the two kinsmen's final reconciliation and "alliance" (5.4.86). This dynamic may be transferred to that between individual rival poets (yet another nod to the *Sonnets*) and the question of "who saw her first"; their competition eventually shows that rivalry has no place in a collaborative authorship and needs to be overcome if the play is to succeed.[70] At the same time, the move between genius poet and joint imagination is embedded in a relationship with the past: the story is given by Chaucer (as father) and set in a mythical past, which foregrounds heirloom but also implies historical distance as early as in the prologue: other than in Pericles with Gower very much alive onstage, Chaucer is in his grave and may rest there but still live on "to eternity". It is his inheritance that is being evoked, feared, and qualified, and he, the "progenie", lends himself to such an ambivalent attitude since he is at once the solitary genius (supposedly) originating the story and the author with whom the two contemporary co-authors enter into a diachronic collaboration. The authority given by Chaucer is not exclusively based on "original invention" but on the contribution to as well as emulation of an ongoing tradition[71] which is thus kept alive.

4. Conclusion

In both plays, there is a co-authorship with a past author. Gower (*Pericles*) and Chaucer (*The Two Noble Kinsmen*) are thus both past (as a source) and present (as being responsi-

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70   Still it should not be forgotten that the conflict between rivalry and collaboration is only resolved by the death of one of the kinsmen. Since *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is the last play (co-)authored by Shakespeare, it is tempting to regard this resolution as an allegorical reference to his farewell to the stage and authorship. Teramura (2012, p. 567) does not suggest such an allegorical reading but conjectures that Shakespeare, in the course of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, becomes canonised by Fletcher, who in his parts of the play "attempt[s] an anthology of Shakespearean moments", beginning with the reappearance of Theseus from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This argument, however, rests on the identification of the authorship of individual scenes, which we regard as problematic, or at least at odds with the collaborative aesthetics of the play.

71   See Teramura 2012, p. 547.

ble for the story on the stage). The conceptualisation of this past-present co-authorship, however, is different.

In Gower's case, the primary way is realisation and presentation, which includes a transformation of genre from song (story) to play. Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, published in the same year (1609) suggest this mode of "rehearsal". Gower, taking up notions from the Chorus / Prologue to *Henry V*, triggers the imagination of the audience by what he tells them. We may regard the play as a representation of what goes on in the minds of the listeners. Telling turns into showing in the imagination, and this is what we see on stage. At the same time, Gower serves as a means to distance and contain the story. From the first, there has been this ambivalence since the various stories of illicit desire are presented in the *Confessio Amantis* with a didactic purpose. Thus the device of introducing Gower as a medieval co-author of Shakespeare (and Co.) and the audience also serves to negotiate the relationship between morality and delight. Projecting co-authorship into the past serves to reveal a general issue of co-authorship, i.e. the balancing of different functions and the need to transform an idea and a story into present, live action and dialogue. At the same time, it distributes responsibility: what comes as a gain in authority and life can also be a successful search for the culprit. The co-author can be held implicitly responsible for dwelling on the most shameful of vices and the cruel blindness of fate. The magical return to life and reward of those who faithfully endure is similarly both authorised and excused.

In Chaucer's case (*The Two Noble Kinsmen*), the primary way of conceptualising his co-authorship as both past and present is ancestry and descent. While he does not appear in person, he appears as the father of the story that is given in marriage to the present playwrights and actors who produce the present offspring. Shakespeare's *Sonnets* suggest this mode of poetic procreation, with the author as a 'begetter'. Even though the story lives "constant to eternity" in the past ("There", i.e. in Chaucer's works), it becomes present through the hereditary line, through being newly written for the stage. But as the child is not the same as the father, the play is different from Chaucer's story, and the Prologue utters the fear of degeneration. The difference emerges through the play's metaphorical reflection on co-authorship in the relationship of its protagonists, who dream of imaginatively transforming reality by becoming mutual heirs. They realise the limits of such an ideal creation when confronted both with the rapture of the solitary genius and with physical desire, while at the same time this awareness becomes the source of a new creation. Projecting co-authorship into the past serves to reflect a general issue of co-authorship, i.e. a negotiation of its ideals and pitfalls. By conceiving co-authorship as legacy, Shakespeare and Fletcher dwell on a feature that is derived from, but not restricted to, the giving of a story by an authority of the past. Both Gower and Chaucer serve to show that collaborative authorship, even when it takes place simultaneously, means giving and receiving.

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Madita Knöpfle

Conceptions of Authorship

The Case of *Ármanns rímur* and Their Reworkings in Early Modern Iceland

Abstract

Since the early 20th century, Eiríkur Laxdal's *Ólandssaga* (ca. 1820?) has been treated as one of Iceland's first novels, which was not always the case. Eiríkur's contemporaries already noticed that he borrowed from existing (folk?) stories and integrated them into his own narrative. This realisation soon led to the assumption that *Ólandssaga* was a folklore collection rather than a work composed by one individual. Among the texts Eiríkur is proven to have borrowed from, there is the story of Ármann and Þorsteinn, which survives in several *rímur* cycles and two *sagas*. *Ólandssaga* incorporates not just one but all versions of the story. In this chapter, I trace the rise of the author in Early Modern Iceland by studying *Ármanns rímur* and their reworkings against the background of contemporary discussions of their origin and authorship.

1. Introduction

Sveipaði hann því öllu um sig og í kringum sig og gekk þannig til að sofa. Og varð þó ekki svefnsamt því að bæði var í honum kvíði og hræðsla. Þar með þjáði hann sultur og matleysi. Sagði hann við sjálfan sig að betra mundi að hressa sig við og gjöra sér nokkuð til skemmtunar. Tók hann þá til að kveða kvæði, drápur og flokka. Því að hann kunni allmargt þar af. En þegar hann lyktaði hvert kvæði heyrði hann raustu nokkra sem sagði nú er mér skemmt ekki vissi hann hvort raustin var innarlega eða framarlega uppi eður niðri. Hélt hann áfram með kveðskapinn og dró smám saman frá honum hræðslan svo hann varð æ hughraustari uns að honum sé þungi mikill svo hann gat sér ekki lengur uppi haldið og lagðist því til svefnværðar hraustari en vonir stóðu til.[1]

He covered everything around him and like that went to bed. But he could not sleep because he was filled with both sorrow and fear. In addition, he suffered from hunger and the lack of food. So, he said to himself that it would be better to cheer himself up and do something for his own amusement. He then started to chant *kvæði*, *drápur*, and *flokka* since he knew a good many of them. But after finishing each poem, he heard a voice say: "Now I am entertained." He did not know whether the voice came from inside or outside, from above or below. He continued with the poetry and his fear

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1   Eiríkur Laxdal: Ólandssaga, p. 132. Punctuation according to Lbs 554 4to. Eiríkur Laxdal: Ólands-saga, [ca. 1820?], fol. 36v–37r. All translations are my own, unless stated otherwise.

steadily decreased, so that he became braver and braver until he felt very drowsy, so that he could no longer keep himself up and therefore lay down for his night's rest, braver than it was to be expected.

When Þorsteinn is sent away to find his father's lost sheep but instead discovers his brothers' dead bodies in a cave, it is poetry that gives him comfort in this time of desperation. And as a reward for the entertainment he thus inadvertently provides, a man called Ármann, overhearing his declamation, promises Þorsteinn to support him through his suffering and the trials that will follow: in *Ólandssaga*, it evidently pays off to have some knowledge of poetry. This passage is a narrative on narration, a self-referential scene that illustrates the act of reciting literature and its potential purposes. One could even interpret this scene in *Ólandssaga* with reference to biographical details of the Icelandic author Eiríkur Laxdal Eiríksson: living as a vagrant in his final years following the loss of his farmstead, Eiríkur Laxdal probably made a living from reading his own stories and poems and those of others during *kvöldvaka* ('evening wake').[2]

Ólandssaga borrows from numerous *sagas* and *rímur* (i.e. poetic narratives), such as the narrative about Ármann and Þorsteinn in the example just discussed. These links again hint at the importance of having some knowledge of poetry and literature, in accordance with principles of Icelandic literary tradition. Pre-modern Icelandic literature, similar to other European literatures of that time, is explicitly intertextual: a secondary character of one *saga* is the protagonist of another, tying both texts together; *sagas* are turned into *rímur* and vice versa; older narratives are reworked into newer versions. It is particularly noteworthy that these practices are present primarily in post-16th-century manuscripts, although print had already found its way to Iceland at this point. In fact, due to the advent of paper as a new writing material, which was more affordable than vellum, Icelandic manuscript culture flourished and did not come to an end until the 20th century.[3] Moreover, the printing press was in the hands of the Church from the very beginning, resulting in a mostly ecclesiastical printing culture. No secular press was authorised until the printing press on the island of Hrappsey in Western Iceland began operations in 1773.[4]

This chapter does not aim to trace to what extent Eiríkur Laxdal might have written himself into *Ólandssaga*, but to examine conceptions of authorship in Iceland, based on a discussion of "Langfeðgaþáttur" ('story of bloodline'), an episode of several chapters in *Ólandssaga*, and the different tales of Ármann and Þorsteinn it draws on. All these texts share the same subject matter, but they differ with respect to form (prose versus poetry), materiality, and paratextual features, particularly those which refer to the author (attributed in the manuscript, print, or externally). Especially where the reception of these

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2   E.g. Lbs 2370 II 4to. Sighvatur Grímsson Borgfirðingur: Prestaævir á Íslandi. XIII. Bindi: Húnavatnsprófastsdæmi, 1900–1929.

3   Driscoll 2013, p. 52; Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2006, p. 176.

4   Jón Helgason 1928, p. 15.

poetic and prose texts is concerned, the differences have implications for the conception of authorship: the growing scholarly interest in *saga* traditions instigated during the European Enlightenment by the Icelandic manuscript collector Árni Magnússon led to a re-evaluation of the relationship between author and text. These developments were also in part a response to the question of how to treat these contemporary prose texts, whose authors were sometimes known. The analysis of metatextual commentaries on *Ólandssaga* and its hypotexts about Ármann and Þorsteinn will show that authorship is closely linked to the text itself: the reading and meaning of a text changes depending on the reader's expectations of the text, often influenced by a specific concept of authorship as well as by contextual information. Vice versa, the author is deduced and constructed from a distinct reading of a text.[5] As a literary palimpsest with unmarked quotations, *Ólandssaga* especially led to confusion among 19th- and 20th-century scholars in the field of folklore studies.[6] Was it to be treated as a folk tale collection and, if so, how was its loose adaption of older tales like *Ármanns rímur* by Jón *lærði* Guðmundsson to be dealt with?

2. Transmission and Transformation of *Ármanns rímur*

The text usually referred to as *Ármanns rímur* is an epic poem composed by Jón *lærði* Guðmundsson in 1637. In eight *rímur*, it tells the story of Þorsteinn, an idle good-for-nothing, and Ármann, a spirit-like man, who helps him survive the trials he must face throughout the story. There are four extant copies of the *rímur*. Three of them date back to the 17th century, having been compiled by Árni Magnússon.[7] The fourth copy was written in the late 1760s, indicating that *Ármanns rímur* were still circulating in 18th-century Iceland.[8] In the late 17th century, the poetical narrative had already been turned into a *saga* by Jón *sýslumaður* Þorláksson,[9] which is preserved in four manuscripts: Árni Magnússon's copy (17th century),[10] a copy commissioned by his contemporary Magnús Jónsson í Vigur (1693–1696, probably related to Árni's copy),[11] and two copies from the

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5   Genette 1997.

6   E.g. Jón Árnason 1954; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1929; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1940.

7   AM 128 I–III 8vo. Jón *lærði* Guðmundsson: Rímur af Ármanni, [ca. 1700]. An overview of the manuscripts and the transmission of the text is given in Jón Helgason 1948, pp. XXII–XXV. Also Stegmann 2017, p. [429].

8   Lbs 896 4to. Jón *lærði* Guðmundsson: Rímur af Ármanni, [late 1760s].

9   On a paper slip in AM 128 I 8vo, Árni Magnússon writes that Jón Þorláksson (the author of the prose narrative based on the *rímur*) sent him the manuscript in 1701. It is possible that this version of the *rímur* served him as a model for composing the *saga*.

10   AM 551 d alfa 4to. Compilation of sagas, including Jón Þorláksson's Ármanns saga og Þorsteins gála, [17th century]. See Stegmann 2017, p. [395].

11   BL Add. 4859 fol. Sagna Flockur Wtlendscra þioda [...], [1693–1696]. According to NKS 1836 4to (Árni Magnússon: Qvædam Excerpta de Monumentis et Historiis Islandicis et eorum Auctoritate, [mid-

18th century.[12] There are, however, no copies extant from the 19th century, even though Icelanders were at that time still very eager to copy manuscripts.[13] The decreased interest in Jón Þorláksson's *Ármanns saga* is probably due to the existence of a newer version of the same subject matter, which was printed in the 1780s in Hrappsey,[14] replacing the older narrative of Ármann and Þorsteinn. Numerous handwritten copies – the earliest dating to 1795/1796, the latest to 1897[15] – as well as a reprint in Akureyri in 1858[16] show that this reworked tale was quite popular and found wide circulation.

3. *Ármanns þáttr gamli* and the Question of Origin

One of the first scholars to study the older material was the Icelandic manuscript collector Árni Magnússon.[17] Manuscript NKS 1836 4to, which includes copies of notes by Árni on collected texts, contains a paragraph on Jón Þorláksson's *Ármanns saga*:

> Sǫguna af Armanni og Þorsteini Gála hefi eg fengid frá Joni Þorlákssyni syslumanni i Austfiǫrdum, og hana sídan communicerad Magnusi Jonssyni i Wigur, svo at vonlegt er, ad hún á Islandi dreifast muni. Nefndan Sǫguþátt hefur Jon Þorlaksson sealfur componerad i prosam efter Ármanns Rímum Jons lærda, og hefur Jon siálfur þetta fyrer mer medkent.[18]

> I received Sagan af Ármanni og Þorsteini Gála from Jón Þorláksson who is *sýslumaður* in the Eastfjords, and I then passed it on to Magnús Jónsson í Vigur, so it is to be expected that it circulates

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18th century], pp. 17f.), Árni Magnússon passed Jón Þorláksson's *Ármanns saga* on to Magnús Jónsson í Vigur, assuming that the *saga* would be circulating in Iceland. Jón Helgason (1948, p. XXVI–XXVIII) did not know of any copies. However, BL Add. 4859 fol., commissioned by Magnús Jónsson í Vigur, contains a copy of the *saga* that possibly goes back to Árni's manuscript. BL Add. 4859 fol. was later sold to the British Museum London, probably by Sir Joseph Banks in the late 18th century (Seidel 2014, pp. 78–80).

12 ÍB 45 fol. Compilation of sagas, including Jón Þorláksson's Ármanns saga og Þorsteins gála, [1735]; Lbs 633 fol. Saman safn af Islendskumm Nordskumm [...], 1760. Lbs 633 fol. probably goes back to BL Add. 4859 fol.: they share eight *sagas*, including two illustrations in *Kirjalax saga*.

13 E.g. Driscoll 1997 about Jón Hjaltalín or Driscoll 2012 about Magnús Jónsson í Tjaldanesi.

14 Ármanns saga [1782?].

15 AM 934 4to; ÍB 76 4to; ÍB 210 4to; ÍB 230 4to; ÍB 307 4to; JS 270 8vo; Lbs 261 8vo; Lbs 1461 4to; Lbs 1756 8vo; Lbs 1785 4to; Lbs 2330 4to; Lbs 3170 4to; Lbs 3910 8vo; Lbs 3946 8vo; Lbs 3627 4to (*Ármanns saga* is only mentioned in both tables of contents, fol. 1v and 75r); Lbs 3972 8vo; Lbs 4364 8vo; Lbs 4655 4to.

