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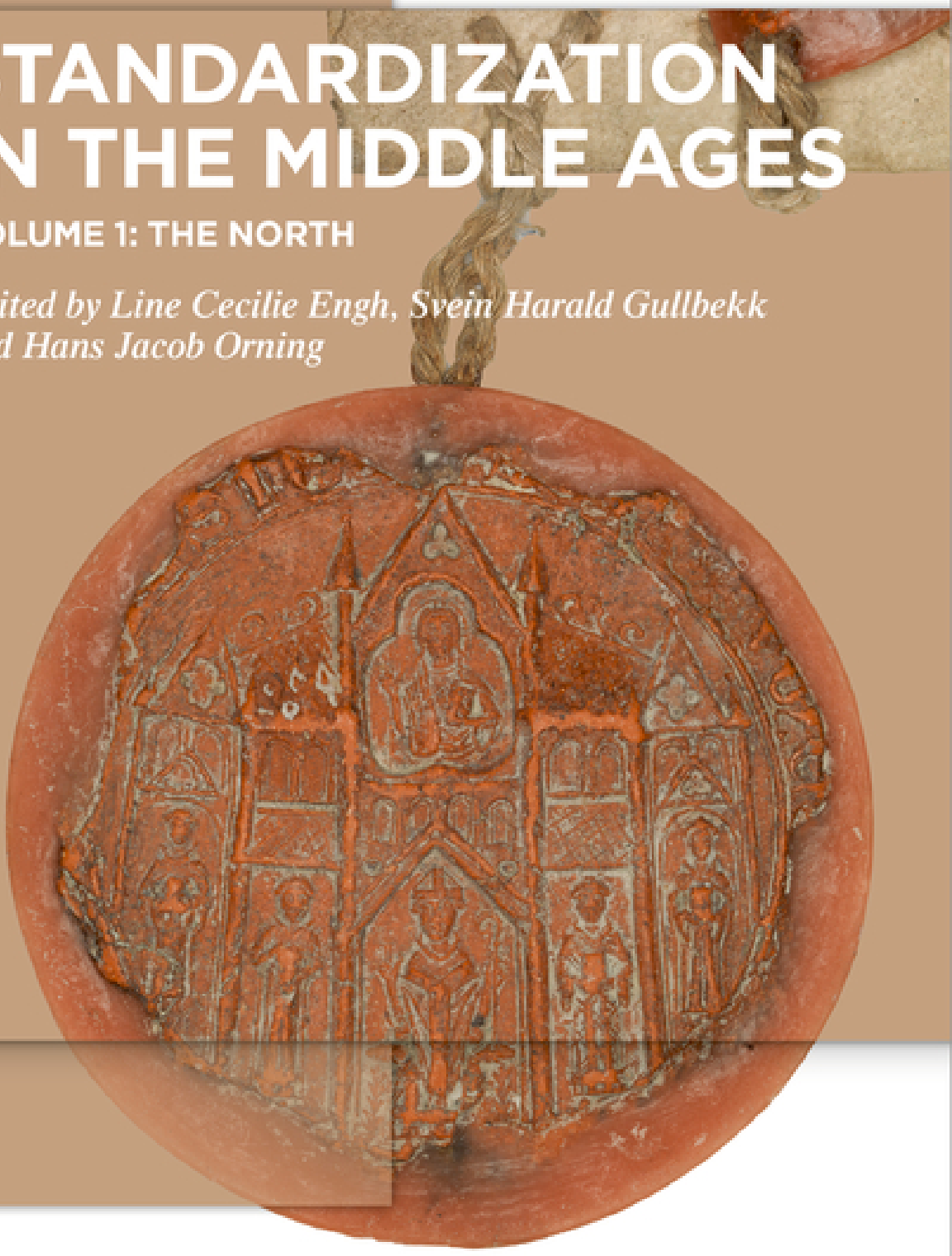
STANDARDIZATION IN THE MIDDLE AGES

VOLUME 1: THE NORTH

Edited by Line Cecilie Engh, Svein Harald Gullbekk and Hans Jacob Orning



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Volume 1: The North

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Acknowledgments

Appropriately enough, it was the numismatist who first came up with the idea to study standardization in the Middle Ages. The initial puzzlement of the other six members of the research group was later parroted by colleagues and friends: But standardization isn't medieval, they quipped. The purpose of the two companion volumes, *Standardization in the Middle Ages. Volume 1: The North* and *Standardization in the Middle Ages. Volume 2: Europe*, is to show that the folk-theory of standardization – standards as fulcrum and offspring of modernity – is wrong and that the numismatist's intuition was right: Medieval people were standardizing, too, although they didn't use that word.

Our gratitude goes to Mark Turner, Geof Bowker, and Johanna Drucker for enthusiastically sharing, in writing and in discussions, their amazing knowledge and insights into cognition, cultural criticism, and classification systems, making this a truly multidisciplinary venture. We would like to thank our co-writers Kaja M. Hagen, Matthew J. Walsh, and Marianne Moen. Thanks also to Iver B. Neumann for engaging in discussion with us at an early stage. We are grateful to the readers who reviewed the chapters and provided constructive critique and thoughtful challenges. We would also like to thank the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Oslo and the Research Council of Norway for funding and the staff at IAKH and DNIR for administrative support. Big thanks to Sarah Thomas and to Kaja and Trym for invaluable help with copy editing and, finally, thanks to the staff at De Gruyter for guiding us safely into harbor.

Rome/Oslo, March 2024
LCE, HJO, SHG, JVS, KBAa, KGJ, JGJ

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Line Cecilie Engh, Kristin B. Aavitsland, Karl G. Johansson,
Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, Svein Harald Gullbekk, Hans Jacob Orning,
Jón Viðar Sigurðsson

1 Introduction to Standardization in the Middle Ages

Abstract: The aim of the introduction is twofold: to present central theories on standardization, and to discuss how to frame and use the concept of standardization in the Middle Ages. We argue that standardization proceeded by way of flux and flexibility: negotiations, interpretations, and adaptations. We suggest that such processes are possibly even *required* for successful standardization to take place. On the surface, the tensions between center and periphery, unity and diversity, predictability and flexibility, and standards and variations may seem like cases of order versus confusion: as if medieval people aspired to homogeneity but constantly succumbed to chaos. But, in fact, the two poles – on the one hand *unitas* and predictability and on the other, *varietas* and flexibility – are two sides of the same coin. It takes attention to both poles to understand processes of standardization in the Middle Ages. Finally, the introduction presents the chapters of the book, which pursue lines of interrogation that oscillate between Bronze Age weights and the Exchequer Standards, Roman script and the Vadstena cursive, Gulathingslaw and Gratian, the parochial system and Hólar bishopric, medieval seals and modern restaurants, Nidaros and Constantinople, Hovedøya and Clairvaux, coinage of Viking Ribe and Eucharist bread wafers, Skaldic and Christian poetry, and more.

Keywords: Standardization, predictability / flexibility, normativity / normalcy, top down / bottom up, community building, quantitative / qualitative, multidisciplinarity

Note: This introduction is penned by Line Cecilie Engh based on the lively discussions and the notes from each of the members of the research group Standardization in the Middle Ages, here listed as co-authors. The authors would like to thank Mark Turner, Geoffrey Bowker, and Johanna Drucker for invaluable contributions and stimulating talks during a series of workshops in Oslo and Rome 2019–2021.

Line Cecilie Engh, Kristin B. Aavitsland, Karl G. Johansson, Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, Svein Harald Gullbekk, Hans Jacob Orning, Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, University of Oslo

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Et idcirco vocatum est nomen eius Babel,
quia ibi confusum est labium universae terrae:
et inde dispersit eos Dominus super faciem cunctarum regionum.
– Gen 11:9

The Chaos of Babel and the Quest for Order

Genesis 11:9 links the name Babel (בבל) to the verb *balal* (בלל), which means to "confuse" or "confound," indicating the ensuing confusion after God caused people to begin speaking in different languages to prevent them from completing their great tower that reached into the heavens. Early Christian exegetes affirmed the linguistic association between Babel, translated as "Babylon" both in Greek and Latin, and confusion. Sanctioning the fusion between Babel-Babylon and confusion, which was to become a commonplace in the medieval west, Augustine writes: "This city, which was called Confusion, is Babylon itself, whose marvelous construction is praised also in the history of the pagans. In fact, the meaning of Babylon is confusion."[1] As medieval interpretations proceeded, forging conceptual connections between the tower of Babel in Genesis (as the cause and site of primeval confusion) and the city of Babylon in Revelation (as the archenemy of God's people), the notion of Babylonian *confusio* took on increasingly richer allusive meaning, indicating not only "the confusion of this world" and "the confusion of the present life" but also "the confusion of sin" and "the confusion of error," i.e., heresies and schism.[2] Significantly, the original linguistic chaos of Babel, the consequence of divine punishment for human hubris, became figuratively extended to signify deviance from the divine norm and concurrently a loss of unity and harmony with other humans and with God.

1 Augustine, *De civ. dei* 16.4, PL 41:482: "Ista civitas quae appellata est Confusio, ipsa est Babylon, cujus mirabilem constructionem Gentium etiam commendat historia. Babylon quippe interpretatur Confusio." Following Augustine, Isidore, *Etym.* 15.1.4, PL 82:527B: "The word [Babylon] comes from confusion since it was there, while building the tower, that the languages were confused and mixed." ("Vocabulum autem sumpsit a confusione, eo quod ibi confusae sint atque permistae linguae aedificantium turrim.") (Latin translations are ours unless otherwise noted.) Similar wording in Hrabanus Maurus, *De universo* 12.4, PL 111:337B. For discussions, see Scheil, *Babylon Under Western Eyes*, 10–11; Thelle, *Discovering Babylon*, 8–22.

2 Scheil, *Babylon Under Western Eyes*, 82, with references to Bede's commentary to Revelation; for a discussion of *confusio* linked to heresy and schism in Bede and Augustine, see Major, *Undoing Babel*, 100; the formula *ut tentatio ipsa non nos in confusionem erroris* notably appears in some rubrics for Matins, e.g., *Incipit sanctorale. Ad matutinum*, PL 86:1060D and 1182B.

At the opposite side of the spectrum, expressing God's privileged order, stood Babylon's typological twin and antithesis, Jerusalem. Countering the confusion of Babel-Babylon, Jerusalem represented a lost past, a future promise, and concurrently a present potential: the standard by which to navigate worldly confusion, sin, and error.[3] In Bede's eighth-century reading, Jerusalem appears alongside Babylon to contrast *confusio* with *concordia*: "And this city, in which languages are divided and people scattered, is deservedly called Babylon, that is, Confusion; that city is called Jerusalem, that is, Vision of peace, in which the languages of all the peoples are united in the praise of God and harmony is established."[4]

Medieval readings of the biblical myth of Babel/Babylon and humanity's descent into confusion through diversity and variation as a fall from a unified and unifying standard brings us to the heart of this study. These readings alert us to a specific medieval apprehension about chaos, incomprehensibility, disorder, and, accordingly, a yearning for order and unity. The intuition of medieval Christians was that (re-)establishment of unity was a quest for shared standards, an ideal to be pursued in a political and an eschatological sense as well as in a practical, aesthetical, and cultural sense.

The present volume investigates the medieval quest for order, focusing on Scandinavia. Sources and cases from Norway and Iceland are discussed as well as some from Sweden and Denmark. However, the chapters are by no means *limited* to medieval Scandinavia but pursue lines of interrogation that oscillate between Bronze Age weights and the Exchequer Standards, Roman script and the Vadstena cursive, Gulathingslaw and Gratian, the parochial system and Hólar bishopric, medieval seals and modern restaurants, Nidaros and Constantinople, Hovedøya and Clairvaux, coinage of Viking Ribe and Eucharist bread wafers, and Skaldic and Christian poetry. The selection of materials and themes reflects the various specializations of the contributors to this volume and is by no means exhaustive.[5] The randomness of our sources and cases, however, points to the broad applicability of the concept of standardization: All historical traces of human endeavor,

3 See also Aavitsland, "Civitas Hierusalem famosissima."

4 Bede, *In Genesim* 3.11.1 (PL 91:123D; trans in Scheil, *Babylon Under Western Eyes*, 83): "meritoque haec civitas, in qua linguae divisae ac gentes sunt dispersae, Babylon, id est Confusio; illa dicitur Jerusalem, id est, Visio pacis, in qua, adunatis in Dei laudem loquelis universarum gentium, est facta concordia."

5 Readers who are missing certain sources or phenomena in medieval cultures that could profitably be studied in light of standardization processes are referred to the companion volume *Standardization in the Middle Ages. Volume 2: Europe*, edited by Engh and Aavitsland, forthcoming on De Gruyter, for a broader array of case studies.

from any period, would very likely show up some interesting aspects of cultural standardization.[6]

In recent years, the humanities have shifted focus from an interest in *unity* to an interest in *diversity*; our approach, however, is closer to the medieval idea and ideal of *unitas in diversitate*. Impositions from a political and geographical core to marginal(ized) fringes were certainly an important drive in the processes of unification and standardization. Rather than imagining hierarchical relations configured by degrees of deviance or conformity to a normative center (e.g., Paris or Rome), we emphasize, like most recent scholarship, that the medieval North was an active part and presence – not just a passive periphery – of the "expanding Europe" of the central and late Middle Ages.[7]

Many contributions to this volume highlight the pivotal role of the "Universal Church," *ecclesia catholica*, although the "universality" or unity in question was largely limited to Latin or papal Europe. Nonetheless, with its institutions, networks, and hierarchies, the Latin Church connected distant places and affected all facets of society, from the Mediterranean to the North Sea, from monastics and clerics to lay people, from parish priests to poets and painters, from royal courts to law courts, and from the celebration of mass to monetization and commercial trade in marketplaces. However, Medieval Scandinavia did not merely follow and obey; sometimes it spearheaded. The coinages issued in Scandinavia in the period of Christianization, for instance, carry more explicit Christian messages than coinage from the periods before and after the eleventh century. One exceptional Danish example is an issue from the Slagelse mint in the 1020s that contained a legend with the famous first words of St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God" (*In principio erat verbum, et verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat verbum*).[8] This coin not only represents the oldest Gospel quotation from Denmark and Scandinavia; it is also the earliest coin in Europe to carry a full quotation from the Bible. (Figure 1)

The emergence of Christianity on the peripheries of the Western Latin world was an important element of the making of Europe: the spread of social and cultural standards and usages among both lay and religious beyond any normative center. As scholars have noted, medieval Latin Europe was characterized by

6 See the chapter by Engh and Turner in this volume.

7 A tangible example of this (re-)orientation in medieval scholarship the past 20 years or so, was the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Bergen, operating as a Centre of Excellence from 2002 to 2012, whose central organizing theme was Periphery and Centre in Medieval Europe.

8 Gullbekk and Jürgensen, "The Economy of Sacrifice."

Figure 1: Coin from Slagelse with legend from Jn 1:1: *In principio erat verbum, et verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat verbum*. Photo courtesy of The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

inter-connectivity – much more so than the ancient world had been.[9] With the Gregorian church reforms, from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, medieval Europe achieved a degree of cultural standardization – or unity in diversity – which was unsurpassed, compared to what came before and after, and which lasted until the Reformation. One example may suffice, from the field of law: By the late medieval period, one historian explains, legal procedure had become standardized to the degree that a lawyer educated in Italy was perfectly able to appear in a court in Norway.[10] Needless to say, this could not have happened today.

In this book, we argue that standardization proceeded through flux and flexibility: negotiations, interpretations, and adaptations. We suggest that such processes are possibly even *required* for successful standardization to take place.[11] On the surface, the tensions between center and periphery, unity and diversity, predictability and flexibility, standards and variations may seem like cases of

9 E.g., Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom.*

10 This is Anders Winroth's observation, in "How European Law Became Standardized" in *Standardization in the Middle Ages. Volume 2: Europe.*

11 See esp. Engh and Turner's chapter in this volume.

order versus confusion: as if medieval people aspired to homogeneity but constantly succumbed to chaos. But, in fact, the two poles – on the one hand *unitas* and predictability and on the other, *varietas* and flexibility – are two sides of the same coin. It takes attention to both poles to understand processes of standardization in the Middle Ages.

Standardization – A Theoretical Perspective

At first glance, the Middle Ages might appear to be an unlikely place to look for standardization. In contemporary usage, standardization is a term mainly applied in industry, technology, and business. Standardization concerns policymakers, strategists, and technocrats dealing with legislation, economics, and engineering. The European Union has no fewer than three standardization bodies, involving tens of thousands of technical experts, interest groups, and business federations. Modern technological and industrial societies are inconceivable without standardization. But is the opposite true, too? Does standardization presuppose modern industry and technology? Are processes of standardization limited to the industrial Enlightenment, to scientific standardization, to standardization of measures and weights, to Taylorism and Fordism?

Although the word "standardization" has roots in medieval Latin (from *standardum*, a military flag or banner), the term bears the stamp of the modern period. Both as a goal, a practice, and as an object of scholarly study, standardization is closely tied to concepts of modernity.[12] But definitions of standardization are open to a broader perspective. According to the Oxford Dictionary, standardization is "the process of making objects or activities of the same type have the same features or qualities; the process of making something standard."[13] Most definitions emphasize standardization as an activity which establishes uniformity and provisions for common and repeated use, therefore creating specific rules and measures to ensure a well-defined practice and reducing the risk of failure. If put this way, standardization can be seen as a vital feature in much of human social interaction, not just limited to specific, highly specialized areas in contemporary societies. In line with this, the historian Andrew L. Russell offers an understand-

12 E.g., Mokyr, "Long-Term Economic Growth and the History of Technology" and Noble, *America By Design*, 76. For a treatment of the move towards quantification in the late Middle Ages, relevant to this, see Crosby, *The Measure of Reality*.

13 "Standardization", Oxford Leaners Dictionary <http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/standardization>.

ing of standardization that allows for a broad, analytical engagement with the term: "the specific meaning of the term 'standard' varies depending on context: it can refer to a screw thread, a unit of measurement, a regular set of practices, or a way of looking at the world."[14] This open-ended and contextual approach is useful for historical scholarship since it both avoids a too narrow restriction of the term and encourages multidisciplinary perspectives.[15]

Recent work in cognitive science and social theory provides useful insights into why standardization is so imperative for cognitively modern human beings (the past 50,000 years or so), why standards are so difficult to achieve, why the fluid equilibria we call standards are tenuous, and how they are achieved at all, for a while.[16] Human behavior is infinitely complex, which makes it highly unpredictable. Generating predictability is a precondition for meaningful social and cultural engagement.[17] Without some shared social, cultural, and linguistic standards, there would be no communication, no communities, only chaos and disintegration. Processes of standardization permeate cultural practices and production, too, despite post-romantic disdain for convention and predictability, and concurrent celebration of the disorderly and the transgressive. Artistic and literary originality requires that there are rules to be broken. Without any cultural and aesthetic standard of form, there would be no creativity, no diversity, no innovation, only mess.

Crucially, while complex human interactions presuppose a degree of predictability and common ground, they also presuppose a degree of flexibility, a circumscribed flexibility, so to speak.[18] Standards are never achieved once and for all; they are maintained. An essential part of maintenance is constant adaptation, readjustment, and innovation.[19] Just take McDonald's restaurants in Italy that serve panini with Parmigiano Reggiano and Caprese salad. Or the success of the thirteenth-century Church in absorbing potential heretical dissent through the endorsement of the mendicant orders.

Standardization processes, moreover, have aspects of normativity and aspects of descriptivity, or normalization.[20] In the former case, standards are attempts to

14 Russell, "Standardization in History," 247–248.

15 See also warnings against compartmentalization in the study of standardization by David, "Standardization Policies for Network Technologies."

16 See Engh and Turner in the present volume.

17 See Engel, *Generating Predictability*.

18 Engh and Turner, this volume; see also Turner and McCubbins, "Selves and Choices" and Steen "The Precarious Self."

19 See Turner, *Origin of Ideas*.

20 See Drucker, *The General Theory of Social Relativity*, 55–60.

copy, emulate, imitate, and conform to a model, an ideal, or a prototype. We speak of "setting the standard," as in the Platonic notion of the paradigmatic *exemplum*. In the latter, standards are implemented through set rules and prescriptive practices that are not idealized, but rather arise from classification and categorization, as when we speak of a standard dish, standard tickets, or standard value: indicating something unremarkable, plain, or abstract, akin to Aristotle's understanding of the serial quality of *exempla*.

The flux between predictability and flexibility, and concurrently between normativity and normalcy, makes standards not just tenuous, but also renders standardization a slippery concept for scholars to come to terms with. Since processes of standardization encompass stability and instability, rules and resistance, conformity and change, paradigm and seriality, the understanding of the specific historical and social forms of these interrelations is critical for further theoretical and empirical study.[21]

Several questions arise from these considerations, some of which are especially pertinent to an inquiry into standardization in premodern societies. What role do formal structures and institutions play in standardization processes? Is standardization top-down or bottom-up, or both? What is the relation between macro and micro levels in standardization, and between power structures on the one hand and agency, resistance, and negotiation on the other?

While we shall not attempt to answer these questions in this introduction, we would like to clarify some preliminary concerns and stances. First, both formal and informal institutions can offer social structures that provide the element of predictability necessary for complex interactions. In a wide sense, institutions can be understood, in the words of a leading scholar on institutional design, as "any outside intervention that impacts on behaviour."[22] Accordingly, generating predictability from the outside – i.e., institutions – does not require any particular structure. Nor does this approach make a distinction between institution and culture, but rather includes "symbol systems, cognitive scripts, and moral templates," as well as more formal codifications and measures.[23] When approaching processes of standardization (and diversity) in premodern societies, with weak formal structures but rich networks and tight communities, such a broad and fluid understanding, attentive to informal structures, is imperative. A case in point are social and cultural groups connected to knowledge-based practices. Studies by Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, and Benedict Anderson (in a modern context) and Brian Stock, Barbara Rose-

21 See also Koch, McMillan, and Peper, *Diversity, Standardization and Social Transformation*, 213.

22 Engel, *Generating Predictability*, 5.

23 Engel, *Generating Predictability*, 5.

nwein, and Colette Moore (in a medieval context) bring to the fore, albeit in different ways and with different emphases, how communities are formed from shared practices and from shared interpretations and expressions.[24] Mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire not only *require* processes of standardization, but they also *produce* standardization: uniformity of practice and norms and provisions for common and repeated use, as we noted above. Concepts of communities of practice (Bourdieu), imagined communities (Anderson), textual communities (Stock), and emotional communities (Rosenwein) implicitly gesture towards the indispensable role of standardization in acculturation and in the building and perpetuation of communities and social identities.

Second, standards emerge both top-down through authorization and bottom-up through integration, and at both micro and macro level – and, above all, they emerge as a result of a combination of these.[25] The crucial point here is that institutions, laws, codification, and structures of hegemony and power sanction processes of standardization, but also that these processes (and the structures that authorize them) can be changed when people start to ignore them, replace them, or reproduce them differently.[26] In a Foucauldian sense, standards and standardization are laced with power and power struggles, which can be insidious since standards and standardization are ubiquitous yet elusive, almost imperceptible.[27] A principle so fundamental in today's society that we rarely reflect upon it, standards are embedded, materially and symbolically, in our physical environments and in our social worlds. Often patterns of standardization are invisible, hidden from our day-to-day consciousness. Standards may appear natural but are in fact a result of ongoing, endless negotiations. Standards come at a cost, and they are never neutral. As Bowker and Star put it: "Each standard and each category valorizes some point of view and silences another."[28] Standardization can therefore tell us much about conflicts and contestation, social organization and moral order, but also trust and cooperation, mutual understanding and common concerns.

In this volume, we endorse a multidisciplinary and contextual approach to standards and standardization. We take a complex and broad view of standardization and cultural structures and restructuring, considering standardization as an open-ended process that involves negotiation and force, resistance and silenc-

24 Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*; Giddens, *Constitution of Society*; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Moore, "Communities of Practice and Incipient Standardization"; Stock, *Implications of Literacy*, 88–240; Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*.