16 Ármanns saga 1858.

17 Stegmann 2017; Stegmann 2018.

18 NKS 1836 4to. Árni Magnússon: Qvædam Excerpta de Monumentis et Historiis Islandicis et eorum Auctoritate, [mid-18th century], pp. 17f. as cited in Jón Helgason 1948, p. XXVI; Jón Helgason 1980, p. 40.

in Iceland. Said *söguþáttur*, Jón Þorláksson composed in prose by himself based on Ármanns rímur by Jón *lærði*, and Jón himself confessed this to me.

AM 551 d alfa 4to, Árni's copy of the *saga*, contains a glued-on note slip saying "Imposturæ J. Th. S.", meant as a hint that Jón Þorláksson's text was a contemporary 'forgery' and should not be considered an older, authentic narrative.[19] This opinion is echoed later in an index for Árni's manuscript collection prepared by Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík, where he described Jón Þorláksson as a person who liked to 'compose' ("dikta upp") *sagas* and therefore 'fabricated' ("laug upp") seven *þættir*, which Jón Ólafsson also referred to as *imposturæ*.[20] Interestingly, there is no such remark about Jón *lærði*, the author of *Ármanns rímur*, or his poetical narrative in Árni's or Jón Ólafsson's notes,[21] indicating that the conception of authorship and authenticity might differ depending on whether the text in question is in verse or prose.

Since *rímur* are commonly acknowledged as versifications of already existing prose narratives, their writing is primarily considered a craft in the realm of poetical language. Consequently, the *rímur* poet is regarded as a versifier. This is made explicit in *Ármanns rímur*: the non-narrative opening section (commonly called *mansöngur*, i.e. 'love song') of the last *ríma* contains the information that a *þáttur* of Ármann was supposedly adopted for these *rímur* because nobody else wanted to use it (*ríma* VIII,7).[22] No narrative about Ármann survives that is older than the *rímur* and could therefore have been the one referred to in this *þáttur*. This raises the question of whether an older prose narrative, now lost, once existed or the poet made this up to legitimise his *rímur*.[23] Aside from reading this remark as proof of the existence of an older narrative about Ármann, the poet's comments about possible already existing texts appear to be part of a dialogue with the audience about the *rímur* themselves: in the first *ríma,* the poet parenthetically affirms the existence of Icelandic books that tell of Ármann and his deeds (*ríma* I,16), implying that Ármann is of great significance, thus transferring that significance to the *rímur* by association. In the *mansöngur* of the fifth *ríma*, it is stated that 'the old narrative about Ármann is solely narrated to pass the time' ("Áfram ber eg / Ármanns þáttinn gamla, / stakan til þess að stytta dag, / stundum gleymi eg rauna hag.", *ríma* V,7).[24] Here, the poet refers to his own performance and the purpose of his recita-

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19   Jón Helgason 1948, p. XXVII.
20   Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík 2018, pp. 214f.
21   Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík 2018, pp. 217f.
22   Jón Helgason 1948, p. XXII; Driscoll 1997, p. 12.
23   In a review of the reprint of the reworked *Ármanns saga*, Guðbrandur Vigfússon (1859) was one of the first to discuss this issue and doubted the pre-existence of a *saga* or any written sources. Instead, Guðbrandur assumed that the motifs and themes must have been the offspring of 'superstition' (*bábylja*) and that 'folk tales' (*almúga sögur*) about Þorsteinn gáli had been used.
24   Jón Helgason 1948, p. 48.

tion. Beyond that, this stanza also suggests that the 'old narrative about Ármann' is not understood as separable from the poetic interpretation: it is 'the old narrative' which is recited. This again emphasises that the authorship of *rímur* was primarily associated with the versification of an already existing narrative. It is striking that the benefits of the narrative's transformation into a poetical text are even indicated in AM 128 II 8vo and Lbs 896 4to, which also claim in their *niðurlag* ('ending') that nobody wants to learn the original *þáttur*.

Whereas all this evidence taken together could suggest the existence of a former narrative, it is also possible that the poet's comments mainly serve as legitimisations for reciting the *rímur*. They are by no means atypical for this tradition but are found in other *rímur* as well. These characteristics possibly go back to skaldic poetry and German *minne* conventions.[25] In both traditions, the communication between the sender and the receiver is explicit and links the poet to the text: either when a skaldic verse is recited by a character in a *saga* (e.g. in *Egils saga*, when Egill as a three-year old recites a stanza about participating in a feast uninvited) or the troubadour addresses his lover in his poem. In both cases, there is a (diegetic) individual who is seen as creatively responsible for the poetic text.

4. The Author as Impostor

Even though many *sagas* contain references to older narratives ('it is told', 'people say'[26]) or their narrators make themselves noticed in judgemental side comments about the narrative itself (e.g. in *Þiðreks saga af Bern*), in pre-modern Icelandic prose texts the dialogue between sender and receiver is not yet as explicit as it would later become in the novel. Editorial fiction like the epistolary novel utilises literary devices which provide a framework for emphasising the process of narration and the dynamics of authorship and editorship, broadly comparable to the *mansöngvar*. Pre-modern prose texts, however, do not share these characteristics, suggesting that the modern, euphemistic conception of the author as individual creator who invents a story from scratch did not yet exist at that time. Moreover, Icelandic manuscripts often lack any information about the authors of texts. There are no indications that contemporaries had a particular interest in authors either, with one exception: to a collector of medieval manuscripts like Árni Magnússon, the text's creator becomes relevant once the prose narrative has been classified as a contemporary forgery and the culprit must be identified.

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25   Hughes 2005, p. 210.

26   E.g. 'svo er sagt' in *Egils saga* or 'svo segja menn' in *Laxdæla saga*. Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog. ONP: Dictionary of Old Norse Prose, URL: https://onp.ku.dk (last accessed 1 March 2021).

In this context, Jón Þorláksson's *Ármanns saga* was not an isolated case but corresponds to a pattern of how recently written *sagas* and their authorship were evaluated in the 17th and 18th centuries. Árni Magnússon noted about a text usually referred to as *Vitlausa Egla* ('Silly Saga of Egill'),[27] a 17th-century reworking of the medieval narrative *Egils saga*, that it was 'different from any other version of Egils saga' he knew ("ölik öllum öðrum Egils sögum"):

> Mig minner, eg hafi einhversstadar, epter sögu Sigurdar ä Knör, ad hann þessa Egilssögu ritad hafi epter hendi lærda Gisla i Melrackadal, og er þä Gisle, öefad, author bokarinar. Gisle var ad vïsu sannreyndr impostor. Enn Sigurdur var frömur madr.[28]

> I recollect that I have [a note? S. O.] somewhere, according to the account of Sigurður of Knör, that he wrote this saga of Egil [sic] following the learned Gísli of Melrakkadalur, and consequently Gísli is the undoubted author of the book. Gísli was certainly a blatant impostor. But Sigurður was a[n] honest man[.][29]

Although variance and *mouvance* were by then the rule within Icelandic manuscript culture, this version of *Egils saga* obviously went too far. This assessment suggests that there was a fine line between minor changes and an entire recast of a *saga*, which found its expression in Árni's differentiation of the 'honest scribe' Sigurður and the 'faking writer' Gísli. Accordingly, the term "author", which Árni applied in this context, was primarily used to refer to someone who had authority for a text and who, in this case, was thus responsible for this 'forgery'; it however lacked the euphemistic interpretation that emerged in the 19th century. The same conception of the author is reflected in Árni's evaluation of Jón Þorláksson's *Ármanns saga*, where a reference to the author likewise served as a red flag for an unauthentic, forged text.

5. The Reworked *Ármanns saga* and the Question of Origin

It was not until the print of the reworked *Ármanns saga* in Hrappsey around 1782 that the question of authorship and the sources and backgrounds of the older *Ármanns rímur* and *saga* was pursued in depth. In this more verbose reworking, the focus lies on Ármann and his efforts in Iceland, whereas Þorsteinn only plays a minor role in the last five chapters. As it was published without a title page, contemporaries soon puzzled over

27   I would like to thank Lena Rohrbach for pointing me towards this prose text and the research about it conducted by Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir (2015).

28   On a note in AM 454 4to. Saga af Egli Skallagrímssyni (Vitlausa-Egla), [early 18th century].

29   Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir 2015, p. 194. Punctuation added by M. K.

its origin and whether it was an 'authentic' *saga* or a new composition and, if so, who was the culprit.

Only a few years after its publication, Peter Erasmus Müller already included this new *Ármanns saga* in his 'Sagabibliothek' and concluded from the presence of the character Bárður Dumbsson, who is the protagonist of *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, that *Ármanns saga* must have been composed a little later, therefore listing it in the chapter on texts from the 15th century.[30] Evidently, Müller was neither familiar with Jón *lærði's rímur* nor the prose version of it by Jón Þorláksson. One of the first to point out that it had to be a later narrative adapted from older sources was Jón Espólín Jónsson, who wrote in reaction to Müller's publication that in Iceland, the text was known to be based on an 'older tale' ("ældre Fabel") and written after 1700 by Einar *sýslumaður* Eyjólfsson.[31] Some decades later, Konrad Maurer would point out that Jón Espólín was right about the background of the printed text but probably confused the newer *saga* with the older one and wrongly assumed that, instead of Jón Þorláksson, his contemporary Einar Eyjólfsson († 15 July 1695) had written it.[32] Einar Bjarnason á Mælifelli, a contemporary of Jón Espólín, attributed the newer *Ármanns saga* to Jón Jónsson Thorlacius († 1708), stating that this information went back to Hallgrímur Jónsson *djákni*.[33] Accepting that the reworked *Ármanns saga* was written at the end of the 18th century, the newer *saga* and the older one probably got mixed up again because Jón Thorlacius was the son of Jón Þorláksson,[34] who according to Árni Magnússon had written the older *þáttur*. Interestingly, at another point Einar attributed *Ármanns rímur* to Jón *lærði* but failed to mention the older *Ármanns saga* in the entry for Jón Þorláksson.[35] That being said, it appears as though in the first half of the 19th century, scarcely anybody was very knowledgeable about the older prose narrative or even aware of the existence of two *sagas*.

The first to follow up the origin of the tales more systematically was the Icelandic scholar Guðbrandur Vigfússon, who was based in Copenhagen in the 1850s and 1860s and worked in the Arnamagnæan Library. Having access to all Icelandic manuscripts that Árni Magnússon had brought to Denmark over a century ago, Guðbrandur assisted the Icelandic librarian Jón Árnason (who, following in the footsteps of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, was at this time preparing a collection of Icelandic folk tales in

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30   Müller 1817–1820, vol. 1, pp. 361f.
31   Jón Espólín Jónsson 1829, p. 66.
32   Maurer 1868, p. 71.
33   AM 1055 4to. Einar Bjarnason: Nokkura Skálda oc Rithøfunda eður Fræðimanna Tal á Íslandi, 1838, p. 193. In a footnote, Einar Bjarnason refers to Jón Espólín's article but does not comment on it. See further ÍB 385 4to. Hallgrímur Jónsson: Uppteiknunar Tilraun Skálda og Lærda Manna Islenzkra einkum Rithöfunda, 1835, p. 306.
34   Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–1952, vol. 3, pp. 291 and 315.
35   AM 1055 4to. Einar Bjarnason: Nokkura Skálda oc Rithøfunda eður Fræðimanna Tal á Íslandi, 1838, pp. 115f.

Reykjavík[36]) by occasionally looking over manuscripts in the Arnamagnæan Manu-
script Collection and checking whether there was anything that Jón could incorporate
into his collection. In a letter dated 10 April 1859, Guðbrandur asked Jón for clarifica-
tion as to what kind of material would be useful for the collection and what was to be
done with texts like the new *Ármanns saga*, which had just been reprinted in Akureyri
the year before. Guðbrandur believed the *saga* to date from the 18th century but to
contain some motifs and themes borrowed from older folk tales. He also reported
having found the manuscripts of Jón Þorláksson's *þáttur* and Jón *lærði*'s *rímur* in the
Arnamagnæan Manuscript Collection, which share similarities with the printed texts
but are on the whole very different works, and asked Jón Árnason whether he knew
of someone in possession of further information on this issue.[37] Jón responded on
19 June 1859 that he was familiar neither with *Ármanns rímur* nor the older *þáttur*,
indicating that, by this time, neither text was well known in Iceland any longer. He
agreed with Guðbrandur that the printed version contained oral tradition but was
undecided whether *Ármanns saga* should be included in his collection or not. And if
so, Jón wondered whether this newer tale ought to be listed under the name of Jón
prestur Þorláksson, possibly referring to the popular poet of this name who was active
in Hrappsey in the 1780s.[38] It is likely that Jón Árnason here confused Jón *sýslumaður*
Þorláksson, the attributed author of the older narrative, with Jón *prestur* Þorláksson
because there is no further evidence to support his statement. Jón Árnason eventually
concluded that he would probably not use the material.[39] In a response of 14 July 1859,
Guðbrandur notified Jón that he had finished a review[40] of the reprint of *Ármanns saga,*
which had been published in Copenhagen, and eventually advised against including
Ármanns saga, although he thought it might be worthwhile to investigate some of its
motifs.[41] In subsequent letters, it became evident that Jón could not find anything else
on this topic in Iceland and therefore, in agreement with Konrad Maurer, who was
also consulted concerning this matter, it was decided that *Ármanns saga* would not be
included in the collection.[42]

36   Jón Árnason: Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og æfintýri.
37   Summary of a letter (NKS 3010 4to. Guðbrandur Vigfússon to Jón Árnason, 10 April 1859). The
      letters in question are digitised, and some have been transcribed on: Handrit.is, URL: https://
      handrit.is; Einkaskjol.is, URL: https://einkaskjol.is; Bréfasafn Jóns Árnasonar, URL: https://www.
      jonarnason.is/brefasafn/ (last accessed 1 March 2021) and partially printed in Jón Árnason: Úr
      fórum Jóns Árnasonar.
38   Jón Helgason 1928, pp. 24, 32, 52, and 57f.
39   Bodl. GV Icelandic d. 1. Jón Árnason to Guðbrandur Vigfússon, 19 June 1859.
40   Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1859.
41   NKS 3010 4to. Guðbrandur Vigfússon to Jón Árnason, 14 July 1859.
42   Summary of letters: Lbs 2655 8vo. Jón Árnason to Guðbrandur Vigfússon, 17 September 1859;
      NKS 3010 4to. Guðbrandur Vigfússon to Jón Árnason, 17 October 1859; Lbs 1056 4to. Jón Árnason
      to Guðbrandur Vigfússon, 15 November 1859.

6. Halldór Jakobsson as the Author of the Reworked *Ármanns saga*

As early as summer 1859, Guðbrandur Vigfússon, in his critique of the reprint of *Ármanns saga*, advocated the necessity of studying these later texts to protect unaware scholars against this *saga* 'forgery'.[43] Konrad Maurer would follow Guðbrandur's appeal some years later and write a paper about 'Icelandic Apocrypha'.[44] In it, he described his experience with Jón Árnason, reporting on the difficulties of how to treat the wide range of material submitted during the preparation of Jón's collection. Maurer observed that Icelanders would not simply collect and copy their texts but act as 'writers' ("Schriftsteller") themselves. According to Maurer, this practice was pushed to an extreme when the subject matter in question stemmed from the writer's imagination, confronting the collectors with multiple problems in dealing with this kind of material: "von solchen Männern wird dann aber die Grenze zwischen der eigenen Production und der schlichten Mittheilung der überkommenen Überlieferungen zumeist nicht mit der wünschenswerthen Schärfe festgehalten."[45] ('People like that do not distinguish between their own productions and the unadorned reproduction of the traditional material as sharply as might be desired.') Based on a manuscript culture of *mouvance* and variance and a written language that had not changed a lot in the past centuries, Maurer concluded that Icelandic literature was prone to forgery and promoted studying neglected texts to identify those that were literary 'changelings' ("Wechselbälge").[46] Within the scope of his article, Maurer attempted to carry out his own proposition by discussing contemporary texts, including *Ármanns saga.* He mostly repeated arguments Guðbrandur had published in his review nine years earlier, however augmenting them. Both agreed that it was probably Halldór Jakobsson (the uncle of Jón Espólín[47]) who had written the printed *Ármanns saga*, something they claimed to have heard in 1859.[48] To support their speculation, Maurer called attention to the fact that Halldór had connections to the printing press in Hrappsey in the 1780s[49] and that he wrote another *saga* 'in the old *saga* style' ("im alten Sagenstile"), which was printed in Leirá in 1804 (*Sagan af Gaungu-Hrólfi sem inntók Nordmandiid*).[50] The latter place was where the Icelandic printing press from Hrappsey had been moved to in 1795, initiated by *Hið íslenska Landsuppfræðingarfélagið* ('the Icelandic Society of the Education of the Nation') under the

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43   Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1859, pp. 135f.
44   Maurer 1868.
45   Maurer 1868, p. 59.
46   Maurer 1868, pp. 59–61.
47   Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–1952.
48   Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1859, p. 133; Maurer 1868, p. 63.
49   Halldór Jakobsson: Chronologiæ tentamen eður tímatalsregisturságrip.
50   Halldór Jakobsson: Sagan af Gaungu-Hrólfi sem inntók Nordmandiid.

direction of Magnús Stephensen (to whom *Sagan af Gaungu-Hrólfi sem inntók Nordman-diid* is dedicated).[51] Moreover, it appears that the same printer, a Swede by the name of Magnús Moberg, was responsible for the first print of *Ármanns saga*[52] and *Sagan af Gaungu-Hrólfi sem inntók Nordmandiid.* All of this evidence taken together would support Maurer's and Guðbrandur's speculations, had there not been Halldór Jakobsson's preface in his *saga* collection of 1789.[53]

Maurer's and Guðbrandur's argumentation falls flat when the *saga* collection's preface ("formáli") and the introduction ("Lesendum heilsan!") of *Sagan af Gaungu-Hrólfi sem inntók Nordmandiid* are discussed together.[54] In the collection's preface, written around seven years after the publication of *Ármanns saga*, Halldór discussed *sagas* in terms of their reliability, differentiating between three types: 1) *sagas* that are made up exclusively for amusement (e.g. *Ármanns saga* or *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*), 2) *sagas* that contain some true stories but conflate them with fairy tales and folk tales, making it impossible to tell which is which (e.g. *Örvar-Odds saga* or *Þiðreks saga af Bern*), 3) *sagas* that are closest to reliable history (e.g. *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, *Njáls saga* or Snorri Sturlu-son's *chronicles*[55]).[56] Maurer possessed this particular *saga* collection and also mentioned Halldór's preface in his paper. There, however, Maurer discounted its value in support of his argument that Halldór was the author of *Ármanns saga*, speculating that Halldór listed *Ármanns saga* under the fictional narratives in the first group of *sagas* because he probably meant either the older one by Jón Þorláksson or – and this idea is not really convincing – the reworked one, wittily keeping his own authorship a secret.[57]

If, however, the introduction of *Sagan af Göngu-Hrólfi sem inntók Norðmandíið* is taken into consideration, one might wonder whether Halldór actually had it in mind to compose a text like the printed *Ármanns saga* and publish it without a title page or an introduction. In the introduction of *Sagan af Gaungu-Hrólfi sem inntók Nordmandiid*, Halldór explains that he has seen Göngu-Hrólfur (Rollo) mentioned in other stories but never read an entire story about him, neither in Icelandic nor in any other language. For this very reason, Halldór decided to compose a *saga* about him, based on historical

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51 Jón Helgason 1928, p. 23; also, Stephensen 1808, p. 200.

52 Jón Helgason 1928, p. 24.

53 MS Icelandic 32 4to. Skemtilegur fraasagna fiesiódur af mørgum merkilegum fornkongum her-togum jørlum og høfdingium [...], compilation of sagas, including an introduction by Halldór Jakobsson, 1789.

54 There is also an introduction ("Til Lesarans") in Halldór Jakobsson: Chronologiæ Tentamen edur Tima-Tals Registurs Agrip fraa Upphafe allra skapadra hluta til vorra Daga.

55 Halldór Jakobsson probably refers here to the text usually referred to as *Heimskringla.* For a discus-sion of the Icelandic historiographer Snorri Sturluson as its possible author, see in particular the article by Lena Rohrbach in this volume, p. 141–173.

56 Edited text in Hughes 2016, pp. 28–31.

57 Maurer 1868, pp. 71f.

sources which he recorded in his introduction (e.g. *Ólafs Saga Tryggvasonar*, *Landnáma-bók*).[58] It is apparent that Halldór attempted to write a *saga*, both in the sense of 'story' and 'history', that would live up to the proposition he had implicitly conceptualised in the preface to his *saga* collection fifteen years earlier: this *saga* was supposed to be as close to reliable history as possible. Considering these reflections, the notion that Halldór should have written and published *Ármanns saga*, which blends narratives about Icelandic history with folk tales, appears as a little odd.[59]

Another reason why the theory of Halldór Jakobsson as the author of *Ármanns saga* ought to be reconsidered is the fact that Magnús Stephensen, who was acquainted with Halldór, did not mention him as the author of *Ármanns saga* in *Island i det attende aarhundrede, historisk-politisk skildret* (1808).[60] Magnús on the one hand knew of Halldór Jakobsson's publication printed in Hrappsey, *Chronologiæ Tentamen edur Tima-Tals Registurs Agrip fraa Upphafe allra skapadra hluta til vorra Daga* (1781),[61] on the other hand he mentions that *Ármanns saga* was printed the same year as *Sagan af Egle Skallagrims Syne* (1782) in Hrappsey.[62] If Magnús had known about Halldór's authorship, it might be expected that he would have mentioned him.

As for Konrad Maurer, to return to him once more, he wrongly assumed *Sagan af Gaungu-Hrólfi sem inntók Nordmandiid* to have been printed in Copenhagen, whereas it was actually printed in Leirá. Furthermore, he mentions that Halldór became *sýslumaður*, a 'magistrate' of the 'district' of the Vestmannaeyjar in 1757.[63] It is indeed correct that Halldór was offered Vestmannaeyjasýsla but he never took it up and was instead appointed magistrate of Strandasýsla the year after.[64] Since the title page of *Sagan af Gaungu-Hrólfi sem inntók Nordmandiid* gives the correct publishing place and mentions Strandasýsla, it is doubtful that Maurer had the print in front of him while preparing his essay *Über isländische Apokrypha*. Perhaps Maurer entirely forgot about the preface – because if he had remembered it, he might have come to a different conclusion regarding the authorship of the *Ármanns saga* printed in Hrappsey. Even though on closer inspection, Konrad Maurer's and Guðbrandur Vigfússon's attribution of *Ármanns saga* to Halldór Jakobsson is based on questionable evidence, the (unverified) consensus since the early 20th century at the latest has been that it was Halldór Jakobsson who wrote *Ármanns saga*.[65]

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58   Halldór Jakobsson: Sagan af Gaungu-Hrólfi sem inntók Nordmandiid, p. [6].
59   Hughes 2016, p. 29.
60   Stephensen 1808 (originally published in Icelandic: Stephensen 1806).
61   Stephensen 1808, p. 208.
62   Stephensen 1806, p. 511; Stephensen 1808, pp. 169 and 199.
63   Maurer 1868, p. 71.
64   Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–1952, vol. 2, p. 258.
65   E.g. Guðni Jónsson 1947, vol. 12, p. XIII; Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–1952, vol. 2, p. 258; Simek / Hermann Pálsson 2007, p. 18; Hughes 2016, p. 8.

7. Transmission and Transformation of the Hrappsey Print

Guðbrandur Vigfússon's and Konrad Maurer's attribution did, however, not spread immediately: around 1890, amateur historian and scribe Sighvatur Grímsson Borgfirðingur copied various texts for a multi-volume compilation entitled *Íslendinga Sögur.* Many of his copies, including the reworked *Ármanns saga*, are accompanied by a preface or postscript,[66] in which he comments on the copied exemplar and the respective *saga* type. Of *Ármanns saga*, Sighvatur records that he copied the Hrappsey print but also referred to the reprint from Akureyri. Afterwards, he draws attention to the names of places and persons mentioned in the text in order to discuss the credibility of the *saga.* According to *Ármanns saga*, Ármann meets both Ingólfur Árnason (around 874) and Eiríkur Blóðöx (around 930) and was present at Iceland's Christianisation (around 1000), which would imply that Ármann was at least 126 years old at the end of the story.[67] Sighvatur concludes from these calculations that

> [m]ennirnir hafa án efa verið til, en sögu ritarinn, sem hefir verið mörgum öldum síðar[,] hefir farið eptir munnmælum, sem þá hafa verið búnar að fá þjóðsögu blæ miðaldanna[,] sem allur var hneigður að landvættum og afreksverkum hinnar horfnu frægðar aldar.[68]

> these people existed without any doubt but the *saga* writer who lived many centuries later relied on oral tradition which by then had already obtained the characteristics of a medieval folk tale, with a great predilection for *landvættir* ('land spirits') and heroic deeds of the vanished glory of the past.

Sighvatur was probably not aware of the research into *Ármanns saga* conducted by Guðbrandur and Maurer, nor did he share their interest in the question of authorship but was mostly concerned with the question of its verisimilitude.

Over the past few centuries, the reworked *Ármanns saga* has not only drawn the interest of scholars but also that of poets: at least five *rímur* cycles were based on the new prose narrative, illustrating its popularity in the 19th century.[69] One of them was composed in 1816 by Magnús Jónsson í Magnússkógum and is preserved in at least nine copies, one of which is an autograph.[70] Magnús, who is known to have used prints as a basis for his *rímur*, usually aimed at adopting the entire prose narrative.[71] Accordingly, the whole plot of *Ármanns saga* is turned into twelve *rímur* without omitting a chapter.

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66 See also Driscoll 2013, pp. 57f. about Magnús Jónsson í Tjaldanesi.
67 Lbs 2330 4to. Íslendinga Sögur, II. Bindi, 1886–1891, fol. 95r–v.
68 Lbs 2330 4to. Íslendinga Sögur, II. Bindi, 1886–1891, fol. 95v.
69 Finnur Sigmundsson 1966, vol. 1, pp. 38–41.
70 Finnur Sigmundsson 1966, vol. 1, p. 38.
71 Eva María Jónsdóttir 2015, pp. 110f.

Jón Oddsson Hjaltalín,[72] however, proceeded differently in his *rímur*, even though he probably used the same print as Magnús:[73] in his *rímur* cycle *Ármannshróður* of 1818, which is preserved in one autograph,[74] he transformed only the eponymous part of *Ármanns saga* and its appendix into seven *rímur* and excluded the last five chapters about Þorsteinn and his trials, contending in the seventh *ríma* that the tale of Þorsteinn was untruthful and had never happened like this.[75] Jón Hjaltalín's approach confirms the existence of a general sense of insecurity about how this *saga* should be read: as historical source or fictional literature. But not only *rímur* were based on the then still new prose narrative; the tale also found its way into a larger and more complex prose text: Eiríkur Laxdal's *Ólandssaga*.

8. Eiríkur Laxdal. One of Iceland's First Fiction Writers?

Eiríkur Laxdal Eiríksson, a contemporary of Jón Oddsson Hjaltalín and Magnús Jónsson í Magnússkógum, is known to be the author of two prose texts: *Ólandssaga* and *Ólafs saga Þórhallasonar*. The latter, which is considered by scholars to be quite enjoyable[76] and seamless,[77] was eventually edited in 1987.[78] *Ólandssaga*, on the other hand, is seen as verbose, fragmented, and pompously moralising.[79] Consequently, it was not made available in print before 2006 and has largely been overlooked in the past decades.[80]

Both texts have played an important part in the literary history of 19th-century Iceland. Both were first read as folk tale collections, and *Ólafs saga Þórhallasonar* in particular has caught the attention of 20th-century scholars of literary studies for being an early (proto-)novel in Iceland, even though scholarship has been limited to readings in a historiographical and folkloristic context.[81] With the exception of Lena

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72   See in particular Driscoll 1997 and his edition of Jón Hjaltalín: Fjórar sögur frá hendi Jóns Oddssonar Hjaltalín (Jón Hjaltalín: Fjórar sögur frá hendi Jóns Oddssonar Hjaltalín).

73   Jón Hjaltalín's wife was probably in possession of the Hrappsey print (Driscoll 1997, pp. 88–90).

74   Finnur Sigmundsson 1966, vol. 1, p. 39.

75   Lbs 248 8vo. Jón Hjaltalín: Rímur eftir Jón pr. Hjaltalín skrifaðar Árið 1826, 1826, fol. 131r: "Enn það sem umm Þorstein tér / þetta sögu letur / syálfsögd lýgi sýnist mér / sem eý stadist gétur." (*ríma* VII, 6, 'And what is said about Þorsteinn in this story looks like fiction [a lie] to me, which cannot be true.')

76   Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1940, p. 107; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 2003, p. 128.

77   Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2006, p. 248.

78   Eiríkur Laxdal: Saga Ólafs Þórhallasonar.

79   Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1940, p. 104; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 2003, p. 123.

80   Eiríkur Laxdal: Ólandssaga.

81   E.g. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1940; Steingrímur J. Þorsteinsson 1943; Stefán Einarsson 1948; Þorsteinn Antonsson 2006; Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2006.

Rohrbach,[82] only few have made an effort to study the specific literary devices used in both *sagas*, although such an approach allows for new insights into Iceland's literary production of prose narratives over the last few centuries. The same is true for its conception of authorship: the history of the transmission and early reception of Eiríkur Laxdal's *Ólandssaga* has been outlined,[83] but its implications for Icelandic literary culture have so far been ignored and will therefore be studied in the remaining paragraphs of this essay.

9. Adapting *Ármanns saga* for *Ólandssaga*

Ólandssaga, of which no autograph has survived, is preserved in one late and fragmented copy (Lbs 554 4to) from the first half of the 19th century. It has been speculated that Eiríkur Laxdal must have started writing the *saga* in the 1770s because he composed two *rímur* cycles – *Rímur af Hermóði og Hlaðvöru* and *Rímur af Ingibjörgu alvænu* – in 1777 and 1778, which can be found in *Ólandssaga* as prose narratives and are assumed to have derived from it.[84] Einar Ólafur Sveinsson has speculated that, for his *rímur* cycles, Eiríkur Laxdal may have reworked a now lost exemplar of *Ólandssaga* which was different than the version that is extant in the fragmental copy, as this would account for some of the differences between the *rímur* and *Ólandssaga*. For example, in *Rímur af Hermóði og Hlaðvöru*, Hermóður's father is Hárekur jarl á Skáney and Hlaðvör's parents are Hringur á Borgundarhólmi and Dagmær, whereas in "Hermóðsþáttur" in *Ólandssaga*, Hermóður's father is Þorsteinn Hreiðarsson and Hlaðvör's parents are Hálfdán and Svanhvít. The *rímur* were probably altered in *Ólandssaga* to genealogically link "Hermóðsþáttur" with "Langfeðgaþáttur", in which the narrative about Ármann and Þorsteinn gáli is reworked: in *Ólandssaga*, Hermóður's father Þorsteinn Hreiðarsson is Þorsteinn gáli and Hlaðvör's father Hálfdán is Ármann / Ármaður (his identity is revealed in chapter 60). Einar Ólafur might have been correct in assuming that there was an older *Ólandssaga* on which the *rímur* were originally based. However, in this former version the different *þættir* were clearly not connected yet; maybe Eiríkur Laxdal's "Langfeðgaþáttur" about Ármann and Þorsteinn did not even exist at that point.