25 David, "Standardization Policies for Network Technologies"; Russell, "Standardization in History."

26 See discussion of Giddens' theory of structuration in Gauntlett, *Media, Gender, and Identity*, 102.

27 Bowker, this volume. See also Bowker and Star, *Sorting Things Out*, 33–50.

28 Bowker and Star, *Sorting Things Out*, 5.

ing, embeddedness and flexibility, cognition and materiality. Above all, we emphasize that standards are not found but invented.[29]

Standardizing in the Medieval North – Rhythms. Embodiment

It is our contention that processes of standardization were not only present in the Middle Ages, but that their study is valuable. Our starting point is that standardization takes place all the time, consciously and unconsciously; it is an integrated part of human interaction and communication. Much of the development in the Middle Ages has elements of standardization, from manuscripts to the judicial system, from rituals to poetry. And although there may have been few standardized units of measurements in the Middle Ages, and even fewer standardized screw threads, there were certainly regular sets of practices and ways of looking at the world that were constantly being constructed and negotiated (and resisted).

The present volume, *Standardization in the Middle Ages. Volume 1: The North*, and its companion, *Standardization in the Middle Ages. Volume 2: Europe*, are the results of a five-year collaboration between seven medievalists from five different departments at the University of Oslo and their research networks.[30] The scope of the two volumes is twofold. First, we aim to achieve a deeper understanding of how medieval people and groups envisioned and enforced predictability, uniformity, and order, and in what ways they attempted to obtain and maintain standards across vast distances and heterogeneous social and cultural structures. Second, we aim to use our medieval sources and cases to learn more about standardization, to develop the theoretical term "standardization" in a tight multidisciplinary collaboration of medievalists from the fields of history, intellectual history, art history, philology, and numismatics with scholars of cognitive science, informatics, and anthropology.

That a group of medievalists should propose to build theory about standardization is a willful and playful provocation of sorts. It serves to jolt our conceptions, to look closer. The advantage of dislodging, indeed appropriating, the concept of standardization from its conceptual habitat of business, industry, and

29 Highlighted in different ways by Lugli, *Making of Measure*; Bowker and Star, *Sorting Things Out*.

30 Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History (IAKH); Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies (ILN); Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas (IFIKK); Museum of Cultural History (KHM); and Norwegian Institute in Rome (DNIR).

mass production – and its clinch with modernity – helps wrestle out elements that scholars have largely ignored or just taken for granted. Modern scholars of history, medievalists included, have frequently employed the terms "standardization" and "standards" to speak of developments in language, law, liturgy, artifacts, architecture, writing, weights, and measures – to name but a few. But only rarely have they actually interrogated the concept, frequently assuming standardization as a given. Prior investigations into historical standardization processes (such as the emergence of clock devices, early modern printing technology, and late medieval efforts to establish monetary unions and "national" or "regional" measurements) have tended to see standards as a byproduct of a shift towards mercantile capitalism or standardization as a measure of quantification. Such investigations, for all their merits, reproduce and sustain narratives of the premodern-modern divide that typically emphasize standardization as a feature of modernity and secular contexts as the locus of processes of standardization.

In this book, we offer a different perspective. We speak of the medieval quest for order as standardization: i.e., attempts to imagine and implement order, to impose and sanction measures – institutional, political, juridical, and aesthetical measures as well as measurement standards. As suggested by the concern over the chaos of Babel, medieval people – perhaps even more than moderns – turned towards the promise of sameness.[31] But they did have different assumptions than moderns about what standards were, how standards were achieved, and what they could accomplish. They also spoke of it differently. For although standardization is not a medieval term, there were certainly many medieval words, both Nordic and Latin, that expressed concern with generating predictability and with concepts of common usage and norms. Most prominently, there was the remarkably complex Latin term *mensura*, "measure," and its related webs of word clusters, *canon*, *regula*, *modus*, *moderatio*, *máti*, *mál*, and *merki* (discussed in this volume in the chapter by Aavitsland and Hagen) as well as the terms *uniformitas* and *conformitas* (in Engh and in Engh and Turner). In addition, there were notions of representation, substitution, and exchange (in Gullbekk, Walsh, and Moen), classification (in Orning), form (in Jørgensen) and function (in Sigurðsson), and genre and convention (in Johansson).

This book, then, deals with medieval concepts of standardization, embedded in specifically medieval frameworks. In other words, we do not maintain a teleology that has modernity as its logical endpoint. Looking at standardization in connection with medieval ideas and practices means interrogating processes that do not delimit standardization to modern notions of quantification, capitalism, and

31 See Lugli, *Making of Measure*; Olson, "The Significance of Sameness."

industrial production. It means, rather, interrogating how theology and technology, qualitative and quantitative perception, abstract and concrete measures, were inextricably linked through processes of standardization, in ways that can deepen our insight into governmentality, institution building, community building, and identity building in medieval societies. The Middle Ages may show us more clearly how imperative and how pervasive, but also how tenuous and how contingent standardization is.

Employing standardization as a framing term and flexible framework, each of the nine chapters in this volume recognizes and emphasizes conspicuous features of standards and standardization. The chapters do not attempt to define the term, but rather use it as a tool to interrogate various cultural phenomena, focusing on recognizable patterns that may show us something about standardization processes. Earlier, we explained that standardization involves processes and purposes that incorporate tensions between normativity and normalcy, between top-down and bottom-up, between local adaptations and global integration, and between flexibility and predictability. Since aspects of these dyads are persistent in all the cases of standardization that we have studied, we would like to emphasize that the oppositions are by no means mutually excluding and that standardization in the Nordic Middle Ages played out in non-linear and amorphous ways, rather than through any either/or dichotomy. We propose two terms – *rhythms* and *embodiment* – to refer to two different, but loosely overlapping patterns of standardization. The two concepts structure this book, dividing the volume in two homonymous parts.

Rhythms (Part 1) point to processes of standardization that are primarily quantitative: embedded in practices of classification and copying, repetition and reworking. Rhythms denote standardization through seriality (as in Aristotle's *exemplum*), sameness, rhyme patterns. It is the kind of standardization that we moderns easily recognize as such: norms, conventions, laws, functions. *Embodiment* (Part 2) refers to qualitative aspects of standardization, as in a paradigm (in Plato's conception): the ideal form, or model, to emulate and embody. This pattern of standardization underpins socialization, learning, and identity formation. We can recognize its force in imitative engagements with poetry, devotion, and ritualization; embodiment is the domain of actualization and form (rather than just content or function). It highlights notions of presence and representation – in a picture, in a poem, or in the mind. Although embodiment is an entrenched concept in Christianity, and as such distinctly medieval, it evokes also more broadly the social aspirations of selves.

The first part, *Rhythms*, opens with Geoffrey Bowker's theoretical chapter, "Raising Standards," on the historiography of standards, which emphasizes practices and *de facto* standards (rather than *de jure* standards). Seated at his computer

desk, musing at the myriad of standards surrounding him, Bowker embarks on a spirited and lively exploration of the deep history of standards, spanning Covid-19 and DNA, empire building and computing technology, Foucault and Lacan. Explaining why we need more histories of standards, he urges historians to turn their attention to standardization in order to deepen our understanding of the power of standards and of the ways in which we live (somewhat reliably) together.

Next, Karl G. Johansson's "Penning the Standard: Norms, Conventions, and Usage in the Scandinavian Middle Ages" offers a threefold analysis of standardization in Scandinavian literate culture from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, focusing on the history of writing (paleography and orthography), the history of texts (orality, literacy, and genre), and the history of the book (codicology and materiality). Discussing concepts of norms, conventions, and usage in medieval manuscript cultures, Johansson argues that early efforts at bottom-up standardization in Scandinavia were feeble due to weak and even non-existent authority and were later supplanted by more effective top-down initiatives that introduced modified European variants.

Hans Jacob Orning, in "Standardizing Violence in Norwegian Medieval Laws," discusses how violence was perceived, classified, and framed in Gulathingslaw and Magnus Lagabøte's Code of the Realm. Rather than seeing the transition from the former to the latter as a development from pre-order to order, as legal historians have argued, Orning suggests that the two medieval law codes represent two very different judicial concepts of violence. Whereas the younger Code of the Realm expressed a standardization process from above, the older Gulathingslaw standardized and classified violence according to judicial principles of addition and accumulation, in processes that were bottom-up instead of top-down, more concrete and less abstract, and that fell outside any center-periphery axis. Drawing on perspectives from Geoffrey Bowker and Michel Foucault, Orning applies an understanding of standardization that substitutes the question of progress with one of power while maintaining that different, even opposing standardization processes could be complementary and could co-exist.

In "Parish Sizes in Hólar Bishopric in the Middle Ages," Jón Viðar Sigurðsson turns to the introduction of the parish system in Iceland. Analyzing a unique source, the *máldagar* (cartulary) of Hólar bishopric, Sigurðsson takes a quantitative approach to the parishes in Hólar. By breaking down the numbers of farms, households, population, and priests in the parishes, he establishes that parishes were not at all standardized in size, but they were standardized through their practices. Notably, the older organizational unit, the *hreppr* (commune), which had the double task of financially aiding farms in case of accident and caring for the poor and elderly, co-existed side by side with the new parish organization, which was responsible for pastoral care. The form of the parish system was flexi-

ble and highly diversified, but its function and its qualitative aspects, namely, pastoral care, was standardized.

The theoretical chapter by Line Cecilie Engh and Mark Turner, "Flexibility, Predictability, Standardization: The Difficult Art of Creating Stable Selves," introduces the second part of the volume, *Embodiment*. The chapter explores the predictability problem: Human behavior is astonishingly complex, which makes it highly unpredictable. To engage with each other, people must somehow generate the requisite level of predictability. Human creativity creates the problem of unpredictability, but it also provides the solution: Cultures exploit human creativity to invent systems and institutions that generate some stability and predictability. From the perspective of cognitive science, Engh and Turner discuss how medieval monastic communities put in place standardizing systems that allowed imaginative exploration of potential selves yet delivered stable, coherent selves needed in the moment of action, choice, or self-presentation, arguing that cultural standardization requires systems to balance flexibility and predictability.

Kristin B. Aavitsland and Kaja M. Hagen's chapter "Setting the Standard: Devotional Measures in the Medieval North" explores a special instance of authoritative standard in medieval culture: the so-called *mensura Christi*, a length measure claimed to reflect the stature of Christ, distributed in various media throughout Europe at least from the thirteenth century onwards. Assuming a character between image and relic, devotional measures clearly break with modern notions of what metrical standards are and do. Presenting three Scandinavian cases from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, Aavitsland and Hagen analyze three salient features of devotional measures – agency, authority, and representation – and situate them in the wider context of medieval devotional practices of the medieval Latin West. Largely overlooked in modern scholarship, the cases uncover a medieval and a qualitative approach to measurements.

Line Cecilie Engh's chapter "The Soft Standards of Liturgical Sensescapes: Edifying Cistercians in the North" discusses Cistercian liturgy and architecture, with the aim of contributing to a deeper understanding of the Cistercian emphasis on common standards and conformity in the twelfth century. With specific focus on the two Norwegian houses Hovedøya (1147) and Lyse (1146), Engh analyzes "hard" and "soft" standards: on the one hand, centralized, top-down rules and legislation, and on the other hand, more flexible, horizontal processes of learning, interpretation, and engagement with the built and natural environment. The chapter concludes that the processes of soft standardization, through which the monks immersed and blended themselves into their liturgical sensescapes, were crucial for building institutional unity and for building monks.

In an interdisciplinary approach to "Standardization of Ritual Offerings: The Eucharist, Human Sacrifice and Monetization," Svein H. Gullbekk, Matthew J. Walsh,

and Marianne Moen focus on standardization of rituals and sacrificial offerings in general and in particular the Eucharist and its representations, substitutions and exchanges based on historical, archaeological, anthropological, and numismatic evidence. Discussing sacrificial rituals and its route to standardized and culturally uniform expressions, the authors show how the sublimation and legitimization of the Eucharistic ritual was tied to economy and monetary ideas and values, both ideologically and in practice. The Eucharist, as ritual, was perpetuated and refined without losing its primary focus or purpose, and its historically established form can be understood as a complex process of increasing standardization.

In the final chapter, "Skaldic Poetry – Encrypted Communication," Jon Gunnar Jørgensen argues that in Old Norse court poetry (*dróttkvætt*), the form was more important than the content. Discussing the extremely advanced metric and poetic standards of Skaldic poetry, characterized by a system of syllables, phonological patterns, and linguistic expressions, Jørgensen shows that it placed high demands on both the speaker (skald) and the recipient. Instead of facilitating communication, the metric requirements created an intellectual challenge which functioned to test the degree of courtly education of the participants. The highly standardized metric form of Skaldic poetry thus became a site of contestation where elements of social aspiration, status, and gender were played out.

As Geoffrey Bowker points out in the following chapter, we live in a world riven through with standards: To understand more of their deep, rich past is to understand ourselves better. At a fundamental level, all technology, all culture, and arguably all life involves standards. Our two companion volumes propose to expand our understanding of ideas and practices that produced, and were produced by, standards for protocol and procedure, authority and affordances, selves and communities, creating that more or less unified and unifying entity that we call Latin medieval Europe. Concurrently, we will hopefully shed more light on the historical, social, cultural, and cognitive processes of standardization, in a long line of Babylonian confusion.

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Abbreviations

PL = Patrologia Latina. Edited by J-P Migne, 221 vols. Paris, 1841–1855.

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Part 1: **Rhythms**

Geoffrey C. Bowker

2 Raising Standards

Abstract: We live in a world of standards. However, it is not clear how to understand the historiography of how we got there. This chapter proposes that standards have a deep biological and historical heritage. In particular, it argues that using a category of modern invention to understand medieval standards is both appropriate and enlightening.

Keywords: Categorization / classification, de jure / de facto standards, historiography of technology & knowledge

Introduction

I am writing this essay in my study. And thinking about lists of standards – be these modeled on the exuberant excess of Rabelais or the famous heterogeneous Chinese encyclopedia of Borges.[1] As I glance around, I start to take stock of the standards I am surrounded by. The computer I'm typing on alone contains multitudes. Two sets of these at least have a deep history. In order to get two different systems to communicate, we need good "handshakes" (a technical term in this context) between them. We also need computer protocols – another technical term which reaches far back into diplomatic history.

My screen is of a standard (though excessive) size which maps onto a standard sized computer desk which neatly mounts it and two speakers arrayed side by side. Should I have the temerity to open the back of the computer, I should see standard memory units slotted into standard bays which themselves attach to my standard operating system (Windows 11, alas). My computer is plugged into a standard electrical socket (it's interesting that sockets themselves are not yet in-

1 Rabelais, *Les cinq livres des faits et dits de Gargantua et Pantagruel;* Foucault, *Les mots et les choses.*

Note: I am grateful to Hans Jacob Orning and Line Cecilie Engh for the opportunity to write this, and for their encouragement and patience. Dialogue with Svein Harald Gullbekk about money and standards was invaluable (though discourse about money should perhaps have a price). And I thank Sarah E. Thomas for her careful and very helpful suggestions; and Eva Marie Lafuente Nilsson for cleaning up my invariably messy footnotes.

Geoffrey C. Bowker, University of California at Irvine

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ternationally standardized, as I frequently remember only when I arrive in a foreign country without the correct adapter).[2] Of course, the voltage of the electrical current has to be within certain limits or my computer will either not fire up or will be destroyed in a blaze of unglory.

Let's not even talk about Bluetooth, a johnny-come-lately standard which does not sit comfortably into operating systems – which explains its frequent failure. Or my word processor, Word, which has become a somewhat universal standard unfortunately. It is always worth remembering that it is not the best standard that wins historically, it is frequently an agonistic contest with the dice loaded in favor of one party.

But, as ever, my gaze has been too enthralled by my computer. Let's spend a minute with my desk. It came in a standard size box (why tailor a box to a specific product?), itself designed to stack into the standard sized container which brought it (probably) from China. The desk is a mix of metal and plywood covered with a varnish, whose chemical composition is strictly controlled (we do, after all, have some standards about the outgassing of carcinogenic compounds – even though I do wish we had rather more). The screws I had to put in with an Allen key as I assembled it from the carton it came in had standard Whitworth threads – whose progenitor boasted their connection to the principle of the division of labor.[3] I had to choose the Allen key carefully (I didn't like the one they provided so much) – I have two sets of course, one imperial and one metric . . . they almost work interchangeably but there is always the danger of losing the hexagon and being left with a maddening circle if I try to tighten with the wrong one. Talk about double standards! I start to wonder about the screws – the thread in the UK was

2 Egyedi, "Infrastructure Flexibility Created by Standardized Gateways: The Cases of XML and the ISO Container." When such as electric plugs do not become standardized, one is tempted to ask whether this is really separate development (without convergent evolution) or rather a form of nationalism/xenophobia . . . for the latter, we don't want "their" plugs going into "our" sockets.

3 The Whitworth (Imperial) screw threads were standardized in Manchester, UK in 1841. Whitworth, "On an Uniform System of Screw Threads," 160: "To maintain uniformity, provision must be made for multiplying standards of the diameters and threads. This may be easily done, and will prevent the screwing tackle from degenerating by use and propagation. This part of the case is connected with a subject of great extent which, under every aspect, lays claim to the attention of practical engineers. We allude to the general use of standard gauges, graduated to a fixed scale, as constant measures of size. It is quite practicable by such means to work to a common measure with a degree of accuracy sufficient for all ordinary purposes. Corresponding parts, instead of being got up one to another, might be prepared separately. The indefinite multiplication of sizes would thus be prevented, and the economy of the workshop simplified to an extent beyond calculation."

standardized in the 1870s: each one is backed by its own myriad standards – consider the standardized machinery, the standards of production and the standard working day in the factory which made them. The desk is of adjustable height – the range of heights work well for those with normatively acceptable bodies (compare the canonical problem of very short people trying to operate elevators in hotels or high rises).

I then look at what's on my desk. The standard academic disordered collection of books and manila folders. Those which I use are Letter size, which makes it difficult when I spend time in Europe as documents in standard paper size there peak out of the edges and get bent. The books are generically within a range of sizes (let's say quarto and folio to adopt older standards); a convenience for bookshelf constructors . . . though to be honest most of my books are in piles on the floor.

I have a fountain which keeps me quiet company. I can't begin to describe the standardized controls there are over the water that it circulates[4] – even though the fountain itself is largely indifferent. I could of course go on at almost infinite length. The general points are that we live in a world riven through with standards; and that each standard object I pay attention to itself opens up to a myriad of standards contained within it. It contains multitudes.

This is a somewhat higgledy-piggledy list which I shall endeavor to order some below. The overall picture does remind me of a story a microbiologist once told me about nematodes. If you take a clump of soil and wash out all the inorganics, you are left with a clump of nematodes which looks for all the world like the original clump of soil.[5] We see the objects and artefacts of our creation and think them solid and independent, but if we washed out all the material we would be left with dense networks of standards which for all the world seem to have the consistency, opaqueness and rigidity of the material world. We live in a world of standards . . . but how did we get there?

4 "Water Quality Standards," California Water Quality Monitoring Council <https://www.mywaterquality.ca.gov/water_quality_standards/index.html>.

5 "Agricultural soils generally support less than 100 nematodes in each teaspoon (dry gram) of soil. Grasslands may contain 50 to 500 nematodes, and forest soils generally hold several hundred per teaspoon." "The Role of Soil Protozoa and Nematodes." The Ohio State University <https://ny24000991.schoolwires.net/cms/lib03/NY24000991/Centricity/Domain/10/the%20role%20of%20soil%20nemotodes%20and%20protozoa%20%20OSU%20fact%20sheet.pdf>.

The Historiography of Standards

There have been standards over many millennia. Consider, for example, the standards of weights and measure in the Bronze Age.[6] These were not called standards then, as far as we know. In the English language, the cluster of meanings we associate with the word for our context (abstracting away standards as ensigns or flags) fan out in a range from the fifteenth century: "Wei3tis..acordant to ye standard of ye Chekier"[7] which gives us the "authorized exemplar" through the sixteenth century; "Euery handfull to contein.iiii. inches of the standerde"[8] which gives us the legal magnitude of a weight or measure to the seventeenth century; "As for the divisions of the yeare, and the quartering out this remarkable standard of time, there have passed especially two distinctions,"[9] which gives us a unit of measurement. And it is a veritable cluster of meanings, which we shall unpack a little below. However, it seems to the unpracticed eye that it is only since the latest imperium – the colonization of the world by Western powers from the nineteenth century – that standards have become a central part of our state, industrial, and commercial operations.

So why retroject a category to a period before its common adoption, and to fields (for example, liturgy) beyond its current sway? The generic answer is clear: one does so in order to learn something which may not have been apparent to actors at the time. For the case of standards, I suggest three particular reasons.

The first can be sourced in Leslie Kurke's marvelous book *Coins, Bodies, Games and Gold*. She points to the hiatus of some three hundred years between the common usage of coins in ancient Greece to the first philosophical discourse about money by Aristotle in his *Politics*. Her foundational question is whether this means that people were not "thinking" money over that period and her response is that of course they were. They were just not using the word. Through a close reading particularly of Herodotus, she develops an analysis based on the following observation: ". . . the more I looked at coinage, the more I was led to other things: the imagery of metals, stories about tyrants, prostitutes, counterfeiting, and games."[10] Just because a word is not being used in manuscript or published

6 Ialongo and Rahmstor, "Bronze Age Weight Systems as a Measure of Market Integration in Western Eurasia."

7 OED 1429 Rolls of Parl. IV. 349/1.

8 OED 1540 *Act 32 Hen. VIII* c. 13 §2.

9 OED 1646 Sir T. Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* VI. iii. 284. This meaning, oddly since we talk of "standard time" is given as obsolete or rare.

10 Kurke, *Coins, Bodies, Games, and Gold*, xi.

discourse does not mean that it is not *effectively* there, if one reads, in Smith's wonderful term, by "listening forth" to the text.[11]

By the same token, money is not necessarily just "about" equating a certain weight of precious metal (from the eighth century in Britain a pound sterling was a pound of silver – more than 200 times its current value . . .). Hart asks and answers his own question: "If the value of money does not lie in precious metals or in the power of governments, where does it lie? We will conclude, after the following investigation, that money is mainly, but not exclusively, an act of remembering, a way of keeping track of some of the exchanges we each enter into with the rest of humanity. And that is what makes money an instrument of collective memory."[12] This is astonishingly close to a formal description of Bitcoin today as the formal, inviolable register of contracts; the perfect memory.[13] So just as money and its standards reach out into multiple cultural registers, so are multiple culture registers imploded onto the coin.[14] There is never a single point of origin for any historical entity (I remember the vain search for the first member of the proletariat):[15] they precipitate out of complex discourses and practices. We are blinkering ourselves as historians if we try to trace a modern thread (the vast proliferation of standards setting and enforcing bodies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) to a single source. A useful analogy here comes from Michel Serres' talking about the origin of rivers.[16] If you go back to the source/spring then we find a million invisible capillaries feeding into it. It is only after these have collected together that the river, with its linear arrow of time and its accompanying inevitability, flows out.

The second defense of retrojection is that it sheds a light on phenomena that otherwise would not have been easy to explain. One example here is the wonderful introduction to *This is Enlightenment* by Cliff Siskin and William Warner.[17] They argue that the current obsession with media and mediation, while not corresponding to a named discourse in the long eighteenth century, can provide tools for rethinking the past. And a media vision of communication practices then is indeed fruitful. In London, say, there were seven or eight postal deliveries per day in the late 1800s, so that one could invite someone to dinner, get a response back, reply to ask them what allergies they had (if that's not too modern a coinage . . .) and still

11 See, for example, Kearney, "Institutional Ethnography."
12 Hart, *Money in an Unequal* World, 234.
13 Bashir, *Mastering Blockchain. Distributed Ledgers,* ch.3.
14 Bowker, *Memory Practices in the Sciences,* ch.5.
15 Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir.*
16 Serres, *Genèse.*
17 Siskin and Warner, *This Is Enlightenment*, 1–34.

have time to let them know that you had suddenly fallen ill and couldn't make it – much like texting or email today. Roger Chartier writes about the production of personalized news feeds from the stock exchange in London, written (by hand, not printed) several times a day – just as we have newsfeed options today from a number of sources.[18]

There is always a danger here of precursoritis – as displayed in the title of the work *The Victorian Internet*,[19] which discussed *inter alii* the habit of telegraph operators of appending personal messages to the texts they were sending – uncannily akin to the origin myth of email in the habit of programmers of adding messages to the header of files they were sharing in the early internet. Clearly, in this case – as with the personalized newspapers echoing newsfeeds – there is no single historical thread which takes us from one to the other. However, the later instantiations with their own complex discourses and entanglements can clearly provide an analytic tool to look at the earlier forms: they can help sensitize us to connections which might not otherwise be apparent. They bring together later tools to look at an earlier era – much as one can use the calculus, say (developed in a specific seventeenth-century theological, political and philosophical discourse by Leibnitz and Newton) to address issues in ancient Greek mathematics.