As early as 1940, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson pointed out that chapters 35 to 47 in *Ólandssaga*, the above-mentioned "Langfeðgaþáttur", were based on tales about Ármann and

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82 Most recently: Rohrbach 2019a; Rohrbach 2019b. Additionally, the SNF-funded research project 'Romanhaftwerden' at the University of Zurich currently studies 18th- and 19th-century Icelandic sagas by Eiríkur Laxdal and his contemporaries: https://www.uzh.ch/cmsssl/ds/de/projekte/romanhaftwerden.html (last accessed 1 March 2021).

83 Þorsteinn Antonsson 2006, pp. 7–18.

84 Steingrímur J. Þorsteinsson 1943, pp. 186f.; Þorsteinn Antonsson 2006, p. 8; Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2006, p. 247.

Þorsteinn.[85] A few years later, Jón Helgason offered an overview of changes made in *Ólandssaga* in comparison with Jón *lærði*'s *Ármanns rímur*. In this overview, Jón explained the differences between both texts by theorising that Eiríkur Laxdal likely did not have the *rímur* in front of him and consequently overlooked the fact that some motifs and themes probably went back to the 18th-century reworking of *Ármanns rímur*, in addition to which Eiríkur Laxdal's took rather a liberal approach to incorporating the narratives.[86] The existence of the character King Kálfur in *Ólandssaga* demonstrates Eiríkur Laxdal's knowledge of the older material, whereas the killing of Þorsteinn's brothers instead of the slaves and the conflict with Þorsteinn's father point to the printed one. Eiríkur Laxdal was probably familiar with how the material had been transmitted, and intentionally reworked both strands for his own narrative. This suggests that the "Langfeðgaþáttur" was written in the 1780s at the earliest, after the publication of the Hrappsey text.

Aside from changing character names to link different pieces of already existing material, Eiríkur Laxdal deliberately restructured the borrowed narratives, equipped the characters with background stories, and motivated their actions. For example, the character King Kálfur, who is only a minor character in Jón *lærði*'s *Ármanns rímur*, gains significantly in importance in *Ólandssaga*. The episode of Kálfur originally served as a link between two separate parts in the narrative and above all motivated Þorsteinn to travel from Iceland to Bjarmaland.[87] In the Hrappsey print, Kálfur is not even mentioned. In *Ólandssaga*, however, "Langfeðgaþáttur" opens with a chapter about 'King Kálfur and his solemn oath' ("Kalfi kóngi og hans heitstrenging"): there, it is said that Kálfur loses his gold panel – in the original tale this happens to his half-sister. In the following chapters, Þorsteinn returns his father's flock (chs. 36–41) before the episode of Kálfur is eventually taken up again when both meet and Þorsteinn manages to find Kálfur's gold panel (chs. 42–44). Afterwards, Kálfur sends Þorsteinn to his half-sister Hvít where he must overcome further obstacles to rescue her and her daughter Ingibjörg (chs. 45–47). In Jón *lærði*'s *Ármanns rímur*, this appears to be a sadistic move by Kálfur to grant Hvít the joy of testing Þorsteinn. In *Ólandssaga*, Kálfur's intention to send Þorsteinn forth seems to stem from his belief that Þorsteinn is capable of rescuing his sister and niece: "[F]rami þinn mun lítill verða ef þú leggur þig í kyrrsetu far því og finn Hvít systur mína og vit hvörnin samfundir ykkar verða sé ég þér er lagið framar öðrum mönnum að vinna þér fyrirlagðar þrautir mun og svo fara um

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85   Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1929, p. LXXIV; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1940, pp. 104–106; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 2003, pp. 124–127; see also Guðni Jónsson 1947, vol. 12, p. XIII, possibly informed by Einar Ólafur.

86   Jón Helgason 1948, pp. XXXI f.

87   First, Þorsteinn finds his father's sheep. Then, Þorsteinn is sold to Kálfur. Afterwards, Kálfur sends Þorsteinn to his half-sister via Grámann, and there, Þorsteinn wins a wife.

ferð þessa[.]"⁸⁸ ('Your advancement will be little if you take a break. Therefore, go and find Hvít, my sister, and see how your encounters will go. I see that you are better than other men at overcoming the tests that are given to you. You will then go on this journey.') What is only hinted at in Kálfur's command becomes evident in the following *þáttur* of Jarðþrúður and Hvít, when the reader learns that Hvít and her daughter Ingibjörg have been enchanted by a man named Kári who has also turned Hvít's and Kálfur's brother Hálfdán into Ármann / Ármaður (ch. 60). Kálfur sending Þorsteinn to Hvít is more than just a link between two episodes; it has an internal motivation: he wants for his family to be free.

Eiríkur Laxdal's liberal handling of the existing material, even though not uncommon in Early Modern Iceland, eventually resulted in confusion among 19ᵗʰ-century scholars: how was *Ólandssaga* to be read and which part had Eiríkur Laxdal played in its composition; was he an author, collector, or impostor? This controversy sheds light on the question of the conception of authorship regarding prose narratives.

10. Writing or Fabricating Stories in *Ólandssaga*

Contemporary reference books and the way in which they tend to attribute texts to individuals provide valuable insights into conceptions of the relationship between a text and an individual. *Nokkura Skálda oc Rithøfunda eður Fræðimanna Tal á Íslandi* is such a reference book of Icelandic literature. Compiled by Einar Bjarnason in the early 19ᵗʰ century, it is equipped with two indices of 'ancient' ("forn") and contemporary poets and several indices of different types of *sagas*. Out of these, the index with the rather nondescript heading "ímislegar sögr flestar mér ókendar" ('various sagas, most of them unknown to me') might be the most promising in regard to the question of authorship: Einar here catalogued highly diverse titles, including *Sagan af Esopo*, *Sagan af Ulises*, *Sagan af Zadig*, *Sagan af Ivent*, *Sagan af Loðinbirni Parmes*, and also *Sagan af Ólandi*, without, however, mentioning Voltaire, Eiríkur Laxdal, or any other author (except for *Sagan af Skanderbeg*, which Einar explicitly points out as not having been written by Holberg).⁸⁹

The individuals behind the texts were obviously of little importance for Einar's purposes, and it appears as though these indices were primarily intended to give an overview of all the texts that Einar knew or had heard of, arranged according to genre and in

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88 Eiríkur Laxdal: Ólandssaga, p. 145. Punctuation and capitalisation according to Lbs 554 4to. Eiríkur Laxdal: Ólandssaga, [ca. 1820?], fol. 45v.

89 AM 1055 4to. Einar Bjarnason: Nokkura Skálda oc Rithøfunda eður Fræðimanna Tal á Íslandi, 1838, pp. 40–44. Oddly enough, Eiríkur Laxdal's other text *Ólafs saga Þórhallasonar* is entirely missing in this list, even though Einar Bjarnason eventually attributes both texts to Eiríkur Laxdal.

alphabetical order. The relationship between individual and text only gains significance when it comes to the portrayal of the poets and authors: texts make individuals memorable. In the section devoted to the person "Eyrikr Laxdal sonr Eyriks", a list of Eiríkur Laxdal's poetical and prose texts is given and *Ólandssaga* and *Ólafs saga Þorhallasonar* are eventually attributed to him. Einar writes about the former that it was 'long and completely made up' by Eiríkur Laxdal ("laung óll diktuð af hónum"); the latter was, in his opinion, 'alike, a large work' ("eins, mikið verk") entirely about elves and hidden people.[90] No such remark exists about Eiríkur Laxdal's *rímur*, suggesting that this information was not considered necessary – another reason for this might have been that the term *rímur* describes a poetic genre whereas the term *saga* is rather more ambiguous and can refer to both 'story' and 'history'.

Some decades later, this evaluation would resonate in the *Prestaævir*, in which Sighvatur Grímsson Borgfirðingur[91] expressed a similar opinion of Eiríkur Laxdal's texts: in his handwritten encyclopaedia, which provides biographical information about Icelandic clergymen who had lived in Iceland, Sighvatur noted that Eiríkur Laxdal 'put together' ("setja saman") folk and fairy tales and wrote something called *Ólandssaga*. It is only subsequently that Eiríkur Laxdal is described as a 'poet' ("skáld") who also 'composed' ("yrkja") *rímur*.[92] A few years later, Hannes Þorsteinsson, archivist at the National Archives of Iceland, would repeat and emphasise this evaluation in *Ævir lærðra manna*, another handwritten biographical encyclopaedia, by saying of Eiríkur Laxdal's *Ólafs saga Þórhallasonar* that Eiríkur Laxdal 'composed or rather: fabricated from his own breast this series of Icelandic folk tales' ("Eiríkur samdi eða réttara sagt laug upp frá eigin brjósti þjóðsagnabálki íslenskum; samsetningur"). *Ólandssaga* was considered the same kind of 'composition' ("samsetning") as *Ólafs saga Þórhallasonar*. Like the accounts previously discussed, Eiríkur Laxdal's *rímur* are listed by Hannes but are not judged by the same measure with respect to their composition as his prose narratives.[93]

The fact that all three authors highlight the circumstance that Eiríkur Laxdal 'fabricated', 'put together', and 'wrote' his prose texts but 'poetised' his *rímur* is perfectly in line with what has been said about Icelandic authorship previously: usually, composing *rímur* entailed choosing an existing prose narrative and transforming it into verse, partially or entirely; inventing a story and taking responsibility for the content was rarely something a *rímur* poet was concerned with.

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90   AM 1055 4to. Einar Bjarnason: Nokkura Skálda oc Rithøfunda eður Fræðimanna Tal á Íslandi, 1838, pp. 107f.

91   Davíð Ólafsson 2008; Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon / Davíð Ólafsson 2019.

92   Lbs 2370 II 4to. Sighvatur Grímsson Borgfirðingur: Prestaævir á Íslandi. XIII. Bindi: Húnavatnsprófastsdæmi, 1900–1929, pp. 1732–1735. Curiously, Sighvatur Grímsson Borgfirðingur does not mention *Ólafs saga Þórhallasonar*, suggesting *Ólandssaga* might have been a little better known.

93   ÞÍ KA/1–KA/67. Hannes Þorsteinsson: Ævir lærðra manna, 1912–1934, no pagination.

11. Eiríkur Laxdal as a Failed Folk Tale Collector

Eiríkur Laxdal's *Ólandssaga* also caught the attention of scholars in the field of folklore studies: over the course of 1859, while preparing his collection of Icelandic folk tales, Jón Árnason tried to get hold of *Ólandssaga*, which he knew little about at this time, only that it was a large book about elves written by Eiríkur Laxdal. In the spring of 1859, Jón Árnason initially approached his bibliophile colleagues Jón Borgfirðingur Jónsson and Jóhannes Guðmundsson for more information about *Ólandssaga*.[94] From them, Jón Árnason learned that a copy existed in the possession of the farmer and scribe Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson.[95] This must have seemed like a great opportunity to obtain a collection which possibly recorded folk tales that he could add to his own folk tale collection. Therefore, in the following months, Jón Árnason stayed in touch with Jón Borgfirðingur, who reached out to Þorsteinn. In the meantime, Jón had found out that the priest Ólafur Ólafsson á Hrafsteinsstöðum possessed the autograph and tried to get into contact with him; initially, however, without success.[96] In October of the same year, Jóhannes Guðmundsson informed Jón Árnason that he had met Þorsteinn and learnt that Jón Borgfirðingur had already visited Þorsteinn in summer, taking the copy of *Ólandssaga* with him. Furthermore, Jóhannes also mentioned that he had had the opportunity to take a look into Þorsteinn's manuscripts and confirmed something that Jón Árnason had already heard about Þorsteinn: he did not copy accurately.[97] In autumn, Jón Árnason finally received Þorsteinn's manuscript of *Ólandssaga* from Jón Borgfirðingur but was not satisfied at all with this copy, as a letter to his namesake in November shows: Eiríkur Laxdal, "sem talinn er höfundur hennar af öllum[,] logið óttalega inn í munnmælasögur- nar í henni, spunnið út úr þeim, og ránghermt, og svo er þetta Exemplar mjög svo ráng- skrifað af Þorsteini[.]"[98] (Eiríkur Laxdal 'who is said to be the author of the whole *saga*, lied terribly in oral stories there, spun out of them and twisted them, and in addition, this copy was extremely ill-written by Þorsteinn.') Jón Árnason saw himself faced with two different problems for his enterprise: on the one hand, there was the 'corrupt' copy by Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson, and Eiríkur Laxdal's liberal handling of folk stories on the other, which together obscured the folk material in its 'genuine' form that he was seeking. Jón Árnason consequently expressed doubts to his namesake Borgfirðingur that he could use anything of *Ólandssaga* unless he found someone who could provide

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94   ÍB 98 fol. a. Jón Árnason to Jón Borgfirðingur Jónsson, 20 March 1859.

95   Summary of letters: ÍB 98 fol. a. Jóhannes Guðmundsson to Jón Árnason, 3 May 1859; Bodl. GV German d. 2. Jón Borgfirðingur Jónsson to Jón Árnason, 19 July 1859.

96   Summary of letters: ÍB 98 fol. a. Jón Árnason to Jón Borgfirðingur Jónsson, 26 September 1859; ÍB 98 fol. a. Jón Árnason to Jón Borgfirðingur Jónsson, 10 November 1859.

97   NKS 3010 4to. Jóhannes Guðmundsson to Jón Árnason, 5 October 1859. See also Driscoll 2013, pp. 54f.

98   ÍB 98 fol. a. Jón Árnason to Jón Borgfirðingur Jónsson, 10 November 1859.

him with tales to compare it with.[99] This is indeed reminiscent of Jón Árnason's handling of the *Ármanns saga* material, which he decided not to include in his collection at around the same time. This eventually encouraged Jón to again get into contact with Ólafur Ólafsson, who answered him in early 1860. However, it seems that Jón did not receive the autograph before 1862, shortly after the publication of the first volume of *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri*.[100]

In the end, Jón made no use of *Ólandssaga* in his folk tale collection but still devoted a few words to Eiríkur Laxdal when drafting its preface in the course of 1861.[101] Even though the similarities to *Insel Felsenburg* was brought to his attention twice,[102] Jón stuck to reading Eiríkur Laxdal's texts as one large folk tale compilation that he believed to consist of two parts: *Ólafs saga Þórhallasonar* about elves and *Ólandssaga* about folk tales. Unsurprisingly, Jón came to the conclusion that Eiríkur Laxdal had to be one of Iceland's most recent collectors of folk tales. However, Jón attributed the 'inaccuracy' of the recorded folk tales in *Ólandssaga* to Eiríkur Laxdal being a clever but eccentric poet, drawing a causal connection between his character and the structure of *Ólandssaga*: Eiríkur Laxdal's decision to combine folk tales to form a larger *saga* made it impossible to distinguish between elements he had composed himself and those that he had borrowed, an approach diametrically opposed to the one chosen by Jón Árnason for his own folk tale collection.[103] This specific reading of Eiríkur Laxdal's texts suggests that Jón did not view Eiríkur Laxdal as an author like, for example, his contemporary Jón Thoroddsen, who wrote Iceland's 'first' novel,[104] but (to exaggerate the point slightly) as a failed collector whose personality intervenes with the successful undertaking of preparing a collection. There is no hint that he might have seen Eiríkur Laxdal's texts as a literary composition.

12. Recent Research and Conclusion

This assessment is echoed in Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's studies of the 1930s and 1940s, where Eiríkur Laxdal is listed as one of the main sources for Icelandic folk stories in the

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99   ÍB 98 fol. a. Jón Árnason to Jón Borgfirðingur Jónsson, 10 November 1859.
100 Þorsteinn Antonsson 2006, pp. 17f.
101 In the first edition of the collection (Guðbrandur Vigfússon / [Jón Árnason] 1862–1864, p. XXIV), the paragraph on Eiríkur Laxdal was included in the main text although intended by Jón Árnason as a footnote (Lbs 528 4to. Jón Árnason: Íslenzkar Þjóðsögur og Ævintýri, 1850–1865, fol. 9v, 13v). This was duly amended in the second and third editions.
102 Summary of letters: ÍB 98 fol. a. Jóhannes Guðmundsson to Jón Árnason, 3 May 1859; NKS 3010 4to. Jón Borgfirðingur Jónsson to Jón Árnason, 6 May 1859. *Insel Felsenburg* had been translated into Icelandic and published a few years before (Schnabel: Felsenborgarsögur).
103 Magnús Grímsson / Jón Árnason 1852, pp. III–VI.
104 Jón Thoroddsen: Piltur og Stúlka.

18th century alongside Árni Magnússon and Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík.[105] Whereas Árni Magnússon is praised for having collected thoroughly, accurately, and without introducing any changes, Eiríkur Laxdal is characterised as having done the exact opposite.[106] Consequently, Einar Ólafur decided against incorporating the folk tales of *Ólandssaga* in his *Verzeichnis isländischer Märchenvarianten* but provided an overview of the borrowed tales in his two publications on Icelandic folk tales.[107] It becomes apparent there that Einar Ólafur's view on Eiríkur Laxdal and *Ólandssaga* differed slightly from Jón Árnason's. Einar Ólafur read *Ólandssaga* not so much as a failed collection but as a literary text based on folk tales constructed by the individual Eiríkur Laxdal, and held Eiríkur Laxdal's 'uninhibited' lifestyle accountable for scenes that he found immoral.[108]

With the exception of Guðni Jónsson and Jón Helgason, who, possibly informed by Einar Ólafur, have mentioned *Ólandssaga* in connection with the *Ármanns sögur* and *Ármanns rímur*,[109] there has not been any further investigation into the 'folk narratives' used by Eiríkur Laxdal.[110] Instead, in the 1940s and 1950s, literary historians Steingrímur J. Þorsteinsson and Stefán Einarsson stated that Eiríkur Laxdal wrote Iceland's first novels, even though they admitted that especially *Ólandssaga* had, as I have shown, the greatest impact on folklore studies and scarcely any on Icelandic novel writing.[111] This idea was picked up again in the late 1980s and gained especial significance for the first text edition of *Ólandssaga* in 2003, primarily as legitimation for the text's publication. Although Eiríkur Laxdal's biography is always mentioned in more recent literary histories, *Ólandssaga* – if discussed at all – is mainly read as a literary product of the Age of Enlightenment.[112]

The material about Ármann and Þorsteinn on the one hand and Eiríkur Laxdal's *Ólandssaga* on the other plainly exemplifies how concepts of authorship were implicitly reflected in scholarly debates on the nature of these texts. The question whether they were authentic or fake automatically led to a greater attention for the author who was regarded as 'blatant forger' or 'eccentric poet' in contrast to the 'honest scribe' or 'reliable collector'. Especially in cases where the text in question was based on an already existing narrative, this resulted in puzzlement of how to treat the material in terms of including it in or, as Jón Árnason had done it for both *Ármanns saga* and *Ólandssaga*,

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105 Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1940, p. 99; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 2003, p. 118.

106 Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1929, p. LXXII.

107 Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1929, p. LXXIV; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1940, pp. 104f.; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 2003, pp. 124–127.

108 Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1929, p. LXXIII; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1940, p. 104; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 2003, p. 124.

109 Guðni Jónsson 1947, vol. 12, p. XIII; Jón Helgason 1948, p. XXXI.

110 For *Ólafs saga Þórhallasonar* see María Anna Þorsteinsdóttir 1996.

111 Stefán Einarsson 1957, p. 213; Stefán Einarsson 1961, p. 196.

112 Þorsteinn Antonsson 2006, p. 10; Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2006, p. 248.

omitting it from research. Interestingly, these debates mostly concern prose texts and rarely ever poetic texts, suggesting that there was a different conception of authorship – with *sagas* belonging to the realm of 'histoire' (inventing a story) and *rímur* to that of 'discours' (versifying it). Studying these mostly neglected texts in greater depth would allow for more insights into the text production of 18th- and 19th-century Iceland and generate a better understanding of how this literature is to be contextualised.

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Margrét Eggertsdóttir

The Best-Written Saga and the Absence of its Author

Abstract

Identifying the anonymous authors of the Icelandic family sagas has been a popular preoccupation and a never-ending task, not least in modern scholarship. As has often been pointed out, any information about the author of a work will most likely have direct influence on how its readers interpret and understand it. Some scholars believe that the sagas were created by individual authors, whereas others read the sagas as written accounts based on an oral tradition. Yet when did the quest for the author begin, and why was it important? This chapter takes its point of departure in Árni Magnússon's (1663–1730) notes on the sagas. Árni was not only a famous manuscript collector and scholar but may also be seen as the first author of a literary history of Iceland; in his notes he discusses the characteristics of the author of *Njáls saga* and of other medieval authors, both known and unknown. The present chapter is an attempt to throw light on early-modern Icelandic ideas of saga authors and other medieval authors, mainly as they are presented in the first purposeful attempts at writing a literary history of Iceland – that is, Jón Ólafsson's (1705–1779) *Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu*, recently edited by Guðrún Ingólfsdóttir and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir; the literary history by Jón Þorkelsson (1697–1759) entitled *Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ* (forthcoming in a new edition); the account of Icelandic writers and poets by Páll Vídalín (1667–1727); and a literary history by Hálfdan Einarsson, *Sciagraphia historiæ literariæ Islandicæ*, published in Copenhagen in 1777. These histories show different emphases in their approaches, but it seems that the need to find and identify authors of the sagas was felt most urgently by Icelandic scholars who found it necessary for the reputation of Icelandic literary history to have 'real' authors, comparable to the classical *scriptores*.

Keywords

Early Modern Literary Criticism, 18th-Century Icelandic Literary History, *Njáls saga*, Authorship, Reception

1. The Anonymous Author of *Njáls saga*

The genre of *Íslendingasögur* (the sagas of Icelanders, or the Icelandic family sagas) was recorded mostly in the 13th and 14th centuries. The authors, or perhaps rather recorders, of these sagas are largely unknown. The longest one is *Njáls saga*, which describes events between 960 and 1020; it is usually considered to be the most highly developed of the sagas of Icelanders, even the peak of the saga tradition. As with other sagas of

Icelanders, *Njáls saga* is anonymous.[1] There are, however, many theories about the saga's authorship. In view of the fact that writing and book production was closely connected to the church, it has, for instance, been discussed as to whether the author of the saga was a man of the church – or not: considering how important sexual themes and sexual relationships are in the saga, it may seem a far-fetched idea that the author was a priest or a monk. Recently, though, it has been suggested that if this were the case, it could explain how certain events are described in the saga.[2] During the first half of the 20th century, there was, in fact, no topic relating to *Njáls saga* more popular with Icelandic saga scholars and readers than that of the author's unknown identity.[3] At that time, the traditional view that the saga – like other family sagas – should be read as a reliable narrative from an oral tradition was being opposed by the idea that the saga had been created by an individual author. There were then two principal, opposite theories on the origin of the Icelandic family sagas, known respectively as Book Prose Theory and Free Prose Theory, the former usually called 'the Icelandic school'.[4] The main disagreement between them was the extent to which the sagas reflect a literate or an oral culture. It has been pointed out that the ideas of the Icelandic school were, in many ways, a logical step in the development of Icelandic nationalism in the 20th century.[5] As part of the campaign, "the fame of fighters and strong men of the saga-age" should be "mended by new heroes [...]: the saga authors".[6]

Yet was this an entirely new idea? The importance of the idea of the professional author is often linked to the 18th and 19th centuries, even though it has been shown that the literary function of the author existed in the Middle Ages as well.[7] In the 18th century, the first literary treatises on Icelandic literature emerge; the authors of these treatises were in many cases obviously in a difficult situation between the work and the anonymous author. It seems that the authorship of *Njáls saga* was also a topic of interest to the manuscript collector Árni Magnússon (1663–1730). In this chapter I will

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1   See Clover 1985, p. 245; Gísli Sigurðsson 2004, pp. 17–21.
2   See Pétur Gunnarsson 2014, p. 47. The author suggests that the grotesque description of sexual problems in the marriage between Hrútur and Unnur in the beginning of the saga might be explained by its having in fact been written by a monk.
3   See Jón Karl Helgason 1999, p. 150.
4   On the research history of the sagas generally, see Clover 1985; on the term 'Icelandic school', see pp. 241–243.
5   See Jón Karl Helgason 1999, p. 148: "[Sigurður] Nordal's emphasis on the family sagas as works of thirteenth-century *Icelandic* authors rather than products of an oral tradition, can be seen as a response to the claims of some Danes, Norwegians and Swedes, who approached this literature as part of a common Scandinavian cultural heritage."
6   Sigurður Nordal 1940. Ástráður Eysteinsson has even claimed that many Icelanders experienced the lack of author-figures for the Icelandic family sagas as a tragedy; see Ástráður Eysteinsson 1990, p. 171, cf. Jón Karl Helgason 1999, p. 149.
7   See Foucault 1977, pp. 113–138; Chartier 2000; Griffin 1999.

discuss the ideas not only Árni, but also his contemporaries, and other learned men of his time, had regarding authors and authorship in medieval Icelandic literature.

2. The Background

Renaissance humanism made its way from Continental Europe and mainland Scandinavia to Iceland in the wake of the Reformation and brought with it renewed interest in the learning of the past. 16th- and 17th-century scholars in Denmark focused their attention on the ancient history of the Nordic countries and began searching for sources and writing about the history of the Nordic peoples. They soon discovered that a wealth of source material had been preserved in Iceland in the form of extraordinarily valuable manuscripts, in some cases preserved at the episcopal centres at Skálholt in the south and Hólar in the north, in other cases in private ownership around the country.

Especially fruitful was their contact with the Icelander Arngrímur Jónsson (1568–1648), known as 'the learned', who, for various reasons, was urged by Danish historians to collect Icelandic sources that shed light on the history of the North. With his works, written in Latin for foreigners, Arngrímur laid the foundation on which all Icelandic studies abroad were to be based for a very long time.[8] In order to gather material of importance for the history of Scandinavia, Arngrímur used many Icelandic vellum manuscripts as sources, among them those containing the Icelandic family sagas. In his earliest work, *Brevis commentarius de Islandia* ('A short account of Iceland', 1593), Arngrímur paraphrases the characterisation of one of *Njáls saga*'s main characters, Njáll Þorgeirsson, and the description of his final hour.[9] In *Crymogæa Libri III* (1609), his use of saga literature is even more substantial; in this work, he gives abstracts of a number of the sagas of Icelanders and other narratives in the form of brief family histories, "with the genealogy and deeds of individual saga characters substituting descriptions of royal lineage and international warfare in histories of other nations".[10] The editor of Arngrímur Jónsson's works, Jakob Benediktsson, states that Arngrímur shared "his countrymen's unshakable conviction of the truthfulness and historical authenticity of the Icelandic sagas".[11] Notably, when foreign writers, such as Adam of Bremen or Saxo, differed from Icelandic sources, Arngrímur believed that the Icelandic sources were right and the foreign ones wrong. Nothing is known about Arngrímur's opinions on the authors of the sagas, that is, who they might have been or whether it was indeed possible to identify them; yet Arngrímur seems to have had great faith in Icelandic writers, even though their names were unknown to him.

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8 See Jakob Benediktsson 1957, pp. 42 and 44.
9 See Jón Karl Helgason 1999, pp. 24f.
10 Jón Karl Helgason 1999, p. 25; cf. Jakob Benediktsson 1957, p. 53.
11 Jakob Benediktsson 1957, p. 52.

3. Writers of the Past

The consequences of Arngrímur Jónsson's works were, among other things, that Old Norse-Icelandic literature, not least the Icelandic family sagas, were brought to the attention of readers outside of Iceland, and not only Scandinavian antiquarians.[12] In the early modern period, the narrative of *Njáls saga* was available outside Iceland primarily through extracts in Latin works, such as *Antiqvitatum Danicarum* by the royal Danish antiquarian Thomas Bartholin and *Orcades sive rerum Orcadensium historiae* by the royal historian Thormod Torfæus (Þormóður Torfason, 1636–1719), who paraphrased various old Icelandic sources in his book, including chapters of *Njáls saga* set in the British Isles. In this way, the saga was slowly "assimilated into the Latin discourse of European historiography".[13] As an example, one can mention the German scholar of poetics Daniel Georg Morhof (1639–1691), who, in his *Unterricht von der Teutschen Sprache und Poesie* (1682), presented a detailed discussion of German language and literature, as well as of the poetry of other countries. *Njáls saga* is not mentioned here specifically, but Old Norse-Icelandic literature is discussed as an important part of world literature; in a chapter on literature in Scandinavia, we thus find a description of Icelandic poetic traditions. Morhof clearly knew Resen's 1665 edition of the *Edda*, Ole Worm's *Literatura runica* (1636 and 1651), and Arngrímur Jónsson's *Crymogæa Libri III*, and he also cites works by the Swedish scholars Olof Rudbeck (1630–1702) and Olof Verelius (1618–1682). Morhof mentions two Icelandic 'authors', the first being Sæmundur Sigfússon, who was known as "fróði" – that is, 'the learned' – and who in 1077 was priest at Oddi in Iceland. According to Morhof, the *Edda* was composed by a second Icelandic author, Snorri Sturluson, a distinguished and intelligent man and the lawspeaker in Iceland in 1222.[14] Here, two famous authors of medieval Icelandic literature are mentioned, but what they are actually supposed to have written is not entirely clear.

4. Anonymous Authors

One of the oldest suggestions about the authorship of *Njáls saga*, attested in the early 17th century, is that Sæmundur fróði Sigfússon (1056–1133), the Icelandic priest and scholar, wrote the work. After studying abroad, Sæmundr founded a school at Oddi in Rangárvallasýsla; the argument for him being the author of the saga is above all his con-

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12   Lukas Rösli (2019, p. 160) has convincingly argued that "Arngrímur Jónsson's emphasis of *Njáls saga* as an exemplary narrative and his underscoring of the character of *Njáll*" had the consequence that the Icelandic scribal community at the beginning of the 17th century began to refer to a certain type of saga as belonging to a genre of *Íslendinga sögur*.