The third reason for retrojection is rather more expansive. The concept of standards has been over the past century at least a very useful way of thinking about the natural world (see, for example, the use of "standard state" conditions). In the era of Covid, the immune system and its workings have been brought to public consciousness more than ever before. But that has been a longer strand of argumentation that starts from the observation that the immune system acts as a sixth sense, or arguably another form of intelligence to ratiocination.[20] And that it works largely as a regime of standards enforcement and regulation. The immune system decides what entities can come into the body by excluding those it recognizes and considers potentially harmful. It still lets a lot in – over 90% of our body cells come from microfauna and microflora unrelated to our genome. This gatekeeping function is only the first act however. Once an entity penetrates, it is subject to regulation within the body. As with the notorious spike on the Covid virus, this works by only accepting certain standardized form of communication between the exterior of our particular cells and the new body. The spike works very well at creating a "handshake" which permits entry. It is something of a truism that we think with the technology of our times – the brain went from

18 Chartier, *Inscrire et Effacer*.

19 Standage, *The Victorian Internet.*

20 Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber, "A Symbiotic View of Life."

being hydraulic to a telephone switchboard to a computer over the past 150 years to mirror our dominant forms. Extending technology to "dispositifs techniques,"[21] which surely standards are, we can argue that our current form of being in the world is also being discovered within our bodies. Further, we have the "standard human" and innumerable other biological standards for research purposes. Functional MRIs use a "standard" brain – and need to map real brains using GIS technology onto the standard brain, which never really exists, in order to produce comparable results. For Covid, an "international standard was established by the WHO Expert Committee on Biological Standardization as a primary calibrant to harmonize the measurement of anti-SARS-CoV-2 antibodies."[22] Thus nature deploys standards, and we standardize nature in order to explore it.

One can argue, though this is perhaps a step too far, that the principle of homeostasis is core to both our industrial and natural worlds. Terence Deacon among others, drawing on a tradition going back to Claude Bernard in the nineteenth century, posits the principle of homeostasis as core to all life – we need to be able to take any input and transform it to within a set of closely specified standards which work for the "machinery" of life (for example, keeping body temperature to roughly 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit; or, more perniciously, keeping our BMI to within an arbitrary standard range).[23] Homeostasis takes a wild, unruly input and transforms it to a standard, interoperable form. And, as Lynn Margulis argues: "Machines are just DNA's latest attempt to achieve homeostasis."[24] By this vision, all life and technology fundamentally involve standards.

There is of course a problem here as adumbrated by Latour in *We Have Never Been Modern*:[25] he describes how we project our society onto nature and then read nature accordingly and find our society natural. What I am pointing to here is a somewhat different dimension though. It is arguable that any form of organization – from a loosely coupled federation to an imperium requires some kind of standardized practices and interfaces. While the typical discourse on standards relates them, in Britain at least, to the development of the British Empire in the nineteenth century and the accompanying Imperial system of units

21 Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir*.

22 "WHO international standard for SARS-CoV-2 antibodies to determine markers of protection," The Lancet, Microbe <https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247(21)00307-4/fulltext>.

23 The "standard" BMI range fails to deal with healthy outliers, as do cholesterol standards. We try to standardize the human body to within limits we can deal without making too much work for ourselves in individuating.

24 Clarke, *Gaian Systems*, 168.

25 Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern.*

which came into force from the 1820s – a system also known as the Exchequer Standards, which replaced the Winchester Standards in force from 1588 to 1825.[26] The naïve view of the medieval epoch and those before it in Europe was of localized centers of power operating only locally, historians such as Frankopan demonstrate how loose federations (an apt descriptor for our own bodies) have extended across the world for millennia – and just like the centralized form of imperial organization are reliant on the maintenance of accepted standards for trade and commerce in all their forms.[27] Standards are fundamental to all organizations. However, to really make sense of this we need to unpack the term a little.

Standards in all their Variety

It is possible, indeed all too common, to give a positivist reading of standards. A special issue of *Wissenschaftsmanagement*, cited by the wonderful economist of standards Peter Swann, claims that: "Standards are codified knowledge. They express the work and experience of generations. They define how technologies, interfaces and products must be made in order to work properly and fit together."[28] This affords us a vision of the growth of standards accompanying and reflecting the March of the Intellect.[29] There is just as much wrong with the standards side of this adequation as with the intellectual side.

We begin with an apparently fundamental (not so much in practice) distinction between *de jure* and *de facto* standards. If I want to rebuild my home in the Santa Cruz mountains, burned down in the fires last year, there are a number of standards I must comply with: I cannot put electrical sockets into the floor (as the original builders did); the driveway down to my house has to be a certain width with a turnaround at the bottom so that fire trucks have access and egress as necessary; I must now include sprinklers (not part of the former building code) and so forth. This is the beginning of a list I could of course propagate endlessly. It is worth noting that these *de jure* standards are not necessarily followed – some 80% of houses in the area had additions not "to code" before the fires. However,

26 "Imperial Units," Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_units>.

27 Frankopan, *The Silk Roads*. Cf. Engh et al. in the introduction of this volume: "Medieval Latin Europe was characterized by inter-connectivity – much more so than the ancient world had been," 4–5.

28 Cited in Swann, "The Economics of Standardization: An Update," 26.

29 Cf. William Heath's marvelous March of the Intellect paintings, "March of the Intellect," Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/March_of_Intellect>.

there is a strong incentive for me to do so, since the insurance company could refuse my claim in case of a future fire if they found evidence of defalcation. My past, presents and future are caught in a tangled legal and economic web which constrains my actions.

On the other hand, a *de facto* standard at first glance seems to carry less weight. Or again, if I am a mason in the seventeenth century in England, no-one is forcing me to go to the town square to see the standard stone slab size for local construction, though it will certainly be a lot easier if I do.[30] If I write an article for the journal *Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, it is a somewhat universal standard that I should have a title, abstract and introduction. Nowhere is it written that I should have separate sections for a literature review, methodology, findings, and discussion before the more universal conclusion (dear Reader, this chapter does indeed have the latter). However, I know that if I want to get published in the journal, I must provide these. I am in a quandary though when advising my students: there are *de facto* standards for how many papers a student should publish to get a tenure track job. The general standard in the USA is a clear: "far too many," in the sense that the rate of publication has outstripped the growth of readership since the late nineteenth century. We publish because of the *de facto* standard for gaining positions and then tenure is out of all proportion with the ability of folk to actually read. Runaway standards that it's very difficult to escape.

No-one is forcing me to use the QWERTY keyboard – there are alternatives (e.g. the Dvorak layout) which do the job pretty much as well.[31] However, it's almost impossible to imagine a Western world without it.[32] This is a canonical example of how a *de facto* standard can become universal: it's all about the "inertia of the installed base."[33] Sure, we might come out with a better layout (I like the Advantage2 Kinesis layout with a much more sensible and central placement of space, delete, control etc.). However, to change this globally we would have to agree globally to change how factories produce keyboards, how people learn to type on them, what to do with the "legacy" keyboards using the old standard and

30 "Brickmakers were typically paid by the brick, which gave them an incentive to make them too small. As a result, legislation was laid down regulating the minimum sizes and each town kept measures against which bricks had to be compared," "History of Construction," Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_construction#Techniques. For a modern-day version see "Trafalgar Square Imperial Measurements," Atlas Obscura https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/trafalgar-square-imperial-measurements.

31 David, "Clio and the Economics of QWERTY." There is a longer myth, that Dvorak would be quicker – it's not.

32 For the Chinese keyboard and its history see Mullaney, *The Chinese Typewriter. A History.*

33 Star, "The Ethnography of Infrastructure."

so forth. It would cost vast amounts of capital (billions of dollars) and time (much the same as capital) with a payoff which would at best be marginal. In terms of evolutionary theory,[34] we are resting at a certain point in the "fitness landscape"[35] of possible configurations – not necessarily by any means the best.

The clearest common example deployed against the "codified knowledge" theory of standards is the war between Betamax and VHS during the development of videotape technology. The former was, and I hesitate to use the words, objectively better – it gave better picture quality. VHS won out in the initial struggle (more on the these below), but it soon became so entrenched that it was impossible to go beyond it: manufacturers of videotape deployed it, builders of video players and so forth. After a while the installed base had become so dominant that even if I cleaved to the superior standard, I just couldn't buy enough product. It is not so much knowledge that gets codified as economic, social and manufacturing processes.[36] Our standards have folded into them a complex history: they do not represent the triumph of the spirit but rather the just so story of how we got to the present state of affairs. While there might be a clear and present theoretical distinction between *de facto* and *de jure* standards, in practice there is much truck between the two.

At the apogee of empire (and colonialism), Western countries began to move into the managerial mode of organization which now seems such an inevitable part of our culture.[37] This was undergirded by standards. In the United States the largest companies were associated with the insurance industry and the railway industry. The former is associated with the rise of computing. After the market for middle class insurance was saturated, the only way to reach the working class was rapid creation of actuarial tables (the first international conference on statistics dates to the 1850s).[38] Huge insurance offices, often in the Midwest, began to organize around information processing – giving rise to organizational forms which were then folded into the machinery of computing. (In the twentieth century in Norway, the first "object oriented" language – an ancestor of the ubiquitous Java language today – was developed by an organization sociologist working with a

34 For evolutionary theories of technology history, see Gille, *Histoire des techniques*; Simondon, *Sur la technique.*

35 Kauffman, *The Origins of Order*. With respect to "fitness landscapes," string theory posits that we are at a certain resting place in the space of physical landscapes – by no means necessarily the optimum, *pace* Leibnitz.

36 And political struggles – more of this below.

37 Chandler, *The Visible Hand.*

38 Hacking, *The Taming of Chance*; cf. Foucault on governmentality in Burchel, Gordon, and Miller, *The Foucault Effect.*

computer programmer – it was called Simula, since it aimed to formalize and standardize office procedures).[39] To make this work required both standard, interchangeable workers and above all else standardized forms. The material nature of these forms came into computing technology today, through the 80 column Prussian statistical tables transported into the 80 column standards of our word processing systems. Standards have afterlives. The story has been told too often to bear detailed repetition, but it is clearly the other major industry of the time, railways, that gave us standard time in the US and the UK. It was impossible to produce coherent timetables with innumerable local times; and it was impossible to manage rolling stock so as to avoid head on collisions without it as well). This move to standardize time underlays our Internet technology. We used to be happy with leap years (with a one day shift), which became leap minutes as demanded by our computing technology for its standards to operate. This then became the leap second. Unfortunately, a leap second doesn't quite work out well, so nowadays the leap second is "smeared" over several hours so that standard computer time is not affected.[40] Who knew that the "lost 11 days" as Britain moved from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in 1752 (itself necessary to standardize time as rates of communication increased; time no longer being able to be so insular and modular) would come down to infinitesimal fractions of a second.

To elucidate the ways in which standards enfold their own history and in which *de facto* standards become powerful, I concentrate on a simpler, less familiar story than the general nineteenth-century standard story above. We can look the story of email as told by Joanne Yates.[41] When managers wrote to their staff they began using the standard letter format of the time – beginning with the date and a salutation (My Dear Sir . . .) and ending with a formal close ("I am, Sir, your humble servant" – or as one of my friends preferred when writing back to nameless bureaucrats: "You are, Sir, my humble servant"). However, as organizations expanded in size and new reproductive technologies – notable the Gestetner – became available, these superfluous flourishes were whittled down until we had the standard memo form of the mid-twentieth century with simple headers: From, To, Subject and at the bottom a list of who was to receive a "carbon copy" and whether there was an attachment (Enc. or "enclosure"). This organizational, technological history got enfolded into the standard email format of today: From, To, Subject; Attach; CC; BCC. For years my students in computer science have had no idea what a "carbon copy" was till I showed them a picture of the old technol-

39 There is an irony here in that there was later a management craze to make organizations more "object oriented."

40 Genosko and Hegarty, "Smearing time: Critical Temporality and Corporate Ontology."

41 Yates, *Control through Communication.*

ogy – and even then, they were uninterested. The point here is that the ubiquitous *de facto* standard form of email tells us a lot about social and organizational practice in the nineteenth century; as well as offering an image of its technology.

Old standards die very hard. In France one can find spectral traces of the predecimal system: one buys oysters by the "douzaine" or dozen, even though ten would be just as good a number . . . . Base 12 arithmetic itself is an echo of Babylonian base 60 mathematics (60 is highly convenient since it has so many factors – 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10). The United Kingdom, otherwise completely metric, cleaves to miles per hour, unlike any other country in the former Commonwealth. In Australia as elsewhere the change from miles to kilometers was effected overnight – countless signs had to be taken down and new ones put up; another example of the inertia of the installed base. Changing standards is a very expensive business.

We have so far taken standards somewhat singly; however, they are highly ramified in our societies today. Even standards have standards. To see why and how, let us turn to Swann's preoccupation: their economical dimensions. He lists eight "intermediate" effects for them, of which for our purposes I highlight three: division of labor and trust and risk.[42]

The principle of the division of labor is notably attached to the work of Adam Smith, and is surely one of the "load bearing" concepts of the past three centuries.[43] Before the nineteenth century, the work of clock and watch production was that of a skilled craftsman, who worked his materials each step of the way. The Coventry mode of watch production, so beloved of Charles Babbage and indeed one of the central origins of the history of computing, split this into 32 separate operations.[44] The immediate advantage was that most of these operations could be carried out by low paid, relatively unskilled workers. The division of labor gave you simultaneously interchangeable workers (you could swap one out for another easily, since the skills they used were easy to learn) and standardized parts (each link in the production process had to rely on the step before producing the "same" outcome – otherwise there would be skill involved in adapting it). The standard worker had to be coupled with the standard part: for the former see the Therbligs of time and motion studies in the 1920s, where each motion made by a worker was put into graphical form, and workers were expected to

42 Swann, "The Economics of Standardization: An Update," 23. The others he mentions are economies of scale (which can be folded into division of labor); competences (ditto); network effects; barriers to entry; transaction costs and precision.

43 Bolla, *The Architecture of Concepts.*

44 Bowker, "The Time of Computers."

adopt optimal standard movements.[45] As the great manufactories grew during the nineteenth century, this led to a vast web of interconnected standards – pig iron was processed into standardized steel ingots which could be ingested by a variety of factories for different purposes, for example: they had to be the right size and shape, and of the requisite quality.[46]

When the principle of the division of labor extends beyond a single factory producing its own parts, the resultant vast web of standards; one needs to be able to trust that intermediate products made in distant parts of the empire not only fit the immediate technical specification, but also conform to the standards of the next link in the chain. Hence the need for standards on standards. The International Standards Organization, a silent (for most) wielder of enormous power has sets of standards which cover manufacturing processes.[47] It is not enough to show that the final product has been built to a technical standard, you need to be able to show that it was built in a way that conformed to manufacturing standards – so that, to take a simple example, you know that no toxic chemicals were used to produce the otherwise ideal object. One way of understanding this is in terms of regulating trust; which is always a core dimension of the standards process – and indeed of empire writ large. For example, Apple relies on and must trust chips produced in China, which has different environmental, construction, and labor laws. Alas it generically enforces American standards for the parts and ignores it for the working conditions. But then again, consider what it means to say our standards should have universal sway – that plays plangent if you are really saying that in order to respect difference we will enforce sameness. Sigh.

We may seem to be a long way from medieval standards, but I believe we are not. The seemingly inevitable ubiquity and reach of standards today did not spring afresh from the industrial revolution. They have a much longer, deeper history and are of much broader scope than the vision of the modern *homo economicus* (soon to be replaced in some visions by the *homo machinus*, where people themselves become irrelevant).[48] Exploring that deep history can enrich the present through removing the aura of inevitability and recovering the infinite threads which have woven together our current age of standards. Standards are not about codified knowledge so much as about codified practices, arrangements, and technologies – and are to be understood much better in terms of a Foucauldian archaeology than a linear history.

45 Re. Therbligs: cf. Axel, "According Tools with Meaning." "Therblig" is "Gilbreth" (the economist) spelled backwards.

46 Beniger, *The Control Revolution.*

47 Yates and Murphy, *Engineering Rules.*

48 Bowker, "The Ends of Computing."

The Power of Standards

Standards are generally invisible. As a rule, I do not look around my study and say to myself: "Gosh, what a fine collection of standards are embodied here" (the fact that I sometimes say it is between me and my psychotherapist). I just see a gallimaufry of objects (a vase, a rubbish bin, a rubber coaster, monkey figurines) each of which was forged in accordance with a range of standards. Similarly, when we think of science, we tend to think of bright shiny objects such as string theory, evolution, and perhaps fluid dynamics; whereas in fact far the majority of science funding goes to creating and maintaining standards.[49] When we think of regulation, we often think of our visible legal apparatus, though as tireless and brilliant blogger and novelist of standards, Andrew Updegrove asserts:

> The superior power of standards over laws is rarely appreciated. Yet hundreds of thousands of standards manage everything from telecommunications to information technology to professional certifications to almost anything else we can imagine. And while these private sector developed standards are often referenced into law, a far greater number are followed entirely voluntarily. In other words, the enormous benefits of a thoroughly standardized world are achieved without the use of legislatures, police, courts, or prisons.[50]

It is as unsurprising as it is sad that we have so few histories of standards (and so many of the law . . .). The communication and computer industries know this power well: they spend literally untold millions on them; and they chevy endlessly to get representation on standards setting committees.[51]

Standards undergird and mirror empires. Braudel and the Annalists brought out the importance of non-national histories by pointing to food circulation in the Mediterranean.[52] Similarly, one can point to the use of German or British gauges for railway lines (the latter is now the "standard gauge" internationally) as both a surrogate for and maintainer of spheres of political and economic interest in the nineteenth century.[53]

Fossil maps of Europe mirror the nineteenth-century Austro-Hungarian and British empires – different naming standards for fossils stemming from different school originating in Kew Gardens, London, or Vienna mean that the same fossil

49 Latour, *Science in Action.*

50 "War and the Power of Standards," Consortium Info <https://www.consortiuminfo.org/monday-witness/war-and-the-power-of-standards/>.

51 Cf. International Committee for Information Technology Standards <https://www.incits.org/>.

52 Braudel, *Autour de la Méditerranée.*

53 Cf. "Narrowing Is Easier," Inventing Europe <http://www.inventingeurope.eu/story/narrowing-is-easier>.

species has separate names according to tradition.[54] And there is a powerful argument from the Antipodes that we would have an entirely different naming system for flowering plants (angiosperms) if we had started from New Zealand. The system developed by Carl Linnaeus in the eighteenth century was based on earlier folk classifications, which favored describing more genuses in a family for economically important plants such as Umbilliferae (the carrot family) than for chickweed. Inversely, there are many more species per genus in the economically important grass genera (Graminae) than in sedge (Cyperaceae).[55] While standards may be invisible, they have great reach and force.

Conclusion

Over its assorted meanings, a standard can be raised, flown, maintained, and enforced. It is extremely difficult for us now to imagine a world without standards – money, communication, computers, transportation, houses all need standards. They can be somewhat vague (I am "medium" size in clothes in the US, which covers quite a range of sizes). They can have subtle differences indicative of some deeper history. I wear size 10.5 shoes in the US and size 10 in the UK.[56] In measuring stories (US) or storeys (UK) in a building the zero point is zero, or the ground floor in the UK and one in the US; for some reason this is exactly the same convention as for shoes (the British start at zero and the Americans at 1). Reflecting its recent history, Hawaiian language labels in hotels use the British System whereas (American) English ones use the US system.[57] Standards may be vague and capricious; they are also ubiquitous and powerful. There is an urgent need for historians to turn their attention to them in order to deepen our understanding of the ways in which we live (somewhat reliably) together.

54 Koch, "'Taxonomic Barriers' and Other Distortions within the Fossil Record."

55 Walters, "The Name of the Rose."

56 It all depends on barleycorns (1/3 inch) and the size of the last (the support for shaping shoes).

57 "In Hawaii, the Hawaiian-language floor label uses British floor numbering; however, the English-language floor labels use American floor numbering. Formerly, the English floor label also used British floor numbering (Ground floor, First floor, Second floor), which in Hawaiian is (Lepo papa, Papa akahi, Papa alua, respectively), but it was also replaced by North American scheme to make it the same as the rest of the US. To emphasize this difference, buildings in Hawaii use "level" rather than "floor." Thus, Lepo papa = Ground floor = Level 1, Papa akahi = First floor = Level 2, etc," see "Storey," Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storey> (accessed 20 April 2022).

On World Metrology Day in 2019, the kilogram joined the meter as a standard defined solely by time.[58] It is unsurprising – rather, inevitable – in a world which believes that "time is money" to tie our most basic standards to time. This symbolic event marked both a firm system of measurement (the kilogram standard in Paris in place since the French revolution has lost an eyelash worth of weight over the past few hundred years) which is lovely, the triumph of time/money over our ways of reckoning nature. Our choice of standards intimately reveals how we are and how we think about the world . . . . A world without standards is inconceivable; a world which pays attention to the ontological, social and economic dimensions of standards is much to be desired. One of the great tricks of historians is to look at what is not being talked about but is both ubiquitous and consequential: this is certainly my highest goal. Standards are the standard bearers of this quixotic quest.

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58 "The new kilogram just debuted. It's a massive achievement," Vox <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2019/5/17/18627757/kilogram-redefined-world-metrology-day-explained>.

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Karl G. Johansson

3 Penning the Standard: Norms, Conventions, and Usage in the Scandinavian Middle Ages

Abstract: There has long been contentious debate in medieval philology about the relevance of the concept of "norm" on various levels of script and text, and often scholars have retreated to a more open understanding of "usage" on the individual or institutional level. Primarily this discussion has concerned variation on the level of orthography and palaeography, but obviously it has relevance also on the levels of textualization, text production and re-production (transmission and dissemination). A similar problematic issue concerns the application of the concepts of "text" and "genre" in the Middle Ages. The lasting impression of medieval texts is *variance*. Whenever a text was re-written it was also altered. When an oral tradition was penned into this literate culture of variance it was textualized, but also introduced to the variance and diversity of this manuscript culture. This applies to a high degree to our understanding of genres in the medieval poetry. Whether we choose to take a perspective of production (which would be contemporary to the textualization, implicitly or explicitly relevant for the choices made by redactor or scribe) or of reception (which would be more from the perspective of the scholar), we encounter difficulties. Finally, the material form of the book and the usage of quires as a way to store individual texts subsequently bound in multitext manuscripts is discussed. This chapter investigates the standard established for the book as material form. In this chapter, the concept of "standardization" is applied to these issues in order to explore its relevance for elucidating further the processes of textualization, text production and re-production in the Norse material. The written culture is approached from three perspectives: *the history of writing*, *the history of texts* and *the history of the book*.

Keywords: Diversity, variance, mouvance, textualization, materiality

Karl G. Johansson, University of Oslo

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Standardization and Literacy in the Scandinavian Middle Ages

In our contemporary society the idea of standardization is a commonplace; we expect standardization to be part of developing new tools or technological solutions. This notion of standardization is rather new, however, and it is therefore not obvious that the concept could be useful for the study of medieval phenomena. It should, at the outset, be clear that this is a modern concept and that it therefore is primarily a tool for our understanding of what we see in the medieval material and not a conscious or explicit part of medieval thinking. One aspect of standardization that immediately needs to be addressed concerns the direction of implementation of standards in a society where many administrative structures were not established and authority was rather decentralized. A standardization process could, in this society, be initiated by authorities on various levels, that is, being top-down, but at the same time a standard could most likely also emerge from example, that is, from the work of an individual or a local institution which is adopted by other individuals and between institutions in a bottom-up relationship. We could perhaps use the modern meaning of the word, as for example in the sentence "he set the standard for future politicians in the field of human rights", as one level applicable to medieval standardization. This indicates that our use of *standardization* to address questions of *variation* and *change*, as well as of the relation between *norms* and *usage*, will need to differentiate between, on the one hand, top-down initiatives of standardization and, on the other hand, bottom-up initiatives (or perhaps rather processes of low-level change in a tradition).