13   Jón Karl Helgason 1999, p. 26.

14   See Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2014, p. 117.

nection to the area where the main events of the saga take place.[15] In his preface to the standard (*Íslenzk fornrit*) edition of *Njáls saga* in 1954, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson discusses the main ideas and theories about the author and says, among other things, that with respect to Finnur Jónsson's theories, one could state that the name of the author was 'Legio', that is, a multitude or many people.[16] Other suggested authors include Sæmundur's sons, Jón Loftsson, Snorri Sturluson, Einar Gilsson, Brandur Jónsson, and Þorvarður Þórarinsson; all are mentioned by Einar Ólafur and discussed rather briefly, some in more detail than others, but all are rejected at last as possible authors. Nevertheless, Einar Ólafur was convinced that the saga was composed by an author, as were many other scholars of his generation. He describes this apparent author as having several characteristics, most of them very positive, such as his being 'a great idealist' with great 'visual talent', his having 'great variety, a big spectrum of seriousness and humour, [which] shows a great spirit'.[17]

5. The Manuscript Collector and his Favourite Saga

It seems that Árni Magnússon (1663–1730) was acquainted with *Njáls saga* from an early age. In his biography, written by Jón Ólafsson from Grunnavík, *Njáls saga* is connected with what the author defines as a premonition of Árni's destiny, literally 'the beginning of his success'.[18] The account describes how Árni, as a young student in Copenhagen, came into contact with the well-known scholar and teacher Thomas Bartholin (1616–1680). In order to test him, when they met for the first time, Bartholin took a random book from the shelf and asked Árni to read aloud from it. The book was *Njáls saga* and Árni read and translated the text, as well as providing a grammatical explanation of each and every word, and in this way managed to impress Bartholin, who right away took him into his service.[19] The collaboration between Bartholin and Árni over the following years was a success.[20] In a letter to Björn Þorleifsson, written in 1694, Árni utters his wish to come into possession of a certain vellum copy of *Njáls saga*,[21] a manuscript that he in the next letter expresses his gratitude for having obtained and which is most likely the manuscript now called *Oddabók*, housed in Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, with the sigla AM 466 4to.

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15   See Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1954, p. CVII.
16   Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1954, p. CVII.
17   "Fjölbreytnin, hið mikla svið alvöru og kímni, sýnir víðfeðman anda"; "Mikill hugsjónamaður", p. CXXX, [með mikla] "sjóngáfu", p. CXXXII.
18   See Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Ævisögur ypparlegra merkismanna, pp. 50f.: "upphaf hans lukku"; cf. Már Jónsson 2012, p. 56.
19   Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Ævisögur ypparlegra merkismanna, p. 50; first printed in Kålund / Finnur Jónsson 1920, p. 13.
20   See Már Jónsson 2012, p. 56.
21   See Kålund / Finnur Jónsson 1920, p. 552.

6. To Fill the World with Useless Books

Árni began collecting manuscripts early on and remained devoted to the task for the rest of his life. He bought Icelandic manuscripts that he discovered abroad and collected Norwegian and Danish manuscripts, as well as printed books. Not long before he died, he was the owner of the most extensive and precious collection of Icelandic manuscripts in the world.[22] What characterised Árni as librarian and archivist was his precision and thoroughness, but he was definitely not a prolific author. According to his assistant Jón Ólafsson, Árni claimed "that it had never been his intention" to publish books, and that "he did not wish to fill the world with useless books, of which there were already enough".[23] Árni's knowledge has come down to us principally through the slips he made and inserted at the front of each and every manuscript in his possession. Yet Árni Magnússon and Þormóður Torfason are usually considered to be the first scholars in the field of studying medieval Icelandic texts.[24] We know that Árni and his contemporaries were interested in the medieval literature of Iceland, but we must often guess at what they considered to be important and how they valued the old texts. In one case, Árni made an index, or a kind of table of contents, for two large and elegant manuscripts, in which he classified individual sagas as belonging to certain genres.[25] In some cases, he also made short extracts of the sagas; the art of making extracts was popular among scholars at that time, and shows that Árni was using common academic methods.[26] It also shows that he was trying to make the texts available and comprehensible to other learned men in Denmark and elsewhere, as he wrote in Danish and used terms like *fabel*, *historie*, *relation* and so on for texts that in Icelandic are simply called 'sagas'. By using terms from the classical tradition, Árni interprets and classifies the texts and makes clear how varied they actually are.[27] Another opportunity to increase our understanding of Árni's attitude towards the old texts is to look more closely at his observations and comments as preserved in the second part of the manuscript NKS 1836 4to, collected and edited by Jón Helgason.[28] Interestingly, Árni here more than once mentions 'the author of *Njáls saga*' as if he was convinced that there was a singular author, and he seems also to have speculated on the character and background of this person.

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22   See Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir 2015.
23   See Bekker-Nielsen / Widding 1972, pp. 37f.; Már Jónsson 2012, pp. 201f.
24   See, for instance, Gísli Sigurðsson 2004, p. 17.
25   The manuscripts in question are a pair of rather impressive collections, GKS 1002 fol. and GKS 1003 fol., a fine gift for a king; see Slay 1960; Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2019.
26   See Zedelmaier 2015.
27   See Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2019, p. 255.
28   See Jón Helgason 1980.

7. The Art of Writing a Literary History

From the 17th and 18th centuries, there are several attempts at writing a literary history of Iceland. These works were often based on one another, and it seems that they all drew on a draft made by Árni Magnússon that was lost in the fire in Copenhagen in 1728.[29] There are two reasons for taking Árni and his views as a point of departure. For one thing, he is probably the 'father' of Icelandic literary-historical writing, in the sense that all later literary histories seem to be based on his notes.[30] For another, his manuscript collection was the prerequisite for such writing, what made it possible to make a survey of Icelandic literature in the first place. In my view, one of Árni's most interesting comments, preserved in NKS 1836 4to, is the following, in which he simultaneously distances himself from his countrymen, and from the alleged authors of the sagas, whom he regards as unreliable:

> Most of our Icelandic sagas were written by men who lacked all knowledge of history and knew nothing about chronology. They tell of things which do not matter at all and increase or amplify the narrative with a lot of words. Apart from things being told very confusingly, much of it is exaggerated and untrue. Icelanders are stupidly promoted. Most of them [the sagas] are written so late that the authors were unable to know anything about the truth value of the events. In Icelandic stories [sagas], Icelanders and their greatness are promoted in a stupid way, as if they were better than all other nations. More than any other author, the author of Njáls saga has been shameless in this respect in many places, and that is one of the arguments for Sæmundur the learned not being the author of Njáls saga, as one would expect more intelligence from him.[31]

One interesting fact is that Árni was collecting information on Icelandic authors. The manuscript AM 434 4to contains an incomplete inventory of medieval authors.[32] Chap-

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29 See Jón Helgason 1926, p. 186.

30 See Guðrún Ingólfsdóttir / Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2018, p. XI.

31 Jón Helgason 1980, pp. 63f.: "134. Flestar af vorum Islendsku sógum eru skrifadar af hominibus historices penitus ignaris et chronologiæ imperitis. eru þar í mesta part scitu indigna, amplificerud med ærnum ordafiólda, item res confusissime tracterader, og margt aukid og ósatt Islendsker stulte eveherader, flestar eru og skrifadar so seint, ad authores kunnu ei vel vita veritatem gestorum. I Islendskum sógum eveherast stulte Islandi, og þeirra meriter, eins og þeir væri óllum Nationibus fremur. framar ódrum hefur Niálssógu Author verid bligdunarlaus þar í, í mórgum stódum, og er þad eitt Argument til ad Sæmundr Fródi se ei hennar Author, því af honum er ad vænta meire greindar". The Latin comments were translated into Icelandic by Helgi Guðmundsson (1997, p. 319, fn. 1). Árni also thought that Icelandic authors were more favourable towards Norwegians than Danes, cf. Jón Helgason 1980, p. 63: "133. Islendsker Sóguskrifarar eru giarnan hlidhallari Nordmónnum enn Dónum, qvippe cognatis suis et amicis, cum qvibus commercia semper habuere." ('Icelandic saga writers tend rather to take the side of the Norwegians than the Danes, not surprisingly, since they are relatives and friends, with whom they have always had trade connections.') All translations are my own, unless stated otherwise.

32 Már Jónsson 2012, p. 209.

ters have been prepared in alphabetical order where a few persons are listed, most often with little or no information, such as the prior Brandur the learned, the monk Gunnlaugur, and Sturla Þórðarson. Interestingly, Ari the learned is not listed anywhere, and the largest part of the manuscript contains empty pages. In the manuscript AM 254 8vo III (fol. 42v), there is a note written by Árni, where he again discusses the authorship of *Njáls saga:*[33]

> I remember having somewhere seen it suggested that Ari the learned was the author of Njáls saga. But that is an absurd suggestion. The author of that saga was an inept writer (he produced some kind of parliamentary protocol)[34] and in many instances he was too long-winded, and apart from that hardly familiar with locations around Skálholt. Ari was an economical writer, concise, and entirely conversant with the area.[35]

Here, Árni Magnússon, apparently without hesitation, rejects the idea that Ari the learned could have written *Njáls saga*, and explicitly states that the author of *Njáls saga* was "ineptus scriptor" – in plain words, an incompetent or simply bad writer – mainly because he was verbose (prolix) and did not know the area around Skálholt too well. By contrast, Ari is framed not only as a 'brief' author, but as *cordatus*, that is, wise and sensible, the opposite to the author of *Njáls saga*.

Another comment from Árni on the author of *Njáls saga* is also connected to the setting of the saga:

> Rev Jón Halldórsson thinks that Njáls saga was written in Árnessýsla [a large county in south-western Iceland], more precisely down on the 'Skeið', it says there. Also: riding east over the rivers and many other similar things. This says nothing. Indeed, the author of Njála was not familiar with the Breiðafjörður area.[36]

Here Árni is quoting his contemporary, the writer and scholar Jón Halldórsson (1665–1736), who obviously also had an opinion about the author of *Njáls saga*. Árni has his doubts as to Jón Halldórsson's reasoning, but he nevertheless seems convinced that

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33   Thanks to Lukas Rösli for bringing this to my attention.
34   Árni Magnússon is presumably referring to the saga's long and detailed descriptions of the legal proceedings at the Althing.
35   AM 254 8vo III, fol. 42v: "Einhverstadar minner mig eg hafi sied til geted, ad Are frodi væri author Nials sógu. En þad er önyt gata. Þeirrar sógu author hefur veret ineptus ['giórt eins og þing protocoll'] scriptor et usqve ad ineptias verbo- ['res nullius momenti prolixe referens'] -sus, þar med litt kunnugur sumum locis i kringum Skalhollt. Are hefur vered scriptor cordatus, brevis, og alkunnugur þar um land."
36   Jón Helgason 1980, p. 51: "87. Niálssógu meinar sra Jon Halldorsson skrifada vera uppí Arness sÿslu, nidur á Skeidum, stendur þar. Item ad rída austr ifir ár, et forte plura similia. þetta seger eckert. A Breidafirdi hefur Niálu Author ad vísu ókunnugur verid."

the author of *Njála* (as *Njáls saga* is often nicknamed in Icelandic) did not come from the Breiðafjörður area, where Árni himself grew up.

A comment on *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* shows that Árni regarded some manuscripts of it as 'useless', and also sheds light on his ideas about saga authors. Árni claims first that Magnús Sigurðsson in Bræðratunga in 1703 has a 'useless' copy of *Ragnars saga*, before claiming that the author is 'Þórður Þorkelsson, certainly [*certum*]'.[37] Who Þórður Þorkelsson, the alleged author of *Ragnars saga*, might be is not clear. Interestingly, Árni seems to be interested in the authorship of the sagas while simultaneously holding fiction generally – that is, everything that someone made up himself – to be a 'lie', or even 'nonsense' or 'hogwash'.[38]

8. The First Attempts at Writing a Literary History of Iceland

Árni shared this attitude towards truth and lies with his scribe and assistant Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík (1705–1779),[39] whose draft of a literary history of Iceland has recently been published.[40] Jón Ólafsson came to Copenhagen in 1726 when he was 21 years old, having been hired as Árni Magnússon's scribe and assistant. Árni died only four years later, but he obviously had a great impact on Jón, who seems to have admired him more than any other person he had ever met. As described in the introduction to the recent edition, Jón Ólafsson knew and made use of Páll Vídalín's *Recensus poetarum et scriptorum*.[41] Páll (1667–1727), a lawman, district sheriff, and a poet, was a close friend and colleague of Árni Magnússon; I will come back to his work later. Jón also made use of Árni's notes and his draft of a literary history; it is not known how thorough or comprehensive this draft was, but according to a letter from Árni to Rev. Jón Halldórsson in Hítardalur from June 1729, the draft consisted of a few packages in 8vo that were destroyed in

37 Jón Helgason 1980, p. 39: "Ragnars Sógu in 4to óníta á Magnus Sigurdsson i Bræd<ra>tungu 1703 [...] Author er Þordur Þorkelsson, certum."
38 In Icelandic: *lygi* or *þvættingur*, cf. Jón Helgason 1980, pp. 54 and 59.
39 See Jón Helgason 1926, pp. 15–34. Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík had great respect for Árni Magnússon, for whom he worked for a period of four years. Among other things, Jón wrote the biography of Árni and some stanzas in honour of him; see Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Ævisögur ypparlegra merkismanna.
40 See Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu. Jón wrote his literary history at the instigation of the Danish scholar Albert Thura (1700–1740), who was writing his own Danish literary history; Thura first intended to include information on Icelandic writers and poets in his own work, but later realised that a better option would be to have a separate history written of the literature of Iceland; see Jón Helgason 1926, pp. 177–181.
41 Páll Vídalín: Recensus poetarum et scriptorum Islandorum hujus et superioris seculi.

the fire in 1728.[42] We also have later literary histories by Jón Thorchillius (1697–1759), who wrote *Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ* (not yet published), and Hálfdan Einarsson (1732–1785), who wrote *Sciagraphia historiæ literariæ Islandicæ*, printed in Copenhagen in 1777 and 1786.

9. Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík and his Draft of a Literary History

Jón Helgason, who in 1926 wrote his doctoral dissertation on Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík, was of the opinion that the chapters Jón Ólafsson wrote on medieval Icelandic literature were of little importance, but the recent editors of his literary history, Guðrún Ingólfsdóttir and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, do not agree with that.[43] They claim that the work is an 'interesting testimony' as to how Jón Ólafsson and his contemporaries 'defined and discussed both medieval and contemporary literary works'.[44] They emphasise that the literary histories from the 18th century, including that by Jón Ólafsson, do not distinguish between poets and scholars, or more precisely between literary works and scholarly writings.[45]

10. True, Half-True and Lies

Jón Ólafsson separates literary works in prose into three categories: true, half-true, and lies. It has been pointed out that this distinction is derived from categories of classical rhetoric, namely *historiam*, *argumentum*, and *fabulam* respectively, as detailed in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, sometimes attributed to Cicero: "The legendary tale [*fabulam*] comprises events neither true nor probable like those transmitted by tragedies. The historical narrative [*historiam*] is an account of exploits actually performed

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42   See Kålund / Finnur Jónsson 1920, p. 186: "Jeg havde giort adskillige Fortegnelser over Historier og Poesier, med korte Anmærkninger og andet deslige, som kunde tiene den, der maaske siden ville skrive *Historiam Literariam Islandiæ*; men dette er nu saa aldeles ødelagt, at deraf ikke er et Blad tilovers." ('I had made several entries for stories and poetry with short comments and the like, which could be useful for someone who perhaps would like to write a literary history of Iceland, but these are now completely destroyed, so that there is not even one page left.')

43   See Guðrún Ingólfsdóttir / Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2018, p. XIII; cf. Jón Helgason 1926, p. 195f. Jón Helgason (1926, p. 188) claims that the structure of the work is imperfect and does thus not deserve to be called a literary history and should rather be regarded as a bio-bibliographical dictionary. He also notes the inaccuracies and errors made by his namesake, but nevertheless admits that Jón Ólafsson atones for his errors by recounting things that only he seems to know about.

44   See Guðrún Ingólfsdóttir / Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2018, p. XV: "mjög áhugaverður sem vitnisburður um hvernig Jón Ólafsson og samtímamenn hans skilgreindu og fjölluðu um bæði fornbókmenntir og samtímabókmenntir."