In modern linguistics we operate with *norm* as a concept related to various authorities of education and expectations on the individual language user. The potentiality for change in the spoken language (often referred to as *standard language*) can be observed in the interaction between the individual's understanding of the norm (*perceived norm*) and the actual use. There is always variation in a living, spoken language, but it does not always lead to change. But in this variation at every given point some features may be involved in processes of change. When a change is beginning to catch on, we react and often condemn the speakers who are in our view breaking the norm while often ourselves unconsciously using the same innovation. In written language these changes may be observed either in systematic mistakes in the individual users' usage, which is then an object of criticism in a similar way to spoken discourses, or in centrally administrated reform for example in order to make the written language conform closer to the spoken *standard language*. Both options cause a lot of debate in a modern

society; in the first case stigmatizing the language user who does not have command of the rules for writing the language, and in the second leading to arguments for a conservative writing clashing with more liberal and pragmatic views.

In a society with more vague and undefined authorities of both spoken and written language this interaction between perceived norms and the everyday use of language is hard to register from the extant sources. It could be expected, however, that this interaction was also present in the medieval manuscript culture under scrutiny here, and to be sure, we do find examples on many levels of comments on the correct use of language.

The concept of *norm* as a tool for understanding variation and change in written material from the Middle Ages has been debated frequently in philology and there is no consensus as to how it should be applied. Many scholars have concluded that the norm concept is not applicable for understanding variation and change in the medieval material and have refrained from using it and instead have chosen to only discuss the usage found in individual hands as well as in scribal milieux in individual scriptoria.[1]

The relation between oral tradition and the emerging literate culture is an important aspect to be taken into account when the notion of standardization is applied to further our understanding of emerging genres. In the Scandinavian regions oral traditions as they are allegedly represented in the extant written sources seem to have been adapted to the written form to various degrees. An obvious difference can be discerned between, on the one hand, Norse literate culture in the western parts and, on the other hand, literate culture in the Swedish and Danish realm. In the eastern and southern parts of Scandinavia vernaculars emerge considerably later and with a more direct and explicit interaction with European models, either translated into the vernacular or at a later stage used as matrices for producing original texts in the vernacular. This does not exclude, however, similar interaction in the western regions, only that the Latin literate culture here was to a greater extent confronted with the indigenous traditions.

The material innovations introduced with writing – for example, pens, ink, and parchment – could seem to be so basic that they need no mention in our context, but it is certainly relevant to take into account how material innovations are incorporated in the indigenous culture by the learned elites and how they were adapted to local needs and, importantly, indigenous authorities. The production of the physical manuscripts could, for example, take different routes, in the way

1 For a discussion of the relation between norms and the individual scribe's usage see e.g Johansson, *Studieri Codex Wormianus;* Mårtensson, *Studier i AM 557 4to*; Kjeldsen, *Filologiske studier i kongesagahåndskriftet Morkinskinna.*

the written parchment leaves were incorporated in quires, collections of quires and bound into books. A text could be re-written in a single quire or gathering of quires, it could be bound into a single text volume, and it could subsequently at any point in time be incorporated in a multi-text manuscript, either as part of a collection of independent quires (a composite manuscript; the work of a collector) or re-written into a consciously established collection (the work of a redactor). It is therefore of interest to further our insights into the development of various types of manuscripts in the extant Scandinavian material so as to discern the possible lines of innovation and standardization over time and in different milieux.

On all the mentioned levels the concept of *standardization* could bring both new perspectives and insights. If we consider standardization as a strategy, conscious or as a response to current demands, of the users of both spoken language and written texts this would perhaps enhance our understanding of norms and perceived norms in the medieval milieux. While norms are today accepted as a means of stabilizing society and for authorities to keep order, this kind of authority is difficult to detect in the contexts of text production and re-production in medieval society. This implies that we need tools to explore the strategies of individuals and local milieux to find common rules for their use of writing, texts, and the material options given. Rather than operating with a rather anachronistic concept of top-down authority which seems not always to have been clearly defined, if even present, in the time under scrutiny, we can possibly use standardization to describe and analyse how variation was handled and how it related to changes in the use of written language, texts and the establishing of literate strategies.

Three perspectives on medieval literate culture could serve as objects for exploring the relevance of a concept of standardization in philological studies. The *history of writing*, the *history of texts* and the *history of the book* all provide rich examples of variation, innovation, change, and emerging uniformity. The history of writing, generally under the concept of *literacy*, is a global study, interested in the emergence of written languages, the development of the use of script and its implications for the society and culture where it is taking place. The history of texts could be seen as a sub-division of the history of writing. Here the focus is on the textualization of culture and society.[2] This study should, I argue, recognize the empirical aspects of the study of texts in transmission and use over the period we have delimited (*a* history) at the same time as the theoretical aspects of texts

2 For a thorough discussion of *textualization* and the emerging literate culture see e.g. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*.

are, of course, central (*the* history). The third field, the history of the book, is also to be seen as a sub-division of the history of writing.[3]

History of Writing

In this section the focus will be on palaeography and orthography. In the earliest introduction of Roman letters in the Norse realm, there seems to have been primarily influences from the west, from the British Isles in the adoption of writing and in matrices for palaeography. The earliest extant examples of writing produced in Norway and Iceland, from the mid-twelfth century, are primarily executed in the Carolingian script. There are also from the outset a number of peculiarities referred to as Anglo-Saxon or insular, as the þ ("thorn"), ƿ ("wynn") ꝛ ("insular r") and ꝼ ("insular f"). Using the script also involved orthography, to adapt Latin orthographic rules to a vernacular written language. My first example involves both these aspects of the emerging use of Roman script for the vernacular: the so-called First Grammarian, considered to have been active in mid-twelfth-century Iceland and possibly in the Benedictine milieu in the northern parts of the island, most likely the monastery of Þingeyrar. This man set out to order the usage of the written language both concerning orthography and palaeography in the text today known as *The First Grammatical Treatise* (*FGT*).[4] It should be noted at once, however, that the text we today have access to is not the original, but rather a re-writing at two centuries remove in the manuscript Codex Wormianus (AM 242 fol) dated to c. 1340–1370.[5] This quite common situation of extant sources being of often considerably later date than the lost original is in this case of great relevance in itself, as the extant re-writing, on the one hand, displays a living interest in the experiment of standardization made by the First Grammarian, while on the other hand, it also shows how this experiment did not

3 From the book *What is the History of the Book* (Raven 2018), however, the impression is rather that the history of the book comprises both the history of writing and the history of text. This needs to be discussed further, I think. Raven considers, for example, everything written as part of the history of the book (even if he hesitates when it comes to writing on un-mobile objects, as e.g. rocks or buildings). His study includes codicology, palaeography, but also e.g. the narratives found in the books, what would often fall under the study of literary history, Raven, *What is the History of the Book*.

4 Hreinn Benediktsson provides a thorough introduction to the text and the work of the First Grammarian, see *The First Grammatical Treatise*.

5 For the most recent study of this manuscript, the compilation, its compiler and scribe, see Johansson, *Studier i Codex Wormianus*.

succeed, since neither the orthographic nor the palaeographic suggestions seem to have had any great impact on the emerging use of writing in Iceland.[6]

When the *FGT* was composed, most likely in mid-twelfth-century Iceland, the use of writing in the vernacular was still a relatively new activity. There seem to have already been established some traditions, as referred to by the First Grammarian, but the palaeography was still crude and there was, and would remain, a lot of variation in the orthography.[7] The First Grammarian set out to bring some order to things. His text commences with an argument for a standard of writing based on the variation between languages and writing systems:

> In most countries men record in books either the (historical) lore (relating to events) that have come to pass in that country, or any other (lore) that seems most memorable, even though it (relates to events that) have taken place elsewhere, or men commit their laws to writing, each nation in its own tongue. But because languages differ from each other – which previously parted or branched off from one and the same tongue – different letters are needed in each, and not the same in all, just as the Greeks do not write Greek with Latin letters, and Latinists (do) not (write) Latin with Greek letters, nor (do) the Hebrews (write) Hebrew with Greek or Latin letters, but each nation writes its language with letters of its own.[8]

The palaeographic suggestions made by the First Grammarian seem to have had some limited impact in the second half of the twelfth century. There are e.g. examples of ꝁ for "kk" and the broken ł for "ll" in contemporary manuscripts. But the use of these types is primarily found in the earliest manuscripts; the usage was never conclusive and they soon disappear from use. It is also clear from the

6 See e.g. *The First Grammatical Treatise*, 22, concerning the mistakes made by the scribe of Codex Wormianus in rendering examples in the treatise. On the influence of the treatise in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Iceland, see *The First Grammatical Treatise*, 25–33. The role of *FGT* in the history of Icelandic literature is treated by Hreinn Benediktsson, see *The First Grammatical Treatise*, 174–188.

7 Even in the mid-fourteenth century, when the extant re-writing of *FGT* was undertaken, the orthographic variation found even within the work of one and the same hand could be extreme, see e.g. Johansson, *Studier i Codex Wormianus*; Mårtensson, *Studier i AM 557 4to*; Kjeldsen, *Filologiske studier i kongesagahåndskriftet Morkinskinna* for studies of variation in orthography within individual manuscripts and hands.

8 *The First Grammatical Treatise*, 206–207: "I flestum lǫndum setja menn á bækr annat tveggja þann fróðleik er þar innan lands hefir gerst eða þann annan er minnisamligastr þykkir þó at annarsstaðar hafi helldr gerst eða lǫg sin setja menn á bækr hverr þjóð á sína tungu. Enn af því at tungurnar eru ólikar hverr annarri, þær þegar er úr einni ok hinni sǫmu tungu hafa gengiðs eða greins þá þarf ólika stafi í at hafa enn eigi ena sǫmu alla í ǫllum, sem eigi rita grikkir latínustǫfum girskuna ok eigi latínumenn girskum stǫfum latínu né enn helldr ebreskir menn ebreskuna hvárki girskum stǫfum né latínu, helldr ritar sínum stǫfum hverr þjóð sína tungu". (The Norse text slightly normalized by the author).

lists of characters re-written by the fourteenth-century scribe that much has been out of use so that he could not recognize, and therefore not represent correctly, the original characters as they were intended (Figures 2 and 3).

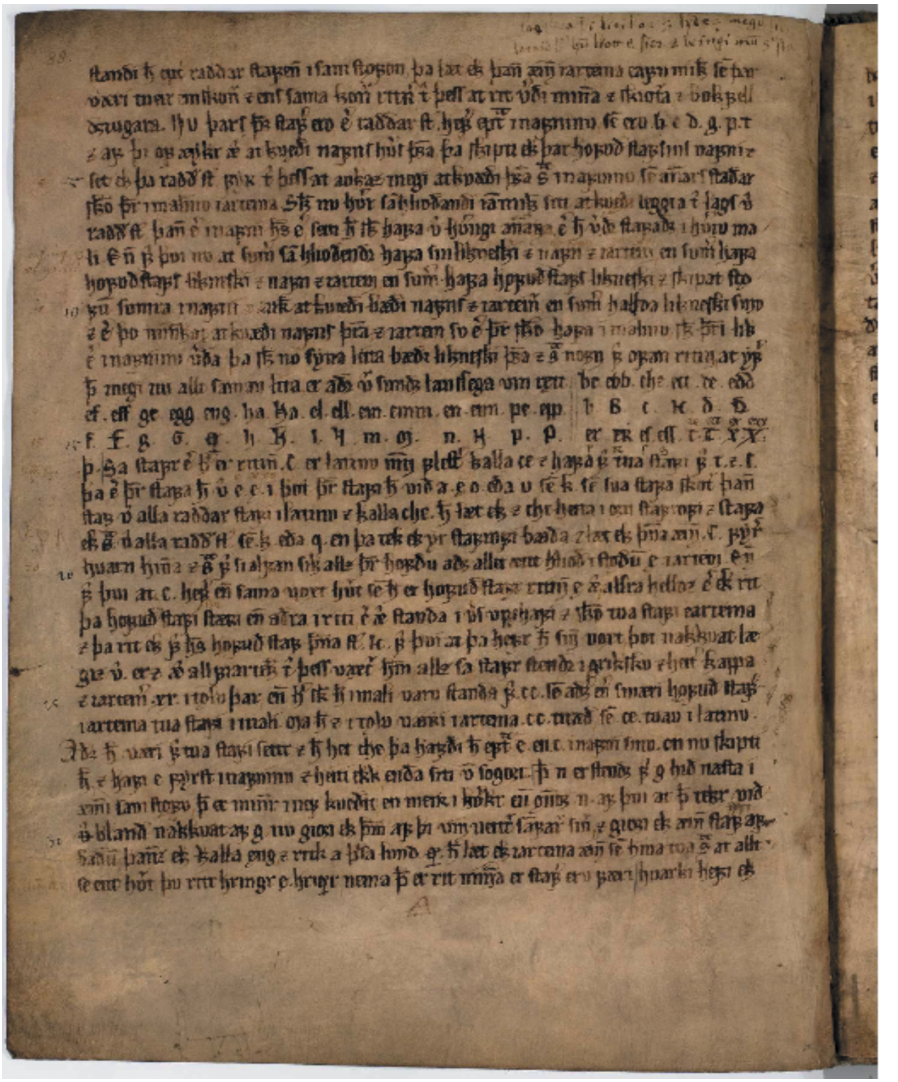
The orthography was obviously of more importance to the First Grammarian. He undertakes a thorough analysis of the spoken language and suggests how vowels and consonants should be represented. He also concludes that two characters should not be needed in Norse as *x* and *z* could be written "ks" and "ts" respectively. It is interesting to note that the scribe of Codex Wormianus does not heed this suggestion, as he frequently uses both *x* and *z*, thus providing one illustration of the lack of influence the *FGT* had on orthographic standards in the subsequent centuries.

The First Grammarian provides a good example of an individual who with his work is trying to establish a standard in an environment where there is no authority to implement a standard from above. In his own environment his endeavor may have had some impact, but in a larger context and over time it faded into oblivion. Initiating standardization may seem therefore to have been a thankless task. At the most our grammarian has achieved an impact locally and created a standard for a generation or two of scribes in the local scriptorium. The suggested standardization soon enough became part of what perhaps could be regarded as an implicit, perceived norm in the local scriptorium; in the usage of the individual scribes, it soon was replaced with other practices.

But the *FGT* after all survived in the written tradition for two centuries and was finally incorporated in the extant compilation of grammatical and poetical texts found in AM 242 fol. It could therefore still have played a role in forming the perception of norms in palaeography and orthography that the compiler of this later manuscript held.

A second example of a considerably later and more top-down character concerning palaeography is found in fifteenth-century Sweden and in relation to the Birgittine abbey in Vadstena. There was for a long time in scholarship a wide acceptance of the term *Vadstenaskrift* "Vadstena script" as relating to a type of *cursive* script found in the scribal milieux of the two Vadstena scriptoria. This idea has recently been challenged in a convincing way by Nils Dverstorp (2008) and Patrik Åström (2010).[9] Both scholars argue that not only was this type of script found in other milieux in Sweden, it was also simply a modified variant of the European cursive written in many milieux on the continent. And this leads me to

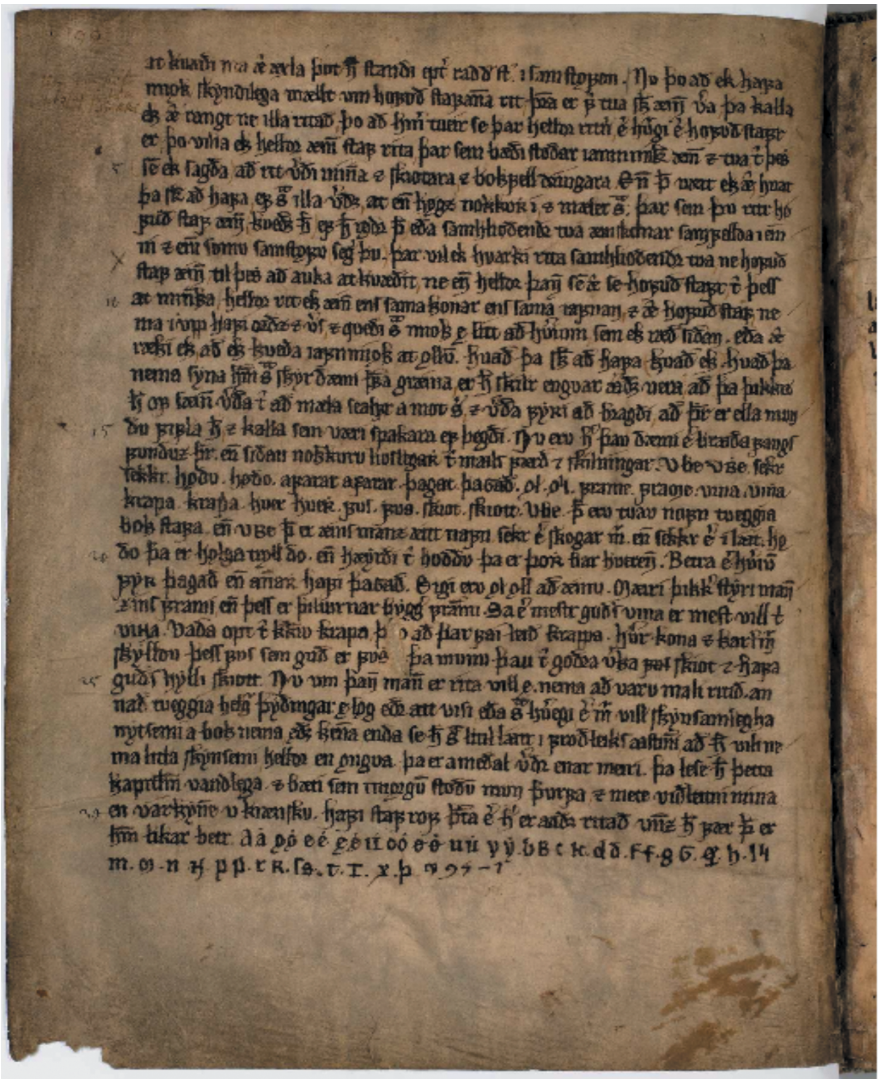
9 Dverstorp, "'Vadstenastil' – en diskussion om paleografisk klassificering"; Åström, "Myten om Vadstenastilen".



Figures 2–3: The alphabets from *The First Grammatical Treatise* illustrating how the fourteenth century scribe (or his lost exemplar) did not recognize the suggestions of the first grammarian, AM 242 fol, fols 44v and 45v (Photos: The Arnamagnæan Institute, University of Copenhagen).

approach it here as a perhaps more successful attempt at standardization than that of the previous example.

There is mention of a new alphabet in a letter from the abbess of Vadstena to the archbishop of Uppsala dated to either 1374 or 1381; it has been suggested to



Figures 2–3 (continued)

refer to what was in earlier research called "Vadstena cursive".[10] Åström maintains that the use of the term *Vadstena cursive* is misleading as the various scripts used in Vadstena and Sweden in general are similar to the types seen throughout

10 Jansson, "Svensk paleografi," 84.

Europe, especially within the realm of the Hansa.[11] The authority needed for innovations and new standards to be implemented may, however, have been stronger in certain milieux, as for example in the two scriptoria active in Vadstena. Dverstorp, in his discussion of the palaeographical features earlier referred to as part of Vadstena cursive, suggests that the homogeneity of the *hybrida* script used by the sisters in the nuns' scriptorium from the last decades of the fifteenth century indicates that they were trained locally. Concerning the brothers' use of various types of script, Dverstorp proposes that they were perhaps more independent on an authorized norm.[12] Åström comes to similar conclusions. He states that the internal homogeneity of the nuns' scriptorium indicates that an education was offered to the sisters upon their arrival in the convent. The brothers of the convent, he suggests, were most likely trained in various milieux before entering the convent, which would account for the rich variety in their palaeography.[13]

The *cursive* script introduced in Scandinavia in the later Middle Ages must rather be considered to be a common innovation which appears in local variants, one of which is to be found in the two scriptoria in Vadstena and in other Swedish milieux.[14] The introduction of a new cursive script in Scandinavia in the later Middle Ages could from this reasoning be characterized as an innovation leading to a further standardization of script accepted with some variations in large parts of Europe. Vadstena could possibly still be seen as a center for lending authority to this new script, but it cannot be regarded as the point of departure for the innovation. If the standardization of a European *cursive* script is seen in relation to the innovative work of the First Grammarian from my first example, it is obvious that teaching and the dissemination of innovations lead to a more standardized use of script; the introduction of a new standard, most likely at its earliest stage in the area including Germany, the Netherlands and France in the late fourteenth century.

History of Texts

The history of writing could as we have seen provide examples of an early bottom-up attempt at standardization that perhaps was not completely successful as well as later top-down innovations that seem to have been more effective. Could phe-

11 Åström, "Myten om vadstenastilen" especially 104 and 112. For the European context see Derolez. *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books. From the Twelfth to the Early Sixteenth Century*, 16–17.
12 Dverstorp, "Vadstenastil," 35.
13 Åström, "Myten om vadstenastilen," 116.
14 Åström, "Myten om vadstenastilen," 118–120.

nomena from the history of texts possibly also be discussed from this perspective? In this section I return to the grammatical and poetical treatises from Iceland and the work of the compiler found in AM 242 fol. By the time the compilation was formed, Christian and European ideas of poetics and grammar had been part of the erudition of learned men in Iceland for a couple of centuries. At the same time there was still an explicit interest in the relation of this contemporary poetry to the old tradition of allegedly oral poetry.

If orality must primarily be approached as tradition rather than as the dissemination of well-defined texts and if it is only when the tradition is formed for the written medium that it is really relevant to talk about *text* and *genre*, we need to address some questions of great importance. The first question that needs to be treated concerns our definition of *text* and whether the notion of *text* is of any relevance when we discuss oral tradition. Was there ever a text in our sense in the oral society or was it always rather a question of *tradition* and *performance*? This has been a bone of contention in Norse research over the last sixty years or more and I do not expect to come up with a final and conclusive answer here. But it is important to keep in mind that orality must be based on tradition, whether memorized as narratives or performed in improvised situations.[15] Poetry in an oral context would depend on the formal competence of the performing poet, as well as an understanding of tradition in the form of myths and legends and other themes that could be formed for performance. It is not obvious, however, or even highly unlikely, that a poet or audience would think of entities reminiscent of the modern concept of texts. Would a stanza always have similar length or would a poet think at all in verse-lines and stanzas? It is tempting to suggest that the answer must be no, as the very idea of form would have had different sets of rules when rhythm and connectives were *heard* not *seen*. It is only with the means provided by the written medium, I would suggest, that the more regulated (standardized) frames of a poem or narrative were formed, and it was in this very medium that the metrical connectives that were earlier *heard* were now related to syllables, verse-lines, and the rules for stanzaic form to be *seen*.

The process from this oral stage to the written stage therefore involves great innovations in composing and disseminating poetry, as well as new demands for the training of poets in composition, performance, and erudition, the processes of

15 The literature concerning orality in the Middle Ages in general is vast (see e.g. the introduction to D.A. Green. *Medieval Listening and Reading. The primary reception of German literature 800–1300*, 3–54. In Norse studies there has been a lively debate concerning the oral tradition of Eddic and skaldic poetry. For a recent collection of articles with many contributions to an overview of this research, see e.g. Larrington, Quinn and Schorn, eds. *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry*.

Verschriftlichung. This would, it could be argued, also necessitate standardization of form as well as content. The question must appear: was there an eight-line stanza in oral tradition or was it standardized as the poetry was transformed into texts in writing?

The earliest written stanza in *dróttkvætt* is admittedly found in the runic inscription on the Karlevi stone on the island of Öland in Sweden, inscribed close to the year 1000 CE. This could indicate that this complicated metrical form with its rich imagery was representative of a skaldic stanza already in the period before Roman script was introduced for the vernacular in the northern region. This is obviously further supported by the tradition in the written Icelandic sources of an oral skaldic tradition stretching back to the ninth century. It has also been argued that there is at least one full stanza in *fornyrðislag* in the runic inscription of the Rök stone in Östergötland in Sweden, traditionally dated to the first half of the ninth century.[16] These examples are scarce, however, and even though many other inscriptions from this earlier period display alliterations and assonances they are presented in more unregular forms, indicating that the textualization of the two first mentioned stanzas in what seems to be the form prescribed in medieval poetological works could perhaps be random, that is, the result of *Verschriftung*, writing the singular lines rather than taking part in a literate tradition, *Verschriftlichung*.[17] For our discussion of standardization, however, it suffices to note that there could possibly be a longer process of textualization of poetry in the earlier writing system of runes that would subsequently have been influential for the textualization in medieval manuscripts using Roman script. It is also interesting and relevant to note in this context that in similar traditions found in e.g. the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*, alliterated poetry was not stanzaic; this could further support a suggestion that oral tradition in the north was not stanzaic until it was textualized in writing.

In the compilation found in AM 242 fol the first incorporated text is the so-called prose *Edda* attributed to Snorri Sturluson. In this text the mythological knowledge necessary for the composition as well as understanding of skaldic poetry is presented in the part called *Gylfaginning*. But more central to our quest for signs of standardization are the formal rules for metrics and imagery put forward

16 See, however, recent studies where new readings of the inscription are presented, Ralph, *Fadern, sonen och världsalltet*; Holmberg, "Svaren på Rökstenens gåtor"; Williams, *Rökstenen och världens undergång*. While the metrical form in itself appears still not to be challenged by these studies they do offer new readings also of the metrical composition.

17 The metrical runic inscriptions have been treated in works by Hübler, *Schwedische Runendichtung der Wikingerzeit*; and more recently Naumann, *Metrische Runeninschriften in Skandinavien*.

in the part of the prose *Edda* called *Skáldskaparmál*.[18] It is interesting here to note the terminology which relates to lines and with terms referring to written rather than oral composition in its treatment of traditional poetry. Important formal components in connecting verse-lines in Norse poetry as described in the prose *Edda* are *alliteration* and *assonances*. This is obviously not exceptional to Norse poetry, but has rather been a commonplace in poetry. It also appears in our modern concepts, formed in classical poetry and rhetoric. The rules in the prose *Edda* do seem to have been translated from these Latin concepts as *samstafr* "con-sonant letter" and *hljóðstafr* (Latin *vox*) "sound letter" ("vowel") respectively. From the prose *Edda* we have the terminology for these connectives within the couplet as *hǫfuðstafr* "main letter" (where *stafr* "letter" is the term used both for runic and Roman characters) and *stuðlar* "supports". The use of assonance as connectives within the couplet is described with the terms *aðalhending* "main rhyme" and *skothending* "skewed rhyme" for full and half assonance respectively. It is also in the prose *Edda* that the ideas of verse-lines with varying numbers of syllables are introduced, an innovation that finds its explicit standardization in this early poetological work.[19]

Poetry is not a genre. But when poetry from the oral tradition is adapted to the written format and textualized, ideas of various genres seem to emerge more or less immediately. Most Norse poetry is today extant in connection to prose texts, and here we can discern a differentiation in the forms used. Already in the earliest collections of kings' lives in the vernacular, the poems in the complicated form of *dróttkvætt* dominate and are used as documentation or verification of what is related in the prose. In the kings' sagas, we also find examples of longer poems in less complex forms such as Eddic meters as *fornyrðislag* and *kviðuháttr*. It is rare, however, to find *lausavísur* ("individual stanzas") in other formats than *dróttkvætt*. In the *Íslendingasögur*, on the other hand, the use of skaldic poetry is rather different than in the kings' sagas. Here the individual *lausavísur* in *dróttkvætt* and longer poems in Eddic meters are presented more to focus on the Icelandic poets. Still the relationship in use between skaldic poetry in kings' sagas and *Íslendingasögur* indicates that poetry attributed to individual poets was considered a genre of its own;

18 It has been suggested by Guðrun Nordal in her study of skaldic poetry in Icelandic grammatica, *Tools of Literacy*, that the evidence of the extant manuscripts indicates that *Skáldskaparmál* was originally produced as a separate work on metrics and diction and that the more complex prose *Edda* as we generally view it today is a later compilation. It could be added that this unified prose *Edda* is in fact not found complete in any of the extant manuscripts, but only in modern editions.

19 For a discussion of the rhyme and alliteration of Norse poetry see e.g. Árnason, "On the principles of Nordic rhyme and alliteration".

the functions are somewhat different but the importance of the poet is still central. The question then is whether this genre is an adaptation of an oral genre or whether it became a genre when it was textualized and made part of the prose genres emerging in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century.

The longer poems in *kviðuháttr* and *fornyrðislag* found in the saga narratives need to be treated separately as they in the form rather appear as Eddic poems, similar to the ones found primarily in the collection of poems in Codex Regius (GKS 2365 4to). The main general difference between these two groups of poems is that the ones identified as skaldic poems are found in saga narratives, allegedly directed to, or commemorating, a king or nobleman, and in most cases are attributed to named poets, while the Eddic poetry is anonymous and only occasionally accompanied by explanatory or expanded prose narratives. The skaldic poems in these less complex meters, however, indicate that by the time when they were included in the various saga narratives, compilers made a clear difference between, on the one hand, these poems attributed to individual poets or at least reminiscent of the ones with attribution and, on the other hand, Eddic poems of myths and legends. This differnce in contexts for what we consider skaldic versus Eddic poetry could be further supported when the poetry in *fornyrðislag* and *ljóðaháttr* found in the so-called *fornaldarsögur*, narratives relating adventures in the time before Iceland was colonized are taken into account. The anonymous poetry presented in these legendary sagas, whether we consider it as being from an older tradition or as a product of the saga narrators and contemporary to the composition of the saga texts, distinguishes itself from the poetry found in the saga genres concerning Norwegian kings or Icelandic heroes in not displaying any skaldic poetry. The question remains, however, whether these differences in distribution represent a distinction of genres established in the processes of textualization, that is, a standardization of genres in writing or mirror a division made already in the oral tradition.

In the thirteenth century most of the extant poetry had been committed to parchment while only a few of the preserved poems seem to have been formed from an oral tradition still prevalent at a later stage. The traditions of skaldic and Eddic poetry seem at this point to have been accepted as separate genres by the patrons, compilers and scribes of the day, and new poetry composed in the old meters, primarily in *dróttkvætt*, by persons in the same environment approached new Christian themes. The standardization of skaldic meters as a textualized genre was taken so far that this poetic form was now used in written compositions.[20]

20 This seems in fact to have been the case already in 1153 when the Icelandic priest Einar Skúlason composed, allegedly in writing, his poem *Geisli* about the saint king Óláfr Haraldsson using both meter and imagery from the tradition of skaldic poetry. The poem is today, as in most cases, only extant in considerably later manuscripts. Einar Skúlason's use of skaldic meter and imagery

From the early thirteenth century or possibly the last decades of the twelfth century there are also a number of translations from Latin prose and poetry into Norse metrical texts which have to be taken into account here. They do not necessarily reflect a contemporary understanding of genre, but rather belong to a group of poems placed in the genre of skaldic poetry by nineteenth-century scholars. The earliest example is provided by the transfer of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetia Merlini* into *fornyrðislag* as *Merlínusspá* by the Benedictine monk Gunnlaugr Leifsson, probably about 1200. This poem is attributed to a named translator in common with skaldic poetry in general, but the form is definitely that preferred for Eddic poetry. It is also relevant to note the similarities in this poem concerning the use of imagery to *Vǫluspá*, an Eddic prophecy proper.[21]

The second translated poem I would like to mention here is *Hugsvinnsmál*, a thirteenth-century translation of the Latin gnomic poem *Disticha Catonis* with no known author. The form is Eddic rather than skaldic but still the poem has been considered skaldic at least since Finnur Jónsson included it in his edition of skaldic poetry (1912–1915).[22] It is also important to mention a third contemporary poem in this context, the *Sólarljóð*, composed in *fornyrðislag* by an anonymous poet, possibly identical to the translator of *Hugsvinnsmál*,[23] and also edited by Finnur Jónsson as a skaldic poem.

It is therefore not certain that the clear-cut definition of two genres that we encounter in modern editions reflects contemporary understandings of genres. There seems, however, to be a clear divide between, on the one hand, poems that could be quoted in the prose narratives of kings and Icelanders and, on the other

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could possibly indicate that the early dating of older skaldic poetry in its highly intricate and textualized form is still not without complications; it is only in the thirteenth century that this poetry is part of the processes of *Verschriftlichung* and involved in the creation of narratives of kings and Icelanders.

21 For recent discussions of *Merlínusspá*, see e.g. Rafnsson, "Merlínusspá og Völuspá"; Johansson, "Översättning och originalspråkstext i handskriftstraderingens våld – *Merlínusspá* och *Vǫluspá* i Hauksbók". Sveinbjörn Rafnsson argues for the possibility that *Merlínusspá* could have been the model for *Vǫluspá* which would make it necessary to regard the latter poem as a product of the late twelfth or even early thirteenth century. This daring suggestion does not seem to have gathered much support. It is interesting, however, that such an argument indicates the close similarities of the two poems, one translated from Latin prose, the other allegedly from an oral tradition dating back to the turn of the first millennium.

22 *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*.

23 For a thorough treatment of the relation between *Hugsvinnsmál* and *Sólarljóð*, see Larrington, "Eddic Poetry – A Case Study: Sólarljóð". It is intriguing that Larrington who has co-edited the poem in the new edition of skaldic poetry in this article from 2020 discusses it as an Eddic poem, without even mentioning the new edition or problematizing what appears as a change of mind concerning the genre of the poem.

hand, Eddic poems of myths and legends, most of which are only found in GKS 2365 4to, but also represented in the *fornaldarsögur* narratives. The one who compiled the prose *Edda*, however, seems to make a division along similar lines, with Eddic poetry represented primarily in the mythological narratives of *Gylfaginning*, only to be replaced by *dróttkvætt* poetry in the treatment of metrics and imagery in *Skáldskaparmál*. It could perhaps be argued that there is an original division of Eddic and skaldic poetry in the early textualization of tradition, while translations and some more contemporary compositions are primarily made in the Eddic meters (with the slightly older *Geisli* as an exception), but not really considered as mythological or legendary by contemporary learned users. Rather these contemporary compositions make use of generic traits from Eddic poetry (and to some limited extent from skaldic poetry), without adhering to the two genres in contemporary generic understanding. As I have commented above these poems were rather placed in the skaldic genre by nineteenth-century scholars and in our modern reception.

It is intriguing that the use of skaldic meters and imagery continued well into the fourteenth century, when it was confronted by new ideals from the continent.[24] The poets of the day did challenge some of the older traits found described in the prose *Edda*, but they also kept much of the formal criteria from skaldic poetry. It could be argued that the standardization of two main genres was completed already in the thirteenth century, and that the later poets adhered to the standard at the same time as they adapted it to contemporary expectations. A good example of this is the poem *Lilja*, most likely composed by the Augustinian priest Eysteinn Ásgrímsson in the second half of the fourteenth century. It is also worth noting that the compiler of treatises on poetics and grammar in AM 242 fol combined the account of the prose *Edda* with the four grammatical treatises to provide what seems to be a *curriculum* compilation for poetry and language. Poetics, rhetoric and grammar were combined in their standardized forms in the reading and composing of skaldic poetry in this literate society.

24 For this new tendency in the use of *dróttkvætt*, see e.g. Johansson, "1300-talets lärda kultur". See also Males, "Wormianusredaktören".

History of the Book

Texts and genres could involve questions concerning standardization in a profitable way and perhaps provide new insights into the manuscript culture and its variance as well as about the absence of established authorities for the implementation of innovations and standardization of new trends. In this last section I wish to discuss also the material side of manuscript culture, the production and use of parchment and paper manuscripts containing the script from the history of writing and the texts from the history of texts. I will explore this with two short examples, one from fourteenth-century Norse material and one from fifteenth-century Vadstena.

The production of parchment was an innovation contemporary with the introduction of writing in Scandinavia in the twelfth century. It could be expected that the earliest parchment was imported from the continent where it had been in use for many centuries, but soon the production was most likely also started locally. We cannot say much with certainty about medieval parchment production in the north. What is clear for Iceland is that there was often a question of low-quality parchment that results in the extant manuscripts appearing dark and the script often hard to read. Nevertheless, there was a rich production of manuscripts in Iceland as witnessed by the many manuscripts still preserved in Scandinavian collections.

But was there an obvious idea of the manuscript as a book? In many cases the extant manuscripts from Iceland and Norway seem to indicate something else, that the parchment was rather kept in smaller units, even individual quires, and that what we see in today's collections often represent later bindings. The innovation of gathering originally singular quires of all kinds into books as the standard appears to be a later phenomenon. It is therefore relevant to perhaps regard the collections of quires or groups of quires as one possible option as a medieval standard available for the collector. An interesting narrative in our context, found in *Lárentíus saga biskups*, relates how Lárentíus after his midday meal took a break before he consulted his library and marked passages that he then asked his servant, *djákn*, to copy in quires, *kvaterni*.[25] This indicates that the use of quires and leaflets of quires was a recognized way to handle collections of texts on a daily basis.

25 Eftir máltíðina dagliga rekaði hann; fyrst fór hann þá í sitt studium ok studeraði hann í bókum; skrifaði hann upp á vaxspjald, nóterandi þat sem hann vildi hafa sérliga ór bókum ok þar eftir skrifaði Einarr djákni upp í kvaterni eðr bók, svá at byskupinum var tiltæk nær hann vildi á líta ok þat frammi hafa. "After the daily meal every day he [Lárentíus] took time off; he first went to his study and studied books, writing down on a wax tablet notes of what he wanted to take particularly from the books, and from this Einarr djákni wrote in quaternios [quires

As an illustrative example of this tradition of collecting quires or leaflets which subsequently, and sometimes considerably later, were bound in books I have chosen to use the compilation which today is named after its alleged first owner Haukr Erlendsson as Hauksbók. My contention, as previously put forward in a number of articles,[26] is that the parts of the manuscript seem to have been handled as loose quires for quite some time before they were finally bound.[27] Could we possibly talk about two parallel standards of keeping texts in parchment manuscripts, as quires loose on the shelf and as bound volumes, the latter perhaps primarily the larger volumes prepared for the reading from a lectern and also in the more richly illuminated volumes? The book as a format for binding written material was obviously available long before Roman script was introduced in Scandinavia. In the oldest extant material from this region, however, the bound books would rather have contained primarily the liturgical texts. Another field where the bound book appears to have been the chosen form would be in law manuscripts. Already in the oldest law material the codex was the container, which carried the text.[28] But for other genres and types of texts the book does not seem to have been the obvious form.

Hauksbók provides an excellent example of a (or a number of) collection(s) originally kept as loose quires or leaflets, that at a later stage was incorporated in a book as we know it. This standardization of binding quires from older collections of leaflets into multi-text manuscripts would then be representative of a transitional period when the book format perhaps was about to be implemented; the more sustainable way of binding all kinds of collections in books would have to wait until the fifteenth century (or even later) to be more globally implemented.

In the fifteenth century the standardized binding of codices from quires where the book was planned in advance as a whole seems to have been more widespread. In the library of Vadstena the book seems to have been standard al-

formed from four foliated leaves, see below] or books so that it was available to the bishop when he wanted to look at it and have it at hand" (ÍF XVII: 379; my translation).

26 Johansson, "Compilations, collections and composite manuscript"; and "The *Hauksbók*".

27 A similar situation seems to appear in the collection of *ævintýri* found in the Icelandic manuscript AM 657 a–b 4to, where four scribes have written separate parts of what is today (for the main part) a bound book, see Johansson, "AM 657 a–b 4° and the Mouvance of Medieval Works". Just a few decades later, a similar kind of manuscript of *järtecken* and other texts relevant to the monastery in Vadstena, Cod Holm A 110, was gathered from the leaflets written by different scribes, see Johansson, "Miracles and More".

28 For studies of early bindings of law material, see Jónsson, "The Size of Medieval Icelandic Legal Manuscripts" for the Icelandic laws and Åström, "Books, Bosses and Bookmakers" for the Swedish realm.

ready in the early part of the fifteenth century. But the quire was still an important unit of any book.[29]

My last example of what could be seen as a top-down standardization is found in the two Vadstena libraries. When paper was introduced as a seriously competitive standard to parchment in Sweden in the fifteenth century, it was initially regarded as a cheaper and less reliable material. This can be seen in the clear difference in the status of paper and parchment charters respectively. If something was intended for a longer period of use and importance it would generally be written on parchment. And paper was certainly a more vulnerable material than parchment. In Vadstena an innovation seems to have been introduced from Italy (in a similar way as the cursive script discussed above?), to use parchment as stabilizing material in the two outer leaves of each quire at the same time as a quire of ten leaves became the new standard replacing the traditional eight leaf quire.

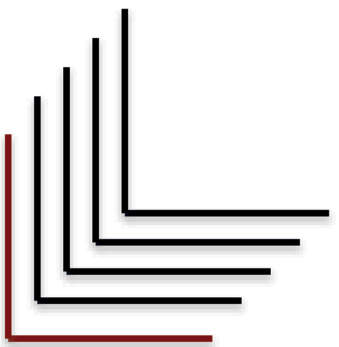

Figure 4: A schematic illustration of a quire consisting of five folded leaves (quinternio), four folded paper leaves, and the outer fold in parchment.

29 The technique of folding leaves so that they could be bound together in quires was old, probably initiated already in the sixth century as an alternative to the scroll, and it was developed further with the arrival of the printing technique in the fifteenth century. Soon paper size was more standardized and a system evolved which led to the terms used today inadequately for parchment books; folio, quarto, octavo and so on to the smallest formats, relating to how the leaves were folded. In a medieval parchment manuscript, all sizes are generally formed from a piece of parchment folded once (which would mean that most medieval manuscripts are folios in folding, but obviously not in size). The folded leaves could then be gathered four and four so that each quire (quaternio) consisted of eight leaves.

This innovation and the changing of the standard was clearly not implemented in Sweden in general, but seems to have been limited to the two scriptoria in Vadstena. It provides an indication of the close connections between the Birgittines of the mother monastery in Vadstena and Rome, perhaps primarily the local Birgittine house. It also shows how standardization was initiated along lines that we would perhaps not have expected, crossing the whole continent from Rome to Vadstena.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have provided a number of examples of how standardization as a concept from our own time can elucidate further processes of *variance*, *change*, and efforts to introduce innovations and maintain a continuity in manuscript culture. I have chosen examples from the earliest period in the twelfth century stretching to the end of the fifteenth century in order to show the variety of the observed standardization processes and how they relate to various social and cultural contexts. I have also tried to give examples from the whole Scandinavian region, from the Icelandic Þingeyrar to Vadstena in Sweden to show the geographical span of these processes. In order to organize these observations in a new way I have chosen to divide them into three categories: *the history of writing*, *the history of texts*, and *the history of books*. This means that time and geography has been subordinated to thematic categories. I hope this has created an opening for some new insights into the rich variety of this medieval society in time and space.

The first category under scrutiny concerned the history of writing. Here the First Grammarian is an obvious starting point with his innovative approach to writing his indigenous language with the novel Roman script. It could be argued that the grammarian had an easy task as the writing system was not really an innovation. But this argument is easy to counter. The treatise does display an ambitious and highly original approach to standardizing both palaeography and orthography for the Norse language, and the grammarian sets about the task with a systematic method that has astonished generations of scholars. But the fate of this ambitious program of standardization was to have little impact. It only survives in a manuscript from the fourteenth century written by a later scribe; probably at the instigation of a learned compiler whose reason for including the treatise in his compilation is still not clear. Standardization in a manuscript culture and with weak or even non-existing authority proved futile. But the Roman script did survive as a central tool in the processes of change and my second ex-

ample illustrates a rather different situation from that displayed by the First Grammarian. When new trends in palaeography were introduced in the fifteenth century, Vadstena seems to have been quick to adopt the innovations, so quick that its use of the new cursive script was long considered so particular that scholars named it *Vadstena cursive*. This has lately been challenged and today most scholars would rather adhere to the view that the cursive used in Vadstena was a standardized script seen with some modifications all over Europe at the time. The concept of *standardization* proves useful as it highlights the obstacles for innovation in the manuscript culture. It also displays the changes over time and space from an earlier phase when there are rather vague and unclear authorities to support innovations and standardization to a later period where Church and a secular elite have established more explicit influence on the implementation.

For the second section of the study, I returned to the earliest period of writing the vernacular with Roman script (and admittedly, with some outlooks to the use of runes for the *Verschriftung* of oral poetry). It is a perennial bone of contention in Norse scholarship whether there was a textualized tradition before writing or if we must be content to regard the silence of oral culture as tradition, a tradition that was standardized in the processes of *Verschriftlichung*. I suggested in this section that the division in genres in the extant material, into two main categories of poetry, could be seen as a standardization which took place in the twelfth and early thirteenth century. Some of the categorization in genres, however, must with this reasoning rather be attributed to nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars. We seem to have a blend of medieval standardized forms in two main genres and a later, Romantic categorization carried well into the twenty-first century as a habit of thought that is difficult to rebut. It is clear from this section that the innovation of written texts was not supported by clear models and authority for clear norms for literary genres. While the traditions of an oral community were standardized as texts, the poetics throughout the Middle Ages were still rather vague concerning standardization of genres, with the prose *Edda* as perhaps the most explicit representative for an idea of two main genres of poetry, anonymous Eddic poetry related to myth and legend on the one hand and on the other hand skaldic poetry with attribution to named skalds.

In my last section I turned to the history of the material book. Here I suggested two stages in the processes of establishing standards in book production. In the earlier material there seems to be a tendency to make re-written versions of single texts, that is, to keep the individual text in a separate quire or perhaps leaflet of loose quires. Many of the text collections from the fourteenth century still display traces of having been kept apart for some time before being bound in books considerably later. This tradition was exemplified with Hauksbók, a miscellany or composite manuscript often connected to the Icelandic-Norwegian aristo-

crat Haukr Erlendsson. Closer scrutiny of this manuscript does indicate that it was not originally formed as a book, but rather contains a number of different collections, some of which may even have been gathered without the instigation of Haukr Erlendsson. These collections could obviously have formed an individual's library of leaflets, but this cannot be sustained by the appearance of the extant manuscript. In my own work I have recently found similar traces in both Icelandic (AM 657 a–b 4to) and Swedish (Cod Holm A 110) manuscripts, which could be an indication that the standardization of the bound book as a dominant medium for handling written material was still in process in the fourteenth century.

In my last case study, I returned to Vadstena where a novelty was introduced in the fifteenth century. The use of five folded leaves in each quire where a folded parchment leaf forms the outer two leaves covering eight paper leaves was most likely introduced as a new standard from Italy. This, just as the new cursive script that appear in Vadstena and Sweden in the same period, indicates that standardization in the fifteenth century had more authority and could be implemented with greater force than the more bottom-up standardization of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

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Abbreviations

ÍF XVII = Íslenzk fornrit 17. *Biskupa sögur III. Árna saga biskups; Lárentíus saga biskups; Sögubáttr Jóns Halldórssonar biskups; Biskupa ættir*. Edited by Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir. Reykjavik: Hið Íslenzka fornritafélag, 1998.

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Hans Jacob Orning

4 Standardizing Violence in Norwegian Medieval Laws

Abstract: This article approaches standardization in medieval Norwegian laws by analyzing how violence was perceived, classified, and framed in Gulathingslaw (the law for the western part of Norway until 1267) and the National law from 1274. The development of the laws and legal system in the Middle Ages has been described as a process of standardization, "where the various physical and mental structures of the legal culture were connected to one another to form a unity." Instead of speaking of one, singular "standardization," this article discusses various kinds or processes of standardization. The hypothesis is that Gulathingslaw represents a standardization process from below, both in that it starts out with the concrete, as well as in that it situates a killing among the involved parties. A killing which is openly done is public, signifying the known and visible. The National law describes a standardization process which emanates much more from above. The law starts with a general situation, and involves the king in all offenses. The king is the guarantor of peace, and breaking the peace is simultaneously a break with the king. However, instead of seeing this as a development from kin to king, from public = visible to public = royal, these perspectives and views should be seen as complementary and co-existing.

Keywords: Standardization, law, violence, public / private, royal justice, vengeance

Introduction: Standardization and Violence

To classify is human. But it is not "natural." Since Foucault, the act of classifying has lost its innocence. As Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Star puts it: "Each standard and each category valorizes some point of view and silences another."[1] This implies that "what appears on the surface to be a dry and technical subject"[2] is an

1 Bowker and Star, *Sorting Things Out*, 5. Here they underline that a characteristic of most classifications are their invisibility.