45   See Guðrún Ingólfsdóttir / Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2018, p. XVII.

but removed in time from the recollection of our age. Realistic narrative [*argumentum*] recounts imaginary events, which yet could have occurred, like the plots of comedies.ˮ[46] Jón Ólafsson then separates the invented, i.e. made-up or fictional (lying), stories into Icelandic and foreign ones, with the foreign ones being further separated into comedies and tragedies. The most respected category within his framework is that of 'true' stories.

According to Jón, most of the sagas,[47] such as *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Svarfdæla saga*, *Ísfirðinga saga*, *Grettis saga*, and *Njáls saga* are based on true material, but have been augmented and added to in many ways, that is, the characters have existed, but much extra material has been added later. Such additions were made, according to Jón, by monks or priests, who, he says, 'kept inventing and composing these stories in order to gain money and reward'.[48] He claims that many stories, such as *Króka-Refs saga*, *Hálfdanar saga Brönufóstra*, *Samsonar saga fagra*, and *Ármanns saga*, are 'completely made up' ("öldungis upplognar"), and calls some of them, like *Ármanns saga*, very clumsily invented ("ofur þurslega lognar"). Jón also says it is possible to identify stories made up by Icelanders themselves in that they contain giants, trolls, berserks, magic, and other such things ("Það má þekkja þær sögur sem Íslendingar 'hafa sjálfir logið' á því að þar koma fyrir jötnar, tröll, berserkir, töfrar og þvílíkt").[49]

Without doubt Jón Ólafsson's most famous statement is his description of the content of the Icelandic family sagas in one sentence:

> When some of our sagas (yes, most of them) are read, one comes to the conclusion: Farmers were fighting. But the patriot answers: What other subject could be more worth telling in such a country? Ari the learned had another method, and obviously he was the wisest of all historians.[50]

Jón Ólafsson and Árni Magnússon entirely agree on the point that Ari the learned was an excellent writer or author.[51] Jón writes, 'Ari has been a very accurate author and a great

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46 See Guðrún Ingólfsdóttir / Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2018, p. XXIX; [Cicero]: Ad C. Herennium, pp. 22–25.

47 See Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu, p. 6: "flestar vorar sögur" (literally, 'most of our sagas').

48 See Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu, p. 6: "Munkar hafa stundað það að dikta og samansetja slíkt til að ávinna sér fé og laun."

49 Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu, p. 6.

50 Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu, p. 7: "Þá lesnar eru sumar (já, flestar) vorar sögur, verður conclusionen: Bændur flugust á. En patriotinn svarar: Hvað kunni að vera meira söguefni á slíku landi? Ari fróði hefur aðra aðferð, enda má sjá að hann hefur hinn vitrasti historicus verið."

51 On Ari the learned, see Jakob Benediktsson 1993.

admirer of truth',[52] and declares that 'Priest Ari the learned is the Icelanders' first writer'.[53] The only perceived disadvantage of Ari's writing is its brevity: 'But a brief writer he was, and that is a pity, because of the values already mentioned.'[54]

Jón mentions the ideas that Sturla Þórðarson (1214–1284) may have composed the stanzas in *Grettis saga* and may also have been the author of the saga, but notes that he does not find them convincing.[55] Jón also claims (as does Árni Magnússon) that the *sýslumaður*[56] Jón Þorláksson (1644–1712), who was the son of Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason and who had two brothers who became bishops, had made up the saga of Ármann and Þorsteinn gála, as well as seven chapters or acts in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, and that he did this with the acceptance or the favour of his sister-in-law, Ragnheiður Jónsdóttir í Gröf (1646–1715).[57]

11. Will They All Have Been *scriptores*?

Jón mentions in alphabetical order the authors he knows of from medieval Iceland. His work is clearly a draft, as can be seen from the fact that he leaps from 'O' to 'S', which gives him Snorri Sturluson, but does not get any further. He evidently has a problem with Sæmundur the learned, of whom he says, 'To tell the truth, I don't know what he has written or what he is the author of that still exists, except possibly the poem *Sólarljóð* in the collection of poems usually referred to as *Sæmundar Edda*. Maybe he collected most of the odes.'[58] Among other things, Jón asks: 'Will they all have been *scriptores*, those who were called "the learned" in the sagas? I think that is uncertain.'[59] This seems to be one of the main problems of Iceland's literary history: there are many works without authors, and many authors without any works.

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52   Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu, p. 7: "Ari hefur verið scriptor accuratissimus et veritatis amantissimus." Here, Jón uses the word "scriptor"; it seems that both Árni Magnússon and Jón use the terms *auctor* and *scriptor* interchangeably.

53   Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu, p. 21: "Ari prestur fróði er primus scriptor íslenskra."

54   Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu, p. 23: "En scriptor brevis hefur hann verið, og þykir mönnum það mein, vegna nefndra kosta."

55   See Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar, pp. LXVIII–LXXV.

56   *Sýslumaður* is the Icelandic term for the sheriff or chief administrator of each county in Iceland.

57   On Ragnheiður Jónsdóttir, see Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2017, p. 141; Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2017, p. 285.

58   Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu, p. 34: "Ég veit í sannleika ekki hvað hann hefur skrifað eður er auctor til sem nú sé við lýði, nema ef vera kunnu Sólarljóð í fornkvæða-safni því er almennt kallast Sæmundar-Edda. Kannski hann hafi colligerað flestar þær odas."

59   Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu, p. 18: "Munu þeir hafa verið scriptores allir sem hafa það tilnafn *hinn fróði* í sögunum? Það tel ég óvíst þar fyrir."

Jón discusses whether Sturla Þórðarson is the author of *Íslendinga saga* in *Sturlunga saga* (often referred to simply as *Sturlunga*), that is, whether he is the one who mainly 'foretold or recounted' it.[60] He thinks that this may have been the case in the first part of the saga, but not when it gets further along because of how much it differs there from *Hákonar saga*, which Sturla had undoubtedly composed. Jón then adds, 'It would also have been rather funny, if he [Sturla] had wanted to write down what is told about himself'.[61] Interestingly, Jón also gives arguments in five parts for why it is better to know the names of the authors or of 'those who wrote the books'.[62]

12. Only What is Praiseworthy

Jón Þorkelsson (1697–1759), who called himself Thorchillius, was a schoolmaster in Skálholt in the 18th century. He had a great deal of influence on education and was one of the first to spread the ideas of the Enlightenment in Iceland; he travelled in Iceland with the Danish priest, and later bishop, Ludvig Harboe, in order to reform and improve educational matters in the country.[63] Thorchillius wrote a literary history of Iceland entitled *Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ* in 1733.[64] In his introduction, Thorchillius gives a very good account of his work, its aim, and its limitations. He says that he is not in a situation to analyse and describe everything precisely, but that others will later come along and expand it: 'I draw the main features, others will add to it – so that Iceland can at last rightly celebrate its having a thorough and well-written literary history.'[65] Yet Thorchillius also notes that it is meaningless to mention everything, and claims that it must be admitted that among the people there are all kinds of works and manuscripts circulating that have no value at all, not to mention material that is 'trivial, damaging,

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60   The wording in Icelandic is "mest fyrir sagt", see Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu, p. 33.

61   Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu, p. 33: "Líka er það næsta kátlegt, hafi hann viljað færa allt það sjálfur til bókar sem þar lýtur að honum."

62   See Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík: Safn til íslenskrar bókmenntasögu, p. 17: "nöfn þeirra sem bækur hafa skrifað" [Formáli]. One of the five arguments is well known, namely, that possessing information about the author will make it easier for the reader to interpret and understand the work.

63   See Loftur Guttormsson 2000, pp. 309f.

64   The late Sigurður Pétursson (1944–2020), former lecturer of Greek and Latin at the University of Iceland, has translated the text into Icelandic; a bilingual edition by Hjalti Snær Ægisson is now also in preparation. In this article, I have made use of Sigurður Pétursson's translation of the text with their permission.

65   Jón Þorkelsson [Thorchillius]: Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ: "Ég dreg frumdrættina, aðrir bæta við [...] þannig að Ísland geti að lokum fagnað því með réttu að eiga rækilega og vel skrifaða bókmenntasögu."

disgusting, or that contains exaggerations, all of which should be thrown into the fire'.[66] Furthermore, he asks, 'Who would give his intelligence away and wish that the literary history of Iceland, or any other nation, were affected by such writings? If someone wants to write a literary history, he should mention only what is praiseworthy, because of the benefit it does to the public'.[67]

Thorchillius also mentions *rímur*, one of the most important secular poetic genres of post-classical Iceland,[68] with contempt, and adds the following judgement: 'There are also those writing history and accounting for true events, and they should possibly receive a milder judgement than those who compose love lyrics, humorous verses, false morality poems, and vain rubbish deserve; because the charm of style they have is only a lure to the readers, and they should therefore despise it.'[69]

In discussing medieval Icelandic literature, Thorchillius says that the 'classical authors of the Icelandic tongue'[70] are now available, thanks to Árni Magnússon, in his great manuscript collection.[71] He says that he owes a great deal to Árni, who had been his private teacher in Copenhagen, then he provides an inventory of authors in alphabetical order: Ari the learned, Árni Magnússon, etc. He describes Sæmundur the learned as 'a priest in Oddi, who outstripped everyone in intelligence and learning [and] who was called "*hinn fróði*" or "*polyhistor*"'.[72] In the chapter on Sæmundur, he says that he is thought to have composed the history of all the kings of the Nordic countries, but that nothing of it is preserved. About the *Elder Edda* (also known as the *Poetic Edda*), he says that it has been attributed to Sæmundur only because Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson (1605–1675) made this suggestion, but that he thinks it much more likely that it was not composed by one single author and that these poems were instead collected by Sæmundr, 'or some other person interested in such mythological nonsense'.[73] He also

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66 Jón Þorkelsson [Thorchillius]: Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ: "svo að ég minnist ekki á það sem fánýtt er og skaðlegt, óþverra og ofsögur, sem varpa ætti í eldinn."

67 Jón Þorkelsson [Thorchillius]: Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ: "Hver mundi glata svo vitsmunum sínum, að hann skyldi vilja að bókmenntasaga Íslands eða hvaða þjóðar sem er, væri mörkuð slíku? Ef menn taka að sér að semja eða skrifa bókmenntasögu, á þess eins að vera getið, sem á lof skilið fyrir það gagn sem það gerir á opinberum vettvangi [...]."

68 See Driscoll 1997, p. 10; cf. Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2006, p. 223.

69 Jón Þorkelsson [Thorchillius]: Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ: "Auk þeirra eru einnig sagnaritarar og þeir er segja frá sönnum viðburðum, en um þá má kveða upp mildari dóm en þann sem ástarkvæði, gamanvísur, falskur siðlætiskveðskapur og hégómahnoð verðskulda. Því stílþokki sá er þau hafa til að bera er lesendum aðeins tálbeita og því ber þeim að fyrirlíta hann."

70 Jón Þorkelsson [Thorchillius]: Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ: "klassískir höfundar íslenskrar tungu".

71 See Jón Þorkelsson [Thorchillius]: Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ.

72 See Jón Þorkelsson [Thorchillius]: Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ.

73 Jón Þorkelsson [Thorchillius]: Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ: "eða þá einhver annar áhugamaður um þess háttar goðfræðilegan þvætting."

claims that 'it is generally considered that he [Sæmundr] was well learned in magic, because he used the devil as much as needed for domestic needs and in order to get around more quickly',[74] as is known, for example, from the famous story (or folktale) of Sæmundr riding home to Iceland on the devil in the shape of a seal.[75] Thorchillius finds it remarkable how many of Sæmundur's descendants, i.e. the Oddaverjar, were eminent in the fields of history and poetry and in other branches of learning, and how efficiently he provided education to others.

Thorchillius lists all the medieval writers known by name, and primarily discusses those works that are first and foremost historical, like *Landnáma saga*, *Sturlunga saga*, and *Knýtlinga saga*. The Icelandic family sagas are not discussed directly, but are mentioned indirectly in connection with other topics; for instance, it is said that Þorkell Arngrímsson, the son of Arngrímur the learned, went to the Netherlands after studying in Denmark and Norway, where he:

> sought out learned men in Leyden and became acquainted with one of them, Jacob Golius, to whom he presented a book of Icelandic sagas, which was certainly valuable, and it was *Njála*. A certain Dane, Niels Foss, bought this book in an auction and gave to Árni Magnússon.[76]

This is actually the *Njáls saga* manuscript *Reykjabók*, AM 468 4to, now preserved in Copenhagen.[77] Thorchillius also claims that Þormóður Torfason (1636–1719), as a royal translator in Denmark, translated into Danish 'the saga usually called *Njála*, 2) *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, 3) *Hrólfs saga kraka*, 4) *Þorsteins saga víkings* and possibly 5) *Egla* together with 6) *Laxdæla saga*, but for the translations one should look in the Royal Library [in Copenhagen], and it is hardly possible to find them anywhere else'.[78] He therefore thinks it permissible to call Þormóður 'the father of the history of the Nordic countries'.[79]

Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241) is, according to Thorchillius, the most famous of those who have written on the history of Norway and Scandinavia, but he gives only a very short account of him and refers to Þormóður Torfason's biography of Snorri, which Þormóður had announced as forthcoming in the preface to his history of Norway, but

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74 Jón Þorkelsson [Thorchillius]: Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ: "Eftir því sem almennt er talið, þá var hann mjög lærður í göldrum, af því að hann notaði skrattann að vild til heimilisstarfa og til þess að komast leiðar sinnar á skemmri tíma."

75 See Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri, vol. 1, pp. 469–488; Þorsteinn M. Jónsson 1961.

76 Jón Þorkelsson [Thorchillius]: Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ: "leitaði uppi lærdómsmenn í Leyden og kynntist úr þeirra hópi Jacobi Golius, sem hann gaf að gjöf eina bók Íslendingasagna sem vissulega var verðmikil og var það Njála. Þessa bók keypti Dani nokkur Niels Foss á uppboði eftir Golius og gaf hana Árna Magnússyni"; cf. Jakob Benediktsson 1957, p. 96.

77 On Reykjabók, AM 468 4to, see Ellert Þór Jóhannsson 2015, p. 71.

78 See Jón Þorkelsson [Thorchillius]: Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ.

79 Jón Þorkelsson [Thorchillius]: Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ: "föður sögu Norðurlanda".

which, according to Thorchillius, had evidently been lost. He is at least convinced that Þormóður's most important source must have been the great *Sturlunga saga*; on Sturla Þórðarson (1214–1284), sometimes presumed to be the author of that text, he writes:

> There is no doubt that Sturla wrote a great deal, but when it comes to which works, of those still preserved from the Middle Ages, should be attributed to him, it seems to me that Þormóður Torfason suggested it rather than argued for it or proved it that he had written *Sturlunga saga*. If he should be considered its author it seems very likely that he also wrote *Grettla* or the saga of Grettir Ásmundarson, who was a man of much bravery and courage, because the vocabulary and the style of these two works look so much alike that nothing seems to me as similar.[80]

13. Early Modern Literary Criticism

Hálfdan Einarsson (1732–1785) studied theology at the University of Copenhagen from 1750 to 1755, then returned to Iceland and became the headmaster of the cathedral school at Hólar í Hjaltadal until his death. He worked in close cooperation with the Bishop at Hólar, Gísli Magnússon (1712–1779), who also became his father-in-law, and had a great impact on the publications of the printing press at Hólar for about three decades. Hálfdan had his own writings printed both in Iceland and abroad but was at the same time active in using manuscripts as a medium for other purposes.[81]

Running the printing press at Hólar in the middle of the 18th century was far from easy. The machinery was old, the paper and other essential materials were difficult to acquire, and few people could afford to buy the books after they were printed.[82] In response to his difficulties at the printing press, Hálfdan, then still a young man, and Bishop Gísli Magnússon founded a society which sought to encourage the printing and publication of books; it was known as 'Ósýnilega félagið' or *Societas invisibilis*, and was Iceland's first ever literary association. One of its aims was to publish an edition of *Speculum regale* ('The king's mirror'), a mid-13th-century treatise within the medieval *speculum* tradition, that deals with politics and morality; as it happens, the resulting edition *Kongs-skugg-sio utlögd a daunsku og latinu* (Sorø, 1768) is the only known publication of this 'Invisible Society'. In this way, Hálfdan was able to contribute to the international community of learning by printing and publishing works abroad that were intended for a much broader and more learned audience than they would ever have found at home in Iceland.