2 Russell, "Standardization in History," 7.

Hans Jacob Orning, University of Oslo

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inherently ethical act, which can tell us much about values and norms. In this article, I will approach standardization by analyzing how violence was perceived, classified, and framed in medieval Norwegian laws. The development of the laws and legal system in the Middle Ages has been described as a process of standardization, although this term was not specifically used. The legal historian Jørn Øyrehagen Sunde states that "the transition from a legal pre-order to a legal order was a unification project where the various physical and mental structures of the legal culture were connected to one another to form a unity."[3] The Older Gulathingslaw (the law for Western Norway until 1267) is an example of the early phase, in which "norm production occurred in the context of solving concrete legal conflicts in a number of ad-hoc organizations with no common rules for the use of justice."[4] In the later phase of Magnus Lagabøte's National law (1274) and Archbishop Jon's Christian Law (1273), the Church and the monarchy took responsibility for the administration of justice, partly in order to secure peace and eliminate violence, and partly because the Church wanted to "organize the society after the model of God's own arrangement of the heavenly realm."[5]

I will depart from this interpretation in two major ways. First, I find it unsatisfactory to contrast a legal order with a pre-legal one, because it underestimates the legal character of conflict solving before the National law, as well as the ideological character of the regulation of violence in the National law. Second, instead of speaking of one, singular "standardization," I think we should speak about various kinds or processes of standardization. My main aim in this article is to find out what kind of standardization lay behind the regulation of violence in the two laws. On the one hand, I shall argue that the National law operates with a much more abstract and generalized conception of violence than Gulathingslaw, and moreover one which conforms to modern views of standardization. On the other hand, stating that Gulathingslaw is neither systematic nor orderly, in my opinion, formulates the question the wrong way. Rather we must ask: What kind of order characterizes Gulathingslaw, and in what ways is it different from the order in the National law? I will argue that standardizing processes are very different in

3 Sunde, *Speculum legale*, 174 ("Overgangen frå ein rettsleg førorden til ein rettsorden var eit asmeiningprosjekt der dei ulike fysiske og mentale strukturane i rettskulturen vart sett i samband med kvarandre til ein viss einskap"). Legal historians are in line on this development, see for instance Ljungqvist, *Kungamakten och lagen*, 85–156.

4 Sunde, *Speculum legale*, 173 ("normproduksjonen skjedde i samband med løysing av konkrete rettslege konfliktar i ei rad ulike *ad-hoc* organ utan noko felles rettningslinjer for rettsbruken"). Sunde continues that this "was therefore no ideal condition ("var dermed ikkje ein ideell tilstand")."

5 Sunde, *Speculum legale*, 173 ("ordna samfunnet etter mønster frå Guds eiga ordning av Himmelriket.").

the two laws when they deal with violence. These differences relate to what constitutes violence, how to classify it, and how violence should be handled. Paul Davis identifies two variants of standardization, and asks "when will standards emerge as the result of bottom-up consensus, and when will they be accelerated through top-down authority?"[6] My hypothesis is that while Gulathingslaw mainly portrays a standardization process from below, the National law illuminates one stemming from above. However, I argue that this development is not one of substitution, but rather one where the National law complements the way of standardizing violence set out in Gulathingslaw.

Before investigating the laws, we need to address the medieval conceptions of violence. The historian Erling Sandmo has argued that violence as a generic term for the exercise of illegitimate physical force is a modern phenomenon, which was not common until the late 17th century. Only then was the state strong enough to implement and enforce such a conception of violence, whereby the private use of physical force was transformed wholesale into an illegitimate category, reserving the use of legitimate physical power to the state.[7]

It is possible to see the contours of a generalized notion of violence in that medieval law codes have a specific section on 'mannhelgi' (mannhelgarbólkr). Mannhelgi literally means "the inviolability that the law grants each man."[8] These sections invoke a condition of peace that can be broken, and thus are maybe the closest we get to a concept of "criminal law." In the mannhelgi section, it is breaches against man's inviolability that are the issue, or what *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as "the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on, or cause damage to, persons or property."[9] Other law sections deal with breaches against property, family, religion, publicity etc. However, as we shall see, what was included in the mannhelgi sections and the way they were organized is different from modern laws. Hence, the mannhelgarbólkar should serve as the starting point for a discussion of violence, rather than as its answer.

If medieval people had an implicit notion of what constituted violence, they probably did not share the modern view of it as private and illegitimate, unless performed by the state, whose monopoly of violence is (perceived of as) a precondition of the freedom of each individual citizen.[10] The germs of this modern meaning of violence can be found in the Latin "violentia," which denotes an act

6 Davis, "Standardization Policies for Network Technologies."

7 Sandmo, *Voldssamfunnets undergang*.

8 "Mannhelgi," Fritzner, *Ordbog*; Hertzberg, *Glossarium*. Helgi is related to helgr, meaning holy, see Sørensen, *Fortælling og ære*, 191–193 on this term.

9 "Violence," *Oxford English Dictionary*.

10 Weber, *Economy and Society*.

of vehemence, impetuosity, or ferocity that clearly trespasses ordinary, acceptable behavior.[11] However, an act of violence is not classified as illegitimate as such. According to the historian Warren Brown, the term only attained the significance of denoting illegitimate behavior from the late 13th century onwards.[12] Thus, we may be standing on the threshold of the modern concept of violence in the period of the National law. However, I would expect that this leap was not achieved all at once, but came about piecemeal, bit by bit, with spurts and regressions, since "violentia" qua illegitimate violence presupposes that the question of legitimacy was established once and for all. Even in our modern world, the issue of what constitutes legitimate and illegitimate violence can arouse debate. How much more contested, should we assume, was this issue in the Middle Ages.

The issue of legitimate and illegitimate violence becomes even more complicated (and interesting) when we consider the Old Norse term for violence: "vald." Vald can signify the use of physical force in alignment with the vehemence suggested in the Latin "violentia." Yet, here there is a crucial divergence, namely in that vald did not distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate violence. Vald can simply be translated as "power."[13] Thus a "valdsmaðr" – literally a violent man – meant a powerful man, chieftain, or royal official.[14] This does not imply that all violence was legitimate. Drawing a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate "vald" was a crucial issue in the Norwegian medieval laws, but the issue of legitimacy was decided on the basis of other factors than whether the state was involved or not. It is the interplay and tensions between these various conceptions of violence that will form the theme of the remainder of this article – as seen through the lens of standardization. The mannhelgi sections will serve as a point of departure for exploring how people viewed what we call violence, power and crime, and how this relates to the processes of standardization. More specifically, I will mainly analyze the first seven paragraphs in Gulathingslaw and the first six in the National law, since this is where the basic aspects of violence are set out.

The main sources for this study will be two Norwegian law codes from the Middle Ages: Gulathingslaw and Magnus Lagabøte's National law. Gulathingslaw was the law for the western part of Norway until 1267. Its age is disputed, as according to narrative sources it goes back to the 10th century, but in written form it belongs

11 Schreiner and Vandvik, *Latinsk ordbok* has "ofse, brålynde, ageløyse, villskap," meaning impetuosity, brusqueness, unruliness, wildness. An Old Norse parallel would be the term "ofbeldi."

12 Brown, *Violence in Medieval Europe*, 7. Hannah Skoda underlines this even more in Skoda, *Medieval Violence*.

13 "Vald," Fritzner, *Ordbog*; Hertzberg, *Glossarium*.

14 "Valdsmaðr," Fritzner, *Ordbog*; Hertzberg, *Glossarium*.

to the later 12th century. The law manuscripts have two layers within the text: Olaf-text – allegedly from Saint Olaf (d. 1030) – and Magnus-text from Magnus Erlingsson (d. 1184).[15] Here I shall simply treat it as the mouthpiece of an "older" conception of violence than that formulated in the National law from 1274. The latter's provenance is easier to specify, since it was prepared by King Magnus and his councilors, and presented and acclaimed at assemblies in 1274–1277.[16]

Violence in Gulathingslaw: Notoriety, Restitution, Addition

Gulathingslaw is a long and complicated law, with 102 paragraphs in the mannhelgi section. In comparison, the National law has 30 paragraphs, although the comparison is not completely fair, as many of the paragraphs in Gulathingslaw are very brief. What are the principles behind how violence is standardized in Gulathingslaw, and is it possible to see any pattern in how it conceives of violence?

Notoriety

This is how the mannhelgi section in Gulathingslaw opens:

> Eyewitness shall state what kind of homicide it was. The one is guilty of the homicide who witness witnesses against or whom a woman [kona] says is guilty of the homicide. The witnesses shall pursue the woman's statement at the assembly, the first ones she met.[17]

The law starts with the crucial issue of how to find out who is the killer, and how to pursue him. Here the public character of the act looms large: an act of homicide is presupposed to have a witness, or as stated later (G 156), the killer is ex-

15 For the Old Norse version of Gulathingslaw, see Ulset, Rindal, and Eithun, *Den eldre Gulatingslova*. The law has been translated into Norwegian by Robberstad and Lien, eds., *Gulatingslovi*. In the following, Gulathingslaw will be abbreviated as "G," and references are to paragraphs in the law. The standard work on the law is Helle, *Gulatinget og Gulatingslova*.

16 For the Old Norse version of Magnus Lagabøte's National law, see Rindal and Spørck, *Kong Magnus Håkonsson Lagabøtes landslov*. In the following, the National law will be abbreviated as "ML," and references are to sections and paragraphs in the law.

17 This opening passage is not in the main manuscript, but in AM 315f fol. (in Keyser and Munch, *Norges gamle Love indtil 1387* IV suppl, p. 7): "Vidur vistar men skulu vig skilia. Nu er sa ad vige sannur, er vottar bera a hond, edur kona sannar vig a hond. vottar skulu fylgia cono sægu a þing, þeir er first hitte hun," G 150.

pected to proclaim (lýsa, "enlighten" or proclaim) the homicide. Women are mentioned specifically, as witnesses technically should give testimony at the assembly and women are not allowed to attend the assembly. Nevertheless, women are not counted as less valuable witnesses than men, since their statement should be presented by a man at the assembly. Thus, the crucial issue concerning killings is to have witnesses, and in case there are no male witnesses, women can bear witness.[18]

This first part of the mannhelgi section ends by setting out detailed procedures for the aftermath of a killing. Here the decisive issue is the proclamation of the homicide (víglýsing): "But if he proclaims [the homicide] differently, then he proclaims himself guilty of murder."[19] Thus, the antithesis to the openly acknowledged homicide (víg) is murder (morð). A killer becomes a murderer if he does not publicize the killing in the prescribed way (G 156). An earlier paragraph specifies that the news should be broadcast using the 'pilbudstikke' – an arrow passed on from house to house to summon people to the assembly (G 151). The final note is that any free man can represent another. This is the world of the free men's notorious deeds (G 156).

After Gulathingslaw has presented the typical – standard – killing, it goes on to specify situations which can be solved more simply without having to take the case to the assembly. In four instances guilt can be determined immediately without awaiting an assembly decision, namely if the killing has occurred in public places, such as the assembly, the church, the pub (beerhouse) or onboard a ship with 27 men or more (G 150). Another context for settling the issue swiftly is if the killing takes place within a flokkr. A flokkr is a group consisting of at least five men (G 154).[20] The law proclaims that in a case where a man is killed in the midst of a flokkr, "it is well if it is avenged."[21] Hence, this type of killing permits instant action. The cause is probably that the act is in itself so obvious and public that there are no doubts, so it can be dealt with without any further process. Thus, flokkdrap is the simplest form of killing in Gulathingslaw in that it can be dealt

18 In cases where there were no witnesses, perpetrators could swear themselves free with the aid of co-compurgators. On compurgation in legal procedures, see Nordby, *The Judicial Oath in Medieval Norway*.

19 "En ef hann lysír annar veg, þa lysír hann morðe a hendr ser," G 156.

20 The flokkr transforms if it is reduced to a group of three men. If one in a group of three is killed, it is word against word. The pragmatic logic behind Gulathingslaw is nowhere exposed better than in this case: "if both say the other is the killer, then they are both killers" ("segir hvarr sogu a hendr oðrom, þa ero þeír baðer banar," G 155) However, it is strange that a flokkr is not defined as four, since two witnesses are as good as ten, and four would make it two against one.

21 "þa er vel ef hemt verðr," G 152.

with immediately. However, the urgency of this matter also stems from the fact that flokk-killers might be protected by other people who are intent on obstructing the taking of vengeance, as the law goes on to specify what counts as legal and non-legal obstruction (G 152–153).

After the presentation of the easy cases, Gulathingslaw turns to special circumstances. First it discusses locations which carry an aggravating penalty (G 157–158: beerhouse, on voyage), and instances where the perpetrator is not a free man (G 159–160, 163–165; women, minors, thrall, madman, animals). Second, the category of an accident (váðaverk) goes in the opposite direction, as the king abstains from fines in such instances (G 172).[22] The classification of an act of violence as an accident is a fraught one. Gulathingslaw states that in that case the victim shall decide how to classify the act: "it shall only be called an accident if he wants to."[23] This means that a violation only becomes an accident if the victim and / or his family are willing to acknowledge it as such.[24] Notoriety forms the backbone of Gulathingslaw. Cases of homicide have witness testimony as the default condition, and killing in public places serves to increase the guilt of the perpetrator, whereas killing by accident is a mitigating factor.

Restitution

What was the underlying principle behind making an act notorious? Here the wergild systems come into operation, stipulating fines to be paid by the perpetrator and his kin to the victim's kin, sometimes also to the king. Maybe the most famous paragraph of Gulathingslaw is one of its shortest, G 186: "No one can demand legal fines more than three times, neither man nor woman, without taking vengeance in-between."[25] This paragraph has been taken as evidence that legal settlements were second-rate options, and that what really mattered was revenge, hence that violence trumped peaceful solutions.

We would call an act of vengeance violent in contrast to a peaceful settlement. However, the similarities between vengeance and settlement are underestimated. First, both vengeance and settlement make the conflict a matter between

22 Killings in flokk which is not settled is reckoned as very grave with large fines to the king (G 167–168).

23 "vere þvi at eíní vaða verc ef hann vill," G 169.

24 See Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking,* 51–76 on the dangers of calling an act of violence an accident.

25 "Nv a engi madr rett a sér oftarr en þryívar, hvarke karl ne kona, ef hann hemnisc eigi a milli," G 186.

the two parties without involving the king – or the law for that matter. Both are informal ways of solving conflicts as a matter that is only relevant to the parties involved. Second, even if vengeance and settlements are "private," they are also intensely public if by public we mean notorious – known to all. Third, vengeance operates from exactly the same logic as wergild in being a reciprocal system that regulates a conflict between two collectives, which works through a principle of balance. The ideal is not to exclude the perpetrator, but to find a way to redefine and adjust the balance between the parties. Fourth, vengeance is not an extra-legal response, but forms part of the legal system, which in some cases is even encouraged (such as a flokkdrap). Hence, we should not make the violent / peaceful distinction too central in Gulathingslaw. Considering that violence as vald was deeply ingrained in the culture, the central issue is rather whether the form and amount of violence is considered legitimate – and by whom. Here the primary concern is that violence is not excessive or overwhelming, but inversely balanced with the intention of restoring or attuning the status quo.

Addition

So far, I have tried to demonstrate how Gulathingslaw is ordered according to the principles of notoriety and restitution. However, the structure of the law is far from self-explanatory. Limiting ourselves to the first 20 paragraphs of the homicide section, cases of accidents are interspersed with other paragraphs (accident in G 169, 172, 173, 175, 177). The same applies to the role of the king (G 16, 167–168, 170) and flokk-killing (G 152–154, 166–168). If there is a classificatory scheme behind the law, it is not self-evident, and with a modern eye its prime property is inconsistency. Paragraphs take up different issues, and elements like aggravating or mitigating factors are not dealt with in one place but rather are spread out, interrupted by other types of violence.

I would suggest that the underlying principle of standardization in Gulathingslaw is that of addition or accumulation. What matters is not primarily *where* something is positioned, or whether all paragraphs are consistent. Issues are spread out, sometimes even at odds with one another. For instance, the law presents several different systems of wergild, which are not attuned to one another. Robberstad traces five different systems of reckoning wergild in the law.[26] Hence, the law accommodates a lot of what we would call inconsistencies. One reason for this may be that Gulathingslaw had a long prehistory. Instead of revis-

26 Robberstad and Lien, *Gulatingslovi*, 373–375.

ing the law and adapting new paragraphs to existing ones, new issues seem simply to be added to the law. This logic can be related to the oral roots of the law. Orality according to Walter Ong operates according to a logic of aggregation rather than analysis (or synthesis).[27] A similar principle of aggregation lies behind the Common Law-tradition in medieval England, which is basically a collection of laws issued at various times from the Middle Ages onwards.[28] However, even in the literate tradition of Church fathers, this principle is present up to the 12th century in the tendency to pile up layers of commentaries on the Bible among the glossators. The different commentaries could point in all kinds of directions, but they were perceived of as constituting one unity. It was not until Gratian, or even Gregory IX, embarked upon the project of unifying these traditions and presenting them in one work that these variations were harmonized and what we would call a standard was made.[29]

So, if Gulathingslaw does not adhere to what we would call a standard in terms of consistency, what kind of standard does it advocate? In my view, the standard of the law resides in the concrete, in what has been termed the casuistic style.[30] The law starts from a standard example, the archetypical homicide by one free man of another, with witnesses present, securing a correct proclamation. This is the essence of homicide in Gulathingslaw: making an act notorious, which means to identify a perpetrator and a victim. The rest of the section elaborates further, nuances and molds the standard, complications which may stem from variant status of the perpetrator, particularly aggravating places of the killing, the human surroundings, and finally the intentions behind the deed (as defined by the victim). Thus, a myriad of different threads springs from the core, but the core remains even if the threads run wild.

Violence in the National Law: Exclusion, the King's Peace

This is how the section on mannhelgi in the National law of King Magnus Lagabøte opens:

27 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 37–38.
28 See Hudson, *The Formation of the English Common Law*.
29 Burns, *Medieval Political Thought*, 424–426; Winroth, *The Making of Gratian's Decretum*.
30 Robberstad, *Rettssoga*, 101–102.

> It is first in our "mannhelgi" that every man in the Norwegian king's realm shall have peace from others within the realm and outside it. But if a man kills another man, then he has forfeited everything that he owned, apart from his allodial lands, either a man kills woman or a woman kills a man, unless he has committed "skemdarvíg" or "níðingsverk."[31]

In comparison to Gulathingslaw, the mannhelgi section in the National law starts out completely differently. Whereas Gulathingslaw seeks to specify what kind of killing had occurred, the prime concern in the National law is to emphasize that killings are prohibited and will lead to exclusion. What are the principles behind this way of framing or standardizing violence? Before discussing the two principles of exclusion and the king's role, I will address the mode of presenting or ordering of legal cases in the law.

Generalization

The way of presenting cases in the National law differs from Gulathingslaw. Whereas the latter took concrete cases as a starting point, the National law presented an overall image of the situation as one of peace. The difference between the casuistic Gulathingslaw and the generalist National law has been explained as a result of the different characters of the laws and the way they had come into existence. The content of Gulathingslaw was passed on at regional assemblies in oral form for a long period before it was written down, and the paragraphs were casuistic, relating to concrete cases. In contrast, the National law was planned by the king and his inner circle and sent out for formal sanction at the assemblies as one complete law. Moreover, it had more influence from Roman and canon law, which were based on universalist and not casuistic principles.[32]

However, even if the principle of addition is far less prevalent in the National law than in Gulathingslaw, it is not completely absent from it. This can be observed in the bipartite division of úbótamál: the first one on 'skændselsdrap/skemdarvíg' and 'níðingsverk', the second one on the so-called "newer úbótamál." The first has similarities to Gulthingslaw's paragraph 178 on heimsókn, albeit that

31 "þat er first ímanhælgi varra at var lande hværr J noregs konungs riki skal friðhæilagr vera hværr við annan innan lanðz ok otan. En ef maðr vegr mann þa hefir hann firir gort ollu þui sem hann a nema oðalls iorðum sinum eínum hvart sem karll maðr drepr kono eða kona karll mann. nema hann hafe veget skemdar vig eða gort niðings værk," ML IV, 1. The two first paragraphs in the National law also figure in the Newer Frostathingslaw, which can be viewed as a preparation for the National law. See Sandnes and Hagland, "Om lova og lagdømmet."

32 Sunde, *Speculum legale*, 103–106; also see contributions in Tamm and Vogt, eds., *How Nordic are the Nordic Medieval Laws?*

in Gulathingslaw this paragraph is much shorter and placed peripherally in the 29th chapter of the mannhelgi section, and thus it is not in a comparably prominent position as that in the National law. The second section on the newer úbótamál in the National law is "new" insofar that the law paragraphs stem from Magnus Erlingsson's law revision of 1163. These are also included in Gulathingslaw, but there they are placed in the beginning of the law as nýmæli (G 32) and thus do not form part of the mannhelgi section. Hence, even if the National law compared with Gulathingslaw is a more general law that works from abstract principles, not concrete issues, it is not devoid of the additive principle, as the various sections on úbótamál overlap to a substantial degree.

Exclusion

Magnus Lagabøte's National law starts from a general principle: "every man shall have peace from others."[33] The standard is a realm at peace, and an encroachment on the condition of peace moves the perpetrator out of the peace and out of the law – as an outlaw. Thus, whereas Gulathingslaw focuses on restitution and reintegration, the dominant theme in the National law is exclusion. However, the law does not operate with one single dichotomy within vs outside the law, as there is one strong qualification on the total forfeiture in case of homicide, namely of allodial lands. Only in the most serious case of 'skemdarvíg' or 'níðingsverk' is the exclusion permanent and collective for the whole kin. In less serious violations, there is a temporal exclusion that did not impinge on lands held by the kin. Thus, the law posits a three-fold gradation: within law, outside law with allodial land, and outside "all inclusive," where the distinction between the two latter categories carries a temporal dimension and an individual / collective one. The distinction is similar to the one between bótamál (offenses that can be atoned) and úbótamál (offenses that cannot be atoned). The first four paragraphs can be read as elaborations of the úbótamál category, the gravest of offenses.

The two following paragraphs go on to specify different kinds of úbótamál: the first one on 'skændselsdrap/ skemdarvíg' and 'níðingsverk', the second one on the so-called "newer úbótamál." In the following, I will discuss the main variables that were decisive in classifying a homicide as úbótamál in these two sections.[34]

33 "hværr [. . .] skal friðhæilagr vera hværr við annan," ML IV, 1.

34 The first section on níðingsverk (paragraph 3) mentions the following offenses: betrayal of the king; killing a man who has obtained grid; killing a royal lawman for giving right judgment; murder and avenging thieves; killing of close relatives. The paragraph on recent níðingsverk is divided into four sub-sections. Out of these, the first one lies close to Magnus Erlingsson's law

One major operating principle is that killing people who have obtained **grið** or mercy qualifies as úbótamál. The grið referred to here is not the general one that everyone living in the king's realm should enjoy (cf. the first paragraph of mannhelgi), but the special form of protection that a man has obtained as part of a settlement.[35] Another paragraph specifies that it is úbótamál to kill a lawman for giving right judgment, "because that man cut down justice for everyone."[36] Furthermore, it is specified that it is úbótamál to avenge úbótamenn, and that it is legally valid to protect oneself against such attackers. These paragraphs imply that it is difficult to have people respect judgments and settlements. In light of the Gulathingslaw paragraph 186 that vengeance is more highly regarded than settlement, this is not surprising. The wish to protect people under grið, in particular in connection with settlements, is a pressing concern in both laws, but all the more so in the National law. It demonstrated firstly that it has abolished Gulathingslaw's praise of vengeance, and secondly that it goes into more detail in specifying the conditions of exclusion.

A second principle behind úbótamál concerns individual versus collective liability. On the one hand, the National law is famous for its prohibition against **kin** vengeance, making it úbótamál to kill any other than the perpetrator. On the other hand, the National law is far from individualistic. First, while limiting the range of targets, the law expands the range of implicated people in an offense as it stipulates complicity as legally identical to actually carrying out the misdeed.[37] Second, protecting close kin is still a cornerstone in the law. This applies to protection of women and violations within the house, as violations of them classify as úbótamál in contrast to violations of other persons or other places. In the "newer úbótamál," rape is also treated in more detail than previously, and another paragraph is devoted to sexual offenses. Third, killing a close relative, in-

amendment from Gulathingslaw (G 32). Sub-sections 2 and 3 concerns the king and are new, while the fourth part deals with rape. We should also include paragraphs 5 and 6 to this part of the law, since they also deal with úbótamál. The National law also formulates some principles for judging a homicide more mildly, even if it to begin with qualifies as úbótamál. The following circumstances could mitigate the judgment, so that it evades the úbótamál category: accidental homicide; if a homicide was done in order to protect oneself (self-defense); homicide in times of war (for the king); trespasses intending to announce a pending war threat; and killing a close relative which is defined as madness.

35 Sometimes, but not always, grið was given by the king.

36 "sa høggr niðr retyndi firi ollum monum," ML IV 3,3. It is noteworthy that the law man is not called the king's man in this instance – law men had traditionally been appointed among peasants, and only recently by the king.

37 ML IV, 3,4.

cluding oneself (suicide), is úbótamál and a mad man's killing.[38] Fourth, the law states that allodial lands remain untouched by royal fines in cases of bótamál. Here it is specified that lands belonging to a killer should not be sold by his relatives without his consent. Thus, when it comes to the broad range of offenses classified as bótamál, the National law does not break with the kin-based landed structure that we saw in Gulathingslaw, but builds on it and puts the king on top of it.

A third principle relates to **secrecy**, classifying murder or the killing of thieves as úbótamál. This principle of notoriety also builds heavily on Gulathingslaw and its well-established division between murder and openly acknowledged homicide (víg).[39] The National law reinforces but also undermines this principle. On the one hand, secrecy is made even more illegitimate than previously through an association with paganism. Secrecy is strongly associated with the heathen religion in that it is úbótamál to "sit outside to wake up trolls and thereby promote heathendom."[40] Trolls exist, but they evidently need to be awakened and activated in order to be effective. By associating secrecy with paganism, a religious flavor is added to the concept. On the other hand, the law states that the king can condone secrecy, as assassins (flugumenn) are úbótamenn unless they are acting on behalf of the king as part of land-cleansing. Here, the concept of the public *qua* notorious is challenged by a rival concept of the public *qua* royal. Charles Tilly's famous title "state making as organized crime" is echoed in this paragraph. This brings us to the role of the king.

The last principle for úbótamál in the National law concerns **the king**, and this is also the area where the National law departs most radically from Gulathingslaw. The firstly mentioned and gravest offense among úbótamál involves the king: "That is the biggest [offense] if a man betrays land or people from his king."[41] The king also appears in sub-paragraph 4, where harming another is not justified unless it is part of a situation where "the king punishes in order to cleanse the realm."[42] The role of the king is even more prominent in the newer

38 It can be added that women play an ambivalent role in this respect. On the one hand, killing a fornicating spouse is úbótamál, on the other, abducting women is also úbótamál.

39 The first sub-section in paragraph 4 builds on G 32.

40 "uti setor at veckia troll up at fremia með þui heiðni," ML IV, 4,1. According to Ari Þorgilsson's *Íslendingabók*, the first Christian stipulations in Iceland after the conversion in the year 1000 stated that it was allowed to make sacrifices to heathen gods if it happened in secrecy, but if there were witnesses, the act made the culprit an outlaw, see Benediktsson, ed., *Íslendingabók – Landnámabók*, 17.

41 "þat er hit mesta ef maðr ræðr vndan konunge sinum lond ok þægna," ML IV, 3,1.

42 "konungr late ræpssa til land ræínssanar," ML IV, 3,4. The king is also indirectly present in paragraph 5 (killing of a law man).

níðingsverk. Sub-paragraph 1 extends the notion of land-cleansing by allowing the king to act secretly by using hired killers. In sub-paragraph 2, the legal aspect of kingship is strengthened, in emphasizing that people who have obtained the king's landsvist are under a special protection, which will incur úbótamál on those who offend these people. This stipulation puts those who have royal grið in line with those who have grið as part of non-royal settlements.

When it comes to the standardization of violence in Gulathingslaw and the National law, some principles are common to both laws: grið is unbreakable, kin obligations are crucial, and acts of violence should be made notorious. However, there are also significant differences between the laws. Most noteworthy, exclusion of perpetrators is much more prominent as a standardizing principle in the National law than in Gulathingslaw. We can also observe an increased demarcation of kin obligations in the National law, as well as a competing concept of the public as something pertaining to the king – here in addition to the traditional meaning of something notorious. The really new element in the National law is the role of the king. The king is present in Gulathingslaw, but far less and in other roles than in the National law.

The king's peace

The National law operates with a general notion of peace and of its opposite, the breaking of peace. The king is absent in the first paragraph, but this is not because he is irrelevant to the prosecution of homicide. On the contrary, the king is at the very center of the mannhelgi in the law as the one responsible for upholding the peace. The role of the king as the guarantor of peace within the realm resembles that of the modern state, but there are (at least) two differences. First, the king's peace also stretches outside the realm, as the first paragraph specifies that every man shall have peace not only "within the realm" but also "outside it."[43] Second, the National law is in principle not mandatory for everyone living in the king's realm, but contain an element of voluntariness, as the law states that all people are bound by the oath of obedience that they swear to the king, "those who want to benefit from his oath."[44] The latter quote shows that there is an op-

43 "innan lanðz ok otan," ML IV, 1. In other words, royal responsibility transcends the realm, reaching out to all his subjects wherever they may be.

44 "hanns eiðs eigu at níota." ML II, 12. The peasant oath to a new king goes as follows: "Not only are those who swear the oath of obedience to the king liable to abide by this oath, but everyone who are in the king's dominion, born and unborn, those who want to benefit from his oath," ML II 12,1. See also the statement later in the paragraph that everyone owe the king obedience,

tion not to take or accept the oath, which implies being outside the king's peace, as "peace-less" or outlaws.[45]

The main avenue for promoting the conception of royal peace is the notion of úbótamál, which is greatly expanded in the National law. In the previous section, we saw that úbótamál involves that the perpetrator is excluded from the king's peace. Here we will focus on the fact that it also serves to emphasize royal power in various ways. First, in cases of úbótamál the king plays a central role through the practice of giving landsvist. Landsvist literally means "the right to reside in the land."[46] It consists of the king's right to give mercy to a killer in the form of a letter of pardon. This letter would give the perpetrator permanent grið, including a settlement with the victim's kin and reinstatement in his properties, provided that fines were paid to the victim and to the king according to the king's evaluation (probably this only concerned úbótamál, but this is not specified).[47]

The institution of landsvist positions the king at the center of homicide cases. The law emphasizes that the king is expected to consult with good men or give in to their pleadings in cases where landsvist is an option. This is in line with the ideas of *The King's Mirror*, probably written in the same environments in the decades preceding the National law, which envisages the legal process as an utterly complicated one guided by considerations of the intentions behind the act.[48] Considerations of intentions play a huge part in the National law, which accords well with influence from Roman and Canon law.[49] However, in reality the paragraph opens up the possibility for the king to forgive killers at his own will, and thus to annul previous judgments if that suits him.[50] Thus, one could say that the institution of landsvist reverses the processes of standardization, as it brings in an element of unpredictability connected to the royal will that would characterize legal processes all the way up to the legal reforms of the early 19th century.[51] However, unpredictability is not necessarily opposed to standardization, as Engh and Turner point out in their article, as unpredictability attests to the importance of flexibility and creativity inherent in the standardization processes.[52] Moreover, in financial

"those who wants to benefit from the laws and to be worthy thereof" ("þeir sem laga vilia niota ok þeirra vilia verðir vera").

45 This formulation also occurs in amendments to the law from the later 13th century, see for instance Keyser and Munch, *Norges gamle Love indtil 1387 III*, 23 (1294).

46 "Landsvist," Fritzner, *Ordbog*.

47 Imsen, " Den gammelnorske drapsprosessen."

48 *Konungs skuggsiá*, 75–78. See also ML IV, 18; Sunde, "The four daughters of God."

49 On the importance of intentions in the National law, see ML IV, 14.

50 On medieval cases of royal pardon, see Lacey, *The Royal Pardon*.

51 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

52 See Engh and Turner's contribution in this volume.

terms the landsvist can be seen as a sign of standardization, as the granting of landsvist increases royal income in terms of friðkaup – a fee to buy peace from the king, as well as royal power in creating bonds of gratitude from the pardoned person. Here, the legal standardization can be linked to processes of monetization mentioned by Gullbekk et al.[53]

A more specific way of increasing royal influence over homicide cases comes from his right to "cleanse the realm." The formulation "the king punishes in order to cleanse the realm" first appeared in Gulathingslaw.[54] However, there it is mentioned in connection with Magnus Erlingsson's law revision of 1163 in the nýmæli early in the law, and it is thus not integrated into the mannhelgi section. In the National law, the principle is part of the úbótamál paragraphs, where it is mentioned twice.[55] In both instances, it serves as a proviso for accepting otherwise condemnable actions. In paragraph 4, it serves to liberate accomplices from guilt in cases where a misdeed is done as part of royal cleansing; in the following paragraph, assassins [flugumenn] can likewise be absolved if they act on royal command.[56] It is unclear whether the principle of land-cleansing could be activated as a more general principle than in these two instances, but they seem to imply so. Given that the notion of land-cleansing opens up for redeeming acts that otherwise would be illegal, it is tempting to interpret it as an occasion for the king to introduce what in modern terms is called martial law.[57] In the contemporary *The King's Mirror*, the author enters into a lengthy discussion on whether kings can set aside or transgress ordinary norms or laws, and if so, in what cases that is permissible. If the king's case is a bad one, such behavior is a sure sign of a *tyrannus* departing from the legal foundation of monarchy. However, if the king has a good case, the author argues that "the necessity of the realm" [lands nauðsynjar] can legitimate breaking the law in order to attain a higher goal.[58] These ideas were inspired by Roman law, which also influenced the National law to enhance the royal role in law beyond the confines of the Gulathingslaw.

A third way of carving out a more central role for the king in cases of úbótamál in the National law consists of introducing rituals that serve to elevate and glorify the king as a figure raised above everyone else. First, the law specifies that forging

53 See Gullbekk et al in this volume.

54 "refsa til landreínsanar oc friðar," G 32.

55 "konungr late ræpssa til land ræínssanar," ML IV, 3,4; 4,1.

56 The latter context is also the one where this formulation is used in Gulathingslaw (G 32).

57 The technical concept of martial law started to develop later in the Middle Ages, see Capua, "The Early History of Martial Law in England."

58 *Konungs skuggsiá*, 97–98. See discussion in Bagge, *The Political Thought of The King's Mirror*, 189–192.

royal coinage, letters, and seals is classified as úbótamál. Hence royal means of communication are given an exalted position that qualify for specific protection and strong sanctions.[59] Second, the space surrounding the king is given special protection, as killing a man in the king's presence qualifies as úbótamál. This applies even if the king is absent, as long as the killing occurs on the king's farm or ship. These provisions elevating the king are to be found in "newer úbótamál," thus confirming that these stratagems were "new" compared to Gulathingslaw.

The provisions in the National law emphasizing the king's involvement in cases of violence are heavily imbued with symbolic meaning. The issue of landsvist is dependent on royal wisdom in judging what is worthy of pardon and what is not; land-cleansing is an extreme measure that a king should only implement in cases of crisis; and finally that proximity to kings confer special protection. This tone of reverence toward the king permeates the National law, and puts it on an altogether different scale than Gulathingslaw, where the king is less present and less exalted. In this endeavor, the National law also introduces what we can call "invented traditions" in order to legitimize royal power. The second paragraph of the mannhelgi section starts by stating that "All that the killer owned in land and items (lausafé) previously fell to the king, apart from allodial lands,"[60] and continues by specifying that now the king will only take a maximum of 8 ertogs and 13 marks. However, there is nothing to suggest that the king had ever confiscated everything that a killer owned apart from allods. True, it has been assumed that in an early phase, kings confiscated lands from defeated enemies.[61] However, opposition to the king would qualify as landráð – high treason, not homicide, and when it comes to the latter – homicides, we have seen in Gulathingslaw that the situation is quite the opposite because the king had little or no involvement in such cases. Here killings as a rule were perceived to be private matters to be solved between the offender's and victim's kin without royal involvement. One should also take into account that royal involvement in homicide cases increased the costs for the parties. Law amendments from the decades after the National law make it abundantly clear that the king's share in homicide fines was experienced as a burden that parties tried to circumvent.[62]

59 Paragraph 6 makes úbótamál conditional: if an úbótamaðr carries true news about an approaching foreign army he is pardoned. This stipulation is also found in G 178.

60 "allt þat sem vigande atte bæðe i lande ok lausum øyri felle aðr vndir konung vtan oðals iarðer," ML IV, 2.

61 Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 52. However, the thesis of large-scale confiscation has been criticized.

62 See Orning, "Det rettsantropologiske perspektivet og staten."

Thus, the National law invokes not one form of standardization, but several ones – depending on the perspective. From a royal point of view, standardization can be viewed as a process of legalization in which the involvement of the king is regulated whereas it previously had been contextual and unlimited. From a more societal view-point, standardization in the National law primarily concerns centralization. While the king's representative played a minor part in solving cases of homicide in Gulathingslaw, here the king stands at the center of the legal action resulting from the offense. Whether this should be judged a good or bad thing lies in the eye of the beholder.

Conclusion: Laws and Standardization

Laws are intricate matter. Not only is the question of how they were applied in practice very complex, their formulations are also often appallingly enigmatic and difficult to contextualize. The Grand Narrative of Norwegian laws in the Middle Ages is one from a kin-based pre-order of Gulathingslaw to a king-based order of the National law.[63] While there is no doubt that the National law reflects a more literate and centralized society than Gulathingslaw, a focus on standardization substitutes a question of progress with one of power. As mentioned in the introduction, standardization is closely connected to issues of power and normativity.[64] So whose order lay behind the standardization activated in the laws?

Gulathingslaw starts with a standard killing where the perpetrator is held legally responsible to the victim as a result of witness testimony. The normal way of solving this case would either be by taking vengeance or by making a legal settlement including the payment of fines from the killer's kin to those of the victim. Vengeance breaks with the legal proceedings by involving violence, but it follows the same pattern of reciprocity and collective liability. This system has a lot of variants, but its proper antithesis – its abject – is the homicide not accounted for: murder. Murder is the real alien to this system, shown in that if a killing was not properly proclaimed it turned into a murder. There are also other aggravating circumstances that can turn a killing from a bótamál to an úbótamál. However, these parts appear only scattered, here and there,[65] in the law, indicating that

63 See footnotes 3–5.

64 Cf. Bowker and Star, *Sorting Things Out*.

65 Úbótamál appears partly in paragraph 178 far out in the section, partly in the introductory part of the law specified as nýmæli by Magnus Erlingsson (G 32).

úbótamál is not really part of the standard killing. Such acts are primarily issues involving the two kin groups of the perpetrator and the victim, with witnesses and proclamation procedures as the crucial part for securing notoriety, and with the king only playing a peripheral role.

So what separates the standard killing in Gulathingslaw from the standard in the National law? One difference concerns the way of formulating a case. Whereas Gulathingslaw starts out with the concrete, the National law is more general. The former goes for the standard *example* (open killing), while the latter states a standard *principle* (everyone are in peace, a killer has broken the peace). There is also a clear difference in the way that homicide is framed in the two laws. Whereas Gulathingslaw operates with a language of inclusion and reintegration, the National law highlights exclusion and appropriation and posits a two-level system of bótamál and úbótamál. These categories are not absent in Gulathingslaw, but they do not form an integrated part of the law. Finally, the National law can be interpreted as a movement from kin to king. The fact that in the gravest offenses in the National law, a perpetrator both loses his position and goods permanently, including allodial lands, means that the law goes against the interests of the kin group. Moreover, the National law posits the king at the center of the law-breach as the one responsible for maintaining peace and order. The violation is therefore an attack on the king, and as part of the case, he should have fines.

However, there are many similarities between Gulathingslaw and the National law. Even if the National law eliminates kin vengeance, it still operates with the kin group as the basic social group. Despite its language of exclusion, bótamál in the National law is in effect not so different from homicides in Gulathingslaw. In some respects, the National law reinforces kin obligations, not least concerning the protection of women. Second, the National law is just as concerned as Gulathingslaw with encouraging people not to break settlements and judgments. Moreover, what both laws pass over are private settlements. Third, when it comes to notoriety, one could say that the National law introduces a new concept of "public," not as something known to all through procedures of proclamation, but as something pertaining to the king, as in the king's right to undertake "cleansing of the realm." However, land-cleansing is introduced already in the Magnus-text of Gulathingslaw, and the distinction between open killing and secret murder continues to be a cornerstone in the National law. Rather than substituting one concept of public with another, the National law expands the notion, now operating with two different versions of "public."

Thus, while Gulathingslaw and the National laws are opposites in many ways, they also have many things in common. Gulathingslaw represent a standardization process from below, both in that it starts out with the concrete, as well as in that it situates a killing among the involved parties. A killing which is openly done is public signifying the known and visible. The National law describes a standardization process which emanates much more from above. The law starts with a general situation, and involves the king in all offenses. The king is the guarantor of peace, and breaking the peace is simultaneously a break with the king. However, instead of seeing this as a development from kin to king, from public = visible to public = royal, these perspectives and views should be seen as complementary and co-existing. Moreover, there are ample meeting points between the two tendencies, showing that standardization is a polyphonic process occurring at the interstices of royal and private, exclusion and inclusion.

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Abbreviations

G = *Den Eldre Gulatingslova*. Edited by Tor Ulset, Magnus Rindal, and Bjørn Eithun. Oslo: Riksarkivet, 1994.

ML = *Kong Magnus Håkonsson Lagabøtes Landslov.* Edited by Magnus Rindal and Bjørg Dale Spørck. Oslo: Arkivverket, 2018.

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Jón Viðar Sigurðsson

5 Parish sizes in Hólar bishopric in the Middle Ages

Abstract: The introduction of the parish system is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, standardization processes in European history; in the Early and High Middle Ages, approximately 120 000–130 000 parishes were founded in the Western Christianity alone. This process, as far as we know, did not generate any opposition. The main reason was probably the adaptability of the parish system to prevailing local organisation. Christianity became the official religion in Iceland in 999/1000. In the year 1096 or 1097, the tithe was introduced. At that time, there were hundreds of churches in Iceland. Not all of these churches could become a parish church. Therefore, the bishops of Skálholt and Hólar had to decide, together with the local chieftains, which churches were to be assigned this status. In this chapter the focus will be on the size of parishes in Hólar bishopric, and how the parish system was adapted to the *hreppr* (commune), the most important social unit in Icelandic society.

Keywords: Standardization, parish, diversity, pastoral care

Introduction

"The evolution of a parochial network was one of the most significant, as it was one of the most enduring, achievements of the emergent civilization of medieval Europe."[1] In the Early and High Middle Ages, approximately 120 000–130 000 parishes were founded in the Christian West alone. The parish, with its priest, physical boundaries, congregation, parish church, and churchyard, created an important social and mental framework in peoples' lives. The introduction of this system, as far as we know, did not face any substantial opposition. This was because the parish organization could so easily be adapted to other social structures across Europe.[2] So, when discussing the parish system as a standard, we must make a clear distinc-

1 Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion of Europe*, 479.

2 KLNM 16, col. 374–375; *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 411–417; Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe: from Paganism to Christianity, 371–1386 AD*, 9, 464–481; Bünz, "Die Pfarrei im späten Mitte-

Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, University of Oslo

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tion between forms and function. The parish, as this chapter will demonstrate, could take many different shapes, while pastoral care could not be negotiated.

Christianity became the official religion of Iceland in 999/1000. Almost a century later, in the year 1096 or 1097, the tithe was introduced. At that time, there were hundreds of churches in Iceland.[3] Therefore, the bishop of Skálholt, and later the bishop of Hólar, whose bishopric was founded in 1106, had to decide, often together with the local chieftains (*goðar*), which churches were to gain this status. When this process came to a halt around 1200,[4] there were approximately 330 parish churches (*alkirkjur*) in the country: c. 220 in Skálholt diocese and c. 110 in Hólar. Most other churches were given the status as half-churches (*hálfkirkjur*), quarter-churches (*fjórðungskirkjur*) and chapels (*bænhús*), although some were also closed. The difference between a parish church where a mass was sung "every Sunday and every day during Lent, the Christmas season, and on Ember days,"[5] and a half-church, as the name suggests, was that only half of the normal number of masses were sung, while in quarter-churches only every fourth mass was sung and finally in a chapel, where mass was sung only once every month.[6]

Obviously, the geographical distribution was significant for the Icelandic Church, but it was equally important for the chieftains to make sure that churches they had built and those belonging to their closest friends and relatives became parish churches. This was because of the so-called Eigenkirchenwesen, or "proprietary church system", which was well-known across Europe in the Early Middle

lalter – zur Einführung," 9; Pounds, *A history of the English parish.*, 3–40; Sigurðsson, *Kristninga i Norden 750–1200*, 50; Petke, "Die Pfarrei in Mitteleuropa im Wandel vom Früh- zum Hochmittelalter," 22–23; Rentz, *Imagining the parish in late medieval England*, 1; Resl, "Material support I: parishes," 99–106; Thomas, *The Parish and the Chapel in Medieval Britain and Norway* 1–50; "Parish," New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia, <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11499b.htm>.

3 Vésteinsson, "Islenska sóknaskipulagið og samband heimila á miðöldum," 147–166; and "The formative phase of the Icelandic church ca 990–1240 AD," 71–81; Hugason, *Frumkristni og upphaf kirkju*, 172–174; Sigurðardóttir, *Kirkjur og bænhús í Skagafirði*; and *Miðaldakirkjur 1000–1318*; Zoëga and Sigurðarson, "Skagfirska kirkjurannsóknin", 95–116; Zoëga, *Keldudalur, A Typical Household Cemetery?;* and "Early church organization in Skagafjörður, North Iceland," 23–60.

4 There is disagreement about how rapidly the parish boundaries were introduced; some scholars argue that the boundaries were established very quickly (Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga saga I. Þjóðveldisöld*, 201; *KLNM* 16, col. 381), while others claim that they did not take on their final form until around 1200 (Stefánsson, "Kirkjuvald eflist," 79; Vésteinsson, "Íslenska sóknaskipulagið og samband heimila á miðöldum," 147–166).

5 Vésteinsson, *The Christianization of Iceland*, 60.

6 Stefánsson, "Frá goðakirkju til biskupskirkju," 236; Sigurðardóttir, *Kirkjur og bænhús í Skagafirði*, 7; Guðmundsson, *Íslenskt samfélag og Rómakirkja*, 185–186; Eyþórsson, "History of the Icelandic Church 1000–1300," 60; Sigurðsson, "Introduction," 5–6.

Ages. Those who built churches on their farms donated the entire farm or a part of it to the saint who was the patron saint of the church, on the condition that they and their heirs should manage the gift. Those who managed the churches had a great deal of freedom over the control of the church's wealth and income, for example over the tithe, especially the parts belonging to the priest and the church.[7]

In the following, we will discuss the size of parishes in the Hólar bishopric and how the system evolved. The reason for focusing solely on the Hólar bishopric, and not also Skálholt, is the source situation. The sources regarding the Hólar bishopric are much better and provide us with the opportunity to delve into the parish system in more detail. However, it should be emphasized that the sources we have from Skálholt reflect the development in Hólar. Before we proceed, we must examine the source situation, especially the *máldagar*. These are unique sources that enable us to analyse the variation in the sizes of parishes in detail, something that we are unable to do for most other parts of Europe.

Máldagi (cartularies)

When a church was consecrated, a *máldagi* (cartulary) was made. The *máldagi*, as other charters in the High and Late Middle Ages, were highly standardized.[8] They usually opened with a statement about whether the church owned the farm on which it stood (*heimaland*), or how large a part it owned. Then there followed information about the saint to whom the church was dedicated, who became the owner of the church and its property; "The church dedicated to saint Nicholas in Glæsibær owns the entire farm [it stands on]" ("Kýrckia hins heilaga Nicholás j Glæsibæ a allt heima land");[9] "The church dedicated to saint Michael in Núpufell owns one third of the farm [it stands on]" ("Kýrckia hins heilaga Michaelis j Nupufelle. a þridiung j heima landi").[10]

The first entry in a *máldagi* elucidated whether the parish church was a *staðr* or *bændakirkja*, and who was its "owner." If the church owned the farm on which it was located, it was a *staðr* like Glæsibær, while if it only owned a part of the

7 Stefánsson, "Kirkjuvald eflist," 72–81; and "Frá goðakirkju til biskupskirkju," 210–226; and "Islandsk egenkirkevesen," 234–254; and *Staðir og staðamál*, 191–216. Cf. Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West*.