Hálfdan's greatest achievement was a literary history of Iceland entitled *Sciagraphia Historiæ Literariæ Islandicæ AUTORUM ET SCRIPTORUM TUM EDITORUM tum INEDITORUM*

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80   See Jón Þorkelsson [Thorchillius]: Specimen Islandiæ non barbaræ.
81   See Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2017, p. 164.
82   See Jón Helgason 1935, p. 79.

INDICEM EXHIBENS, written in Latin and published in Copenhagen in 1777 and again in 1785. Gottskálk Jensson, who is currently preparing an edition and translation of the *Sciagraphia*, has discussed how much Hálfdan owes to Páll Vídalín's literary history *Recensus poetarum et scriptorum* in an article entitled "Hversu mikið er non-nulla?", or 'How much is some (or considerable)'.[83] As mentioned above, Páll (1667–1727) was a poet and a close friend and colleague of Árni Magnússon's. His work has been described in the following way:

> The *Recensus* lists some 130 writers in alphabetical order. The entries vary in length from only a few sentences (for example, Ásmundur Sæmundsson, Dagur Bjarnason) to several printed pages (for example, Brynjólfur Sveinsson, Hallgrímur Pétursson). The shorter entries normally contain only a brief statement about the profession of the individual writer and his works, often with samples from them [...] Páll Vídalín does not hesitate to comment on the quality of the works of the individual writer.[84]

An interesting difference between Páll's *Recensus* and Hálfdan's *Sciagraphia* is that Páll arranges authors from all periods in alphabetical order, meaning that there is no indication of chronological developments and no system of classification. Gottskálk Jensson and other scholars[85] have pointed out that the *Sciagraphia* is revolutionary in comparison with such earlier attempts at writing Icelandic literary history because it is much more exhaustive and is based on scholarly assessment and interpretations. Hálfdan actually combined two methods in producing the work: he realised that if the focus were to be only on the author, 'works of completely unknown authors'[86] would be missing, and that if different works were listed for each author, there would be no categorisation of the works themselves.

Hálfdan divides his work into six parts: 1. The study of grammar / linguistics and works on the subject; 2. The art of poetry and the most important authors; 3. Historical writings; 4. Philosophical writings and works on physics, medicine, arithmetic, economics, and ethics; 5. The study of law and works on judicial interpretation; 6. The study of theology and devotional works. The only reference to *Njáls saga* that the present author managed to find in the *Sciagraphia* is in Section III: *De Studio Islandorum Historico*, article iv. *Islandiam et Grœnlandiam*, which reads:

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83   Gottskálk Þór Jensson 2000, pp. 112–130; *Recensus poetarum et scriptorum* was published in 1985 in an edition produced by Jón Samsonarson and was reviewed by Kirsten Wolf in 1990.

84   Wolf 1990, pp. 344f.

85   See, for instance, Matthías Viðar Sæmundsson 1996, pp. 101–104.

86   Jón Helgason 1935, p. 112: "Þau rit, hverra höfunda maður alls ekki þekkir"; cf. Matthías Viðar Sæmundsson 1996, p. 104.

a)   In genere: 1. Origines Islandiæ sive Landnámabók 2. Libellus de Islandia Arii Polyhistoris Thorgilsi filii 3. Historia introductæ in Islandiam Religionis christianiæ

b)   In Specie, juxta Alphabeti Seriem.

Under 'N' we find the following: "Niali et filiorum ejus, qvæ jam pridem Havniæ edita est opera Ol. Olavii 1772 in 4to."[87] Here, Hálfdan refers simply to the first edition of *Njáls saga*, edited by Olaus Olavius and published in Copenhagen in 1772 as *Sagan af Niali Thorgeirssyni ok sonum hans.*

It is of great significance that Hálfdan Einarsson mentioned not only all the printed works of which he knew, but also many works that had never been printed, as well as translations into Icelandic. His aim was to give a complete survey of Icelandic literature from the beginning of literary production in Iceland until the middle of the 18th century; this means that he refers to a great number of writings and lists almost four-hundred authors, on the grounds that he seems to have thought one should not ignore 'unlearned' poets and scholars or autodidacts.[88]

As well as being involved in the publication of many other books printed at Hólar during the 18th century, Hálfdan was the editor of Hallgrímur Pétursson's poetry. The printed editions of his poetry were called "Hallgrímskver"; they appeared in 1755, 1759, 1765, 1770, and 1773, with the editions in some instances differing from one another when, as is sometimes noted in a foreword, the editor gained access to a previously unknown manuscript. In other words, Hálfdan Einarsson revised every edition, changed the text, omitted some of the poems, and added others after receiving more information about the poems and their authenticity or background. Matthías Viðar Sæmundsson maintains that Hálfdan's preface to the 1773 edition of Hallgrímur Pétursson's poetry, in particular, is ground-breaking because it emphasises the phenomenon of 'the author' in an unprecedented way; from then on, the 'concept of the author has been highlighted in literary historical studies as much as the concept of time [...] The author was born.'[89] Matthías Viðar also points out that the word "höfundur" first emerges in written Icelandic in the year 1734, when Jón Árnason uses it as a translation of the Latin word "auctor" in his Latin-Icelandic dictionary. The next time it is found in 1784, in a letter from Guðmundur Högnason.[90]

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87   Hálfdan Einarsson: Sciagraphia Historiæ Literariæ Islandicæ, p. 122.
88   See Matthías Viðar Sæmundsson 1996, p. 105.
89   See Matthías Viðar Sæmundsson 1996, pp. 100f.: "[...] síðan þá hefur höfundarhugtakið skipað öndvegi í bókmenntasögulegum rannsóknum til jafns við hugtak tímans [...] Höfundurinn var fæddur."
90   See Matthías Viðar Sæmundsson 1996, p. 101. Guðmundur Högnason (1713–1795) was Hálfdan Einarsson's schoolmate from Skálholt, a remarkable man who was a priest and author, and who wrote the interesting manuscript of music Hymnodia sacra, Lbs 1927 4to.

This emphasis on the works themselves, and a rather limited interest in biographical issues, is in accordance with what Hálfdan himself postulates in his preface. It is not enough to list only the authors in alphabetical order, he says, and to discuss the works of each and every one only there; that arrangement will exclude works by unknown authors and will mix together different works. It is more profitable to discuss together works that belong to the same category, and it is then possible to use an alphabetical ordering and a historical chronology to arrange the material within these main categories.[91] We therefore find *Njáls saga* listed under the name of Njáll and his sons in a list of the main characters or protagonists of the Icelandic family sagas. There is no author here as a substitute for the old saga-heroes, only the heroes themselves.

14. The Authors of *Njáls saga*

In his 2001 book *Höfundar Njálu* ('The authors of *Njáls saga*'), Jón Karl Helgason describes how the saga has developed, changed, and appeared in different forms in manuscripts through the centuries, in translations, and in cultural politics.[92] In the present chapter, my intention has been to draw attention to Árni Magnússon's comments about the author of *Njáls saga*, and to investigate how the anonymous authors of the sagas were treated in the first attempts at writing a literary history of Iceland in the 18th century. Árni Magnússon's own draft was unfortunately lost, but there can be no doubt that his pupil and admirer, Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík, was very much in agreement with Árni's ideas and was faithful to what he wrote. Thorchillius was greatly influenced by Pietism, as can be seen in his writings; he obviously had his doubts about fiction and trivial literature and was not interested in highlighting the Icelandic family sagas or other even 'worse' stories, which, as he indicates, were circulating in the country at that time. Hálfdan Einarsson, on the other hand, had a quite different vision, and worked to include a great number of both authors and works in his book.

Árni Magnússon's attitudes towards *Njáls saga* and its author seem somewhat contradictory. In his aforementioned table of contents in GKS 1002–1003 fol., however, he classifies works that in Icelandic manuscript and literary tradition are simply referred to as 'saga' or 'þáttur' into genres, such as *chronica*, *history*, *poem*, *roman*, *relation*, *tractate*, *introduction*, *fable*, *fabuleux relation*, and *appendix*. By classifying such stories as genres approved elsewhere in Europe, he seems to be attempting to justify them as fiction. Yet when it comes to the 'author' of *Njáls saga*, the question remains of whether Árni Magnússon had the same idea of an author as we do. How inventive and creative was

91   Cf. Gottskálk Þór Jensson 2000, p. 128.
92   See Jón Karl Helgason 2001; cf. Lethbridge / Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir 2018.

an author allowed to be? In this regard, it is interesting that we find in Árni's notes the following quotation in reference to *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*:

> Article 25. The following is the last part of *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* in Resen's manuscript collection: So the brothers Gunnlaugur and Oddur say: that these individuals told them the largest part of what they later composed and gave an account of King Ólafur Tryggvason: Gellir Þorgilsson, Asgrímur Vestlidason, Biarni Bergþorsson, Ingunn Arnórsdóttir, Herdís Dadadóttir, Þorgerdur Þorsteinsdóttir, and then Gunnlaugur says he showed it to Gissur Hallsson.[93]

This is in accordance with the famous ending of *Njáls saga* in many manuscripts: "Og lúkum *vér* þar Brennu-Njáls sögu" ('And here *we* conclude the saga of Njáll of the burning'). In the first printed edition of the saga in 1772, the last sentence reads "ok lúkv ver þar Brennv-Niálssavgv".[94] It seems that only the manuscript *Möðruvallabók* (Reykjavík, AM 132 fol.) has the following variation: "og lýk *ek* þar Brennu-Njáls sögu" ('and here *I* conclude the saga of Njáll'). In his *Íslenzk fornrit* edition from 1954, however, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson uses this singular reading and attempts to interpret its meaning.[95] Yet perhaps the more accurate conclusion to be drawn is that the one who collected the material and had others write it down was no more the author than were all the people he used as his sources.

15. Conclusion

There seems to be a remarkable discrepancy in Árni Magnússon's attitude towards *Njáls saga* and its author; he describes the saga as 'beautiful' and seems to have been fascinated by it from a young age, but does not think highly of its author, whom he judges to be ignorant and "ineptus", that is, 'inept'. Even more remarkably, it does not seem to occur to Árni that the saga may not be the creation of a single author, but rather a composition of many tales, transmitted orally and in different manuscripts, some of them lost, through the centuries. It has been noted that the claim of Sigurður Nordal and other scholars belonging to the Icelandic school in the 20th century to regard the sagas

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93   Jón Helgason 1980, p. 41: "Grein 25. Þetta efterskrifad er Nidurlag Olafs Sógu Trÿggvasonar in Membrana Bibliothecæ Resenianæ: Svo segja bræður Gunnlaugur og Oddur: að þessir menn hafi þeim mest fyrirsagt hvað er þeir hafi síðan samansett og í frásagnir fært af Olafi Konúngi Trÿggvasÿni [...]".

94   *Sagan af Niali Thorgeirssyni ok sonum hans*, p. 282.

95   According to the various apparatus in: *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 464, this reading exists only in *Möðruvallabók*. The other manuscripts read as follows: Ga [Gráskinnuauki = GKS 2870 4to]: "lýkr"; the manuscripts of the X-branch: "lúku vér"; *Oddabók*: "ok lyktast sjá saga"; *Reykjabók* = AM 468 4to: "ok lvkv ver þar"; and the manuscripts based on **Gullskinna*, e.g. AM 136 fol: "oc lukum vier þar Brennu Nialz sógu". See also Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2018.

"as works of thirteenth-century *Icelandic* authors rather than products of oral tradition, can be seen as a response to the claims of some Danes, Norwegians and Swedes, who approached this literature as part of a common Scandinavian cultural heritage."[96] In the same way, it is possible to see Árni Magnússon's attitude as having been related to or affected by a desire to justify saga literature in a broader context for his learned European colleagues abroad, who would expect that behind any excellent piece of writing was a brilliant mind, an author.

In the 17th- and 18th-century attempts at writing a literary history of Iceland, we see differing emphases being placed on the relationship between authors and literary works. Neither the Icelandic scholar Arngrímur Jónsson nor Hálfdan Einarsson seems to have been obsessed with the need to find and identify authors of the sagas; this need was probably felt most urgently by Icelandic scholars who thought it necessary for the reputation of Icelandic literary history to locate 'real' authors, comparable to the classical *scriptores*, to whom works could be attributed. For his part, Árni Magnússon was certainly conscious about the importance of reading the sagas in a broader European literary context. By contrast, Hálfdan Einarsson, who seems to have been the most outstanding literary critic in 18th-century Iceland, was one of the few scholars who allowed himself to focus on the works in the way they are preserved and as they have come down to us.

The quest for the author of *Njáls saga* and other Icelandic family sagas continued into and culminated in the 20th century, partly because it was important for Icelandic scholars to confirm that the sagas were written in Iceland by Icelanders. Yet in spite of all these different theories and speculations, it is significant that the author of *Njáls saga* is still missing.

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96 Jón Karl Helgason 1999, p. 148.

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Sigurður Ingibergur Björnsson, Steingrímur Páll Kárason, Jón Karl Helgason
Stylometry and the Faded Fingerprints of Saga Authors

Charts 1–9: Created by Steingrímur Páll Kárason.

Lena Rohrbach
The Persistence of the Humanistic Legacy

Fig. 1: Copenhagen, Arnamagnæan Collection, AM 47 fol., f. 1r. Photo: Suzanne Reitz. Used with permission.

Fig. 2: Copenhagen, Arnamagnæan Collection, AM 45 fol., f. 1v. Photo: Suzanne Reitz. Used with permission.

Fig. 3: Copenhagen, Arnamagnæan Collection, AM 45 fol., f. 1r. Photo: Suzanne Reitz. Used with permission.

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Fig. 11: Snorre Sturlusøns Norske Kongers Chronica, udsat paa Danske aff H. Peder Claussøn, Copenhagen 1633. Title page. Public Domain. https://baekur.is/bok/000365900/Snorre_Sturlessons_Norske.

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Fig. 14: Snorre Sturlusøns Norske Kongers Chronica, udsat paa Danske aff H. Peder Claussøn, Copenhagen 1633, p. 795. Public Domain. https://baekur.is/bok/000365900/Snorre_Sturlessons_Norske.

Fig. 15: Snorre Sturlusøns Norske Kongers Chronica, udsat paa Danske aff H. Peder Claussøn, Copenhagen 1633, p. 796–797. Public Domain. https://baekur.is/bok/000365900/Snorre_Sturlessons_Norske.

Fig. 16: Heimskringla eller Snorre Sturlusons Nordländske Konunga Sagor, ed. by Johan Peringskiöld, Stockholm 1697. Public Domain. https://baekur.is/bok/000365879/Heimskringla.

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Gudrun Bamberger

A Theory of Early Modern Authorship

Fig. 1: Historia von D. Johann Fausten. Frankfurt am Main: Johann Spies 1587, Titel [VD16 F 943]. Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, Sig. A: 56.3 Eth.

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