8 Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 87–89.

9 DI 2. 41 (1318).

10 DI 2.33 (1318).

farm, it was a farmers' church or *bændakirkja* like Núpufell. The *staðir* were thus usually wealthier than the *bændakirkjur*.

In 1152/53 the archbishopric of Nidaros (Trondheim) was founded. An important, underlying reason for its establishment was the Church Reform movement; its aim was to free the Church from secular influence, placing it under the leadership of the pope. Among the important concessions, made by the kings of Norway in 1152/53 and later Magnús Erlingsson (1163–1184), was an acknowledgment that the Church should control its own property and finances. The archbishop tried, as quickly as possible, to introduce these reforms in Iceland, with help from Þorlákr Þórhallsson who became bishop of Skálholt in 1178. Þorlákr demanded that all churches and their properties, and especially the *staðir*, should be handed over to the bishop; he was very successful in the eastern quarter of the country. However, he had to back down in the face of opposition from Jón Loptsson, Iceland's most powerful chieftain.[11]

In 1269 Bishop Árni Þorlákssson, on behalf of the Norwegian archbishop, Jón Rauði (Red), repeated the demands of his predecessor, Þorlákr Þórhallsson, in a more aggressive way. After a long-running conflict, the Church and the aristocracy arrived at a compromise with the concordat of Avaldnes in 1297, which stated that *staðir* were to be subjected to the bishop's authority. They became benefice churches, *lénskirkjur*, administrated by the bishop and assigned to priests. But churches on farms, *bændakirkjur*, were to remain in the hands of the laymen, provided they met the obligations laid down by their donors; the bishop could make no further claims in such cases.

Since a great deal was at stake, this conflict was protracted. For the Church, it was important to ensure control over its estates and property, and through this, to free itself from the secular powers in Iceland. Those who exercised control over the churches had a great deal of freedom in terms of their wealth and income. They received about half of the tithes, that is the share belonging to the churches and the priests, and they controlled the churchyard and collected fees for funerals. In addition to recieving land tax and rent (*kvaðir*) from the farms owned by the institutions, they also kept the profits from the management of the institutions themselves.

The *máldagi*, after the statement about the type of church and its owner, continued by listing the property belonging to the church; for example, it recorded land, the church's rights and obligations, and included an inventory detailing live-

11 Stefánsson, "Kirkjuvald eflist," 72–78, 112–119; and "Frá goðakirkju til biskupskirkju," 223–226; Eyþórsson, "History of the Icelandic church 1000–1300," 60–64. The discussion about *máldagar* is based on Sigurðsson. "Distribution of Reliquaries and Relics in the Bishopric of Hólar, c.1320" and Sigurðsson, "The Making of a 'Skattland'. Iceland 1247—1450".

stock, movable goods, religious items, the number of books, and the number of clerics (priests and deacons). It also noted how many farms were supposed to pay *tollr* (taxes) to the church, that is tithe paying farms. A *máldagi* thus contained a list of almost all the property the church owned and all its rights. The order of these rubrics varied from *máldagi* to *máldagi*, and obviously, there was a clear difference in the length: wealthier churches had longer *máldagi* than poorer ones.[12]

In 1313 Auðunn *Rauði* (Red) Þorbergsson (d. 1322) became bishop of Hólar. He centralized the administration of the diocese; one stage in this process was in 1318 when he collected the *máldagi* from individual parish churches in his bishopric into one *máldagar*-collection, later known as *Auðunarmáldagar*. This was the first compilation of such records by an Icelandic bishop.[13] Many of the later bishops of Hólar, such as Jón *skalli* Eiríksson (1359–1390),[14] Pétr Nikulásson (1391–1411),[15] Jón Vilhjálmsson (1425–1435),[16] and Óláfr Rögnvaldsson (1458–1495),[17] compiled their own *máldagar*-collections.

The parish churches had their own copies of the *máldagi* because they were supposed to be read aloud on the anniversary day the church was consecrated (*kirkjudagr*).[18] However, the "original" was kept in Hólar after 1318, and we must assume that when the bishop went on visitations, the parish churches would inform him about any changes that should be made to their *máldagi*, subsequently both the "original" and the copy held by the parish would be updated.

The *máldagi* was a highly standardized document. It is therefore strange that the *máldagar* that were made for the bishopric of Hólar had no clear system of ordering the *máldagi* of the individual parish churches, with the exception of the *Auðunarmáldagar*. Here, the first church in the list is that located at the easternmost end of the bishopric, while the last church is the westernmost one; thus, in this case the geographical pattern determines the order of the list. When it comes to the later *máldagar*, it is not possible to find any logic in the order of the parish churches. However, this is unlikely to have caused problems for the administration of the parish churches; it should not have taken a long time for the clerics

12 KLNM 9, col. 679–680.

13 DI 2. 240–336 (1318); Stefánsson, "Frá goðakirkju til biskupskirkju," 230–234; Guðmundsson, "Church Cartularies," 61–64.

14 DI 3. 115–149 (1360–1389).

15 DI 3. 419–498 (1394 and later).

16 DI 4. 413 (1429), nr. 508 (1431), nr. 550 (17 August 1432).

17 DI 4. 233–314 (1461 and later).

18 KLNM 9, col. 679–680.

involved in the bishopric's administration to find the relevant *máldagi* for a particular parish church.

These *máldagar* did not contain complete information about all the parish churches. In *Auðunarmáldagar*, twelve churches are, for example, not mentioned. We will not explain why in this discussion. The important points to bear in mind is that all the bishops *máldagar* must be analysed when considering the size of parishes, and that they show remarkable stability when it comes to the sizes of parishes.

Finally, most of the Icelandic *máldagar* survive in late seventeenth-century copies, but comparisons with the few original fragments indicate that these transcripts are reliable.[19] Transcribing official documents, such as the *máldagar*, in the Middle Ages was a detailed process overseen by individuals who compared the copy with the original. After that, they placed their seals on the copy to signify that it was correct.[20] After the Reformation, when the Danish Crown confiscated all the Icelandic Church property, it was therefore important to have reliable copies of the *máldagar*. It is thus highly likely that the copies of the *máldagar* are accurate.

The Number and Sizes of Parishes

Let us start this discussion about the number and sizes of parishes in Hólar bishopric with the description from *Íslendingabók*, written c. 1125, about the introduction of the tithe. Ari Þorgeirsson, the author, emphasizes that the tithe was introduced because of Bishop Gizurr Ísleifsson's popularity and that everyone agreed to have their property valued. Soon after, in the year 1106, Bishop Gizurr decided that Norðlendingafjórðungur – Iceland had been divided into quarters c. 965 – should be a separate diocese: from then on, there would be two Icelandic bishoprics. Before he made this decision, he had all of the "assembly-attendance-due-paying-farmers" (*þingfararkaupsbœndr*) counted, that is farmers who were supposed to pay the tithe. There were 840 in Austfirðingafjórðungur, 1200 in Sunnlendingafjórðungur, 1080 in Vestfirðingafjórðungur and finally 1440 in Norðlendingafjórðungur.[21] The

19 Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland*, 25–29; Stefánsson, *Staðir og staðamál*, 77–92.

20 See e.g. DI 3.328 (23 April 1385); 366 (28 April 1389); 399 (13 April 1393); 527 (21 July 1398); 562 (1401); 601 (13 July 1409); DI 2.310 (26 February 1417); DI 4. 357 (8 September 1421); 663 (29 September 1441).

21 *Íslendingabók*, *Landnámabók,* 22–23. The word *þing* and *sókn* was used for parishes. *Þing*, assembly, was used to all types and sizes of assemblies, from the General Assembly held at Þingvel-

accuracy of these numbers has been debated; however, most scholars assume that they are fairly accurate, and that most of householders were assembly-attendance-due-paying-farmers.[22]

All the householders in Iceland were supposed to be an assembly man (*þingmaðr*) for a chieftain; however, there was a difference between those who paid the assembly-attendance-dues (*þingfararkaup*) and those who did not. According to *Grágás*, the law code for the Icelandic Free State society (c. 930–1262/64), one in nine assembly-attendance-due-paying-farmers had to accompany their chieftain to the Alþingi at Þingvellir, the annual general assembly for the whole country. The remaining assembly-attendance-due-paying-farmers who did not travel to Alþingi had to pay assembly-attendance-dues to their chieftain. He was then expected to divide it among the assemblymen who accompanied him to the Alþingi. The chieftain and his assemblymen would negotiate the amount. The assembly-attendance-dues were thus not a tax paid to the chieftain but a payment to those who followed him to the Alþingi from those who did not.[23]

In the Free State period, there were four spring assemblies (*várþing*) in Northern quarter. In the years 1262, 1263 and 1264 Iceland came under the rule of the Norwegian king, and in the two decades that followed new law codes were introduced, *Járnsíða* and *Jónsbók* respectively. According to these law codes the country was divided into twelve *þing* (assembly districts), four of which were in the Northern quarter.[24]

In the above-mentioned bishops' *máldagar*, there were twenty-six parish churches in Húnaþing, twenty-six in Hegranesþing, twenty-eight in Vöðlaþing, and twenty-nine parish churches in Þingeyjarþing, amounting to a total of 109.[25] The first census of Iceland is from 1703, when there were 50 358 individuals, of which 11 680 were in the bishopric of Hólar.[26] Little is known about the size of the Icelandic population around the year 1300, or generally in the Middle Ages, but it is likely that it was c. 50 000 with around 15 000 in the see of Hólar.[27] That approximately one-third

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lir every summer to small local assemblies. *Sókn* is related to "seek" (*sækja*), meaning the district whose inhabitants "sought" the same church (KLNM 16, 374).

22 Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years,* 44–45; and *Lífsbjörg Íslendinga frá 10. öld til 16. aldar*, 77–84.

23 *KLNM* 22, col. 380; Ingvarsson, *Goðorð og goðorðsmenn I–III*, 117–124; Karlsson, *Goðamenning*, 166–169.

24 Sigurðsson, "The Making of a 'Skattland'. Iceland 1247–1450," 187–194.

25 DI 2. 240–336 (1318); DI 4.414 (1429); DI 5. 314 (1486–1487). According to Magnús Stefánsson, who has registered all the churches in Iceland in the Middle Ages, there were 108 in Hólar bishopric around the year 1300 (Magnús Stefánsson, *Staðir og staðamál*).

26 *Hagskinna*, 49.

27 Teitsson and Stefánsson, "Um rannsóknir á íslenzkri byggðarsögu tímabilsins fyrir 1700," 163; Sigurðsson, *Frá goðorðum til ríkja: Þróun goðavalds á 12. og 13. öld*, 126–129. The latest and most

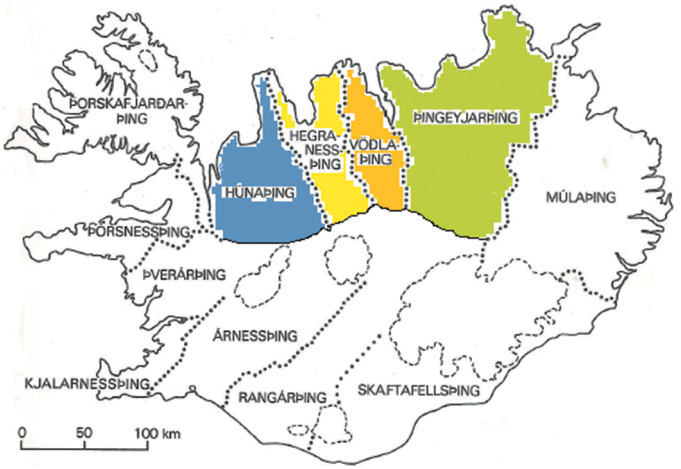

Figure 5: Number of *þing* in Iceland according to *Jónsbók*.

of the population lived in the bishopric of Hólar can also be seen clearly from the counting of assembly-attendance-due-paying-farmers in 1106. The total number were 4560, and of these, 1440 lived in the Northern quarter. In a census of taxpaying farmers in Iceland from 1311, there were in total c. 3800 of these farmers, of whom c. 1150 lived in Hólar diocese (c. 620 in Húnaþing and Hegranesþing and c. 530 in Vöðlaþing and Þingeyjarþing).[28]

A "standard" parish size in Hólar bishopric, based on 1440 assembly-attendance -due-paying-farmers in 1106 and 109 parishes, is approximately thirteen farms. One of these thirteen farms was the farm on which the church stood. So according to these numbers a "standard" parish would contain roughly twelve farms. If we use the same "method" to analyze the numbers for Skálholt bishopric, with its 220 parishes,[29] and 3120 assembly-attendance-due-paying-farmers, a "standard" parish would also contain c. thirteen farms. However, as the following discussion shows, numbers represent the end result of a complex process that lasted for more than a century, and when it began the main problem was to establish a sys-

detailed discussion about the size of the population can be found in Árni Daníel Júlíusson's work *"Af hverju strái,"* 31–54.

28 DI 2. 205 (1311); Ólsen, "Um skattbændatal 1311 og manntal á Íslandi fram að þeim tíma," 295–309.

29 Stefánsson, "Frá goðakirkju til biskupskirkju," 236; and *Staðir og staðamál*.

Table 1: Farms, households, population, and parishes in Hólar bishopric in the census from 1703.

1703	Húnaþing	Hegranesþing	Vöðlaþing	Þingeyjarþing	Total
Number of farms[30]	335	340	334	322	1331
Number of households c. 1703[31]	458	508	481	487	1934
Population in Hólar bishopric 1703[32]	2657	3117	2964	2942	11680
Number of Parishes	26	26	28	29	109

tem that in the short run made it possible for the Icelandic Church to give good pastoral care to as many people as possible.

The main challenge faced by the bishop of Skálholt, and later from 1106 the bishop of Hólar, was deciding which churches would serve as parish churches. In 1970, Sveinn Víkingur argued that due to changes in burial practices resulting from the introduction of Christianity, there were approximately 3000 churches in eleventh-century Iceland.[33] However, no evidence supports this hypothesis. Nevertheless, scholars generally agree that hundreds of churches were erected during the eleventh century,[34] and as mentioned above, only a fraction of these became parish churches.

The *máldagar* frequently mentioned the number of farms paying *tollr* (tax) to the parish churches, in almost all cases hay (*hey*) and fish-oil (*lýsi, ljós*). I have divided them into three categories, churches which received *tollr* from: 0–7 farms, in this group we have forty-four churches, churches which gained *tollr* from 8–16 farms, forty-eight churches, and finally churches that received *tollr* from more than seventeen farms.

The seventeen largest parishes are:

30 Lárusson, *The Old Icelandic Land Registers*, 224–307. The difference between the number of farms (*bændabýli*) and the number of households is that on many farms there were farm cottages (*hjáleigur*), non-farm cottages (*þurrabúðir*) and lodgers (*húsmenska*).

31 *Hagskinna*, 138.

32 *Hagskinna*, 49.

33 Víkingur, *Getið í eyður sögunnar*, 134–136.

34 For an overview of this discussion, see Sigurðsson, "The Christianization of the North Atlantic".

Table 2: The seventeen largest parishes in Hólar bishopric.

	Number of tollr-paying-farms in the *máldagar*[35]
Húsavík in Tjörnes	18
Grenjaðarstaðir in Reykjadalshreppur	19
Einarsstaðir in Reykjadalshreppur	18 – 16
Grýtubakki in Grýtubakkahreppur	17 – 16
Hólar in Saurbæjarhreppur	20 – 11
Hrafnagil in Hrafnagilshreppur	17
Vellir in Svarfaðardalur	30
Kvíabrekka in Ólafsfjörður	24
Barð in Fljótahreppur	24
Holt in Fljótahreppur	22
Fell in Sléttuhlíð	20 – 17 – 18
Hof in Höfðaströnd	27 – 28
Hvammur in Skefilsstaðahreppur	26
Hof in Vindhælishreppur	25 – 13 – 27
Höskuldsstaðir in Vindhælishreppur	26
Víðidalstunga in Víðidalshreppur	10 – 17 – 18 – 17
Melur in Miðfjörður	20

Three of these large parishes were in Þingeyjarþing, four in Vöðlaþing, five in Hegranesþing, and four in Húnaþing. The geographical distribution of these churches is quite even. There is, however, one important detail to underline here. In a rather large area around the bishop's seat at Hólar, we don't find any of these large parishes. The parishes in Skagafjörður are small and all only had one priest. For the bishops, it was important that none of the churches in closest proximity to the cathedral could cast a shadow on Hólar. This was a decision accepted by the local chieftain in Skagafjörður, who in the twelfth century controlled the entirety of Hegranesþing and after c. 1130 all of Húnaþing too.

35 The variations in the numbers above are probably best explained by the consequences of the Black Death in 1402.

I have argued, in several articles, for the importance of the major churches, all of which were also parish churches. These were the thirty-three wealthiest churches in Iceland, as well as their wealth, they had other important things in common; they had three or more clerics, who were among the best educated in the country, and many of these churches became centres of learning.[36] The table below gives an overview of the major churches in Hólar bishopric.

Table 3: Major churches in the see of Hólar.

	Type	Number of clerics (priests and deacons)	Parish size Number of farms
Grenjaðarstaðir in Reykjadalshreppur	Staðr	6/7	19
Múli in Reykjadalshreppur	Staðr	4	11
Háls in Fnjóskadalshreppur	Staðr	3	?
Laufás in Grýtubakkahreppur	Staðr	3	9
Möðruvellir in Saurbæjarhreppur	Bændakirkja	3	12
Saurbær in Saurbæjarhreppur	Staðr	3	9
Hrafnagil in Hrafnagilshreppur	Bændakirkja	4	17
Vellir in Svarfaðardalshreppur	Staðr	3	30
Breiðabólstaður in Vesturhópshreppur	Staðr	4	13-12-13

Of these major churches, only three can be included in the group of the largest parishes in Hólar diocese. It is especially surprising to see that Grenjaðarstaðir, the church in Iceland with the largest number of clerics, only had a parish of nineteen farms. It is problematic to explain why these churches, if we exclude Vellir from the discussion because of its special status and its connection with the cathedral school at Hólar – from 1325, the headmaster of the cathedral school at Hólar was responsible for the church at Vellir[37] – did not have larger parishes. The most likely explanation is that the extent of their wealth meant that they did not need a bigger parish.

Let us go back to the seventeen largest parishes churches and have a look at the number of priests and deacons.

36 Sigurðsson, "Høvdingene, storkirkene og den litterære aktiviteten på Island fram til ca. 1300," 190–194; Sigurðsson, "Introduction. The goðar and "Cultural Politics" of the Years ca. 1000–1150," 1–15.
37 Guðmundsson, *Íslenskt samfélag*, 172.

Table 4: The seventeen largest parishes in Hólar bishopric and number of priests.

	Number of farms[38]	Number of clerics (priests and deacons)
Húsavík in Tjörnes	18	2 – 0
Grenjaðarstaðir in Reykjadalshreppur	19	2 / 3 – 4 / 2
Einarsstaðir in Reykjadalshreppur	18 – 16	2 – 0
Grýtubakki in Grýtubakkahreppur	17 – 16	1 – 0
Hólar in Saurbæjarhreppur twenty	20 – 11	1 – 0
Hrafnagil in Hrafnagilshreppur	17	2 – 2
Vellir in Svarfaðardalur	30	2 – 1
Kvíabrekka in Ólafsfjörður	24	1 / 3 – 2 / 0
Barð in Fljótahreppur	24	1 – 0
Holt in Fljótahreppur	22	1 – 0
Fell in Sléttuhlíð	20 – 17 – 18	1 – 0
Hof in Höfðaströnd	27 – 28	1 – 0
Hvammur in Skefilsstaðahreppur	26	1 – 0
Hof in Vindhælishreppur	25 – 13 – 27	1 – 0
Höskuldsstaðir in Vindhælishreppur	26	2 / 2 – 0 / 1
Víðidalstunga in Víðidalshreppur	10 – 17 – 18 – 17	1 / 2 – 0 / 1
Melur in Miðfjörður	20	2 / 2 – 0 / 1

These numbers show that there is no correlation between the parish size and the number of priests and deacons serving these churches. It is problematic to explain this variation; the most likely explanation is that the size and wealth of the farm where the church was built was the determining factor. Of these seventeen farms, six were *staðr* and eleven *bændakirkja*, as mentioned above the former were usually wealthier than the latter. Of the six *staðr* parish churches, five had two or more clerics, only Fell had just one priest. That is the pattern we see for the other parish churches as well. Of the thirty-eight churches in *máldagar*, in-

38 The variations in the numbers above are probably best explained by the consequences of the Black Death in 1402.

cluding those mentioned above, which had two or more clerics most of them were *staðir*.

When the bishops were deciding which churches should become parish churches, the two key factors were both wealth and equally importantly whether they already possessed a priest(s) and/or deacons. In the first decades after the introduction of Christianity, there, was a lack of priests. There are no "reliable sources on the existence of Icelandic priests and their holding religious services in Iceland until after the middle of the eleventh century."[39] The foundation of the bishoprics of Skálholt in 1056 and Hólar in 1106 improved the situation, as much the quoted passage from *Íslendingabók* shows: "And when chieftains and good men perceived that [bishop] Ísleifr (d. 1080) was far abler than other clerics who could then be obtained in this country, many gave him their sons to be educated and had them ordained priests."[40] But there was still a shortage of priests in Iceland at the beginning of the twelfth century, and it was not until c. 1200 that the numbers of priests met the needs of the Icelandic Church.[41] Many of the priests, especially those from the upper echelons of society, were well educated, many of them came from the chieftains' families or were their relatives, although this was not necessarily the case for priests at the lesser churches. There were no proper schools in Iceland and as Icelanders did not generally travel abroad to be educated, they commonly received their basic education on the farms where they lived. For this reason, those who were educated were often the sons of priests.[42]

According to *Auðunarmáldagar*, there were c. 140 priests and deacons (c. 120 priests and c. twenty deacons). However, it records neither the number of monks and nuns nor the number of clerics at the cathedral of Hólar. A register of 1429 gave a figure of 179 priests and deacons (137 priests and forty-two deacons)[43] in the diocese, whilst another list from 1469 has 182 (143 priests and thirty-nine deacons).[44] If we assume that there were about 180 priests and deacons, c. thirty

39 Eyþórsson, "Reykholt and Church Centres," 26.

40 *Íslendingabók*, 20, "En es þat sá hǫfðingjar ok góðir menn, at Ísleifr var miklu nýtri en aðrir kennimenn, þeir er á þvísa landi næði, þá seldu hónum margir sonu sína til læringar ok létu vígja til presta." *Jóns saga ins helga* confirm this and states that many *hǫfðingjar* (*goðar*) and respectable (*virðulegir*) men send their sons to Ísleifr to be fostered and educated (*fóstrs ok til lærlingar*) and were then ordinated as priests. Many of them became *hǫfuðkennimenn* (major clerics), and two of them became bishops, Jón and Kolr (*Biskupa sögur I*, 181).

41 Rafnsson, *Páll Jónsson Skálholtsbiskup*; Vésteinsson, *The Christianization of Iceland*, 27, 33; Hugason, *Frumkristni og upphaf kirkju*, 174, 223–224; Kjartansson, "Thin on the Ground: Legal Evidence of the Availability of Priests in 12th-Century Iceland," 95–102.

42 Sigurðsson, "The Education of Sturla Þórðarson (and the Icelandic Elite)".

43 DI 4. 414 (1429).

44 DI 5. 83 (1461).

monks and nuns,[45] and between thirty and fifty lower-ranking clerics (i.e. below deacon), then the total number of clergy in the bishopric around 1300 would have been around 250. We also postulate that this was probably the situation around 1200.

I would argue that when the bishops started to carve out parishes, the decisive factors were the churches' wealth and whether or not they had a priest. It is therefore likely that all of the above-mentioned churches became parishes in the early decades of the twelfth century. However, as will be discussed below, when many of the smaller parishes were established in the second half of the twelfth century, the larger parishes were reduced in size. Parishes were not a "static" unit,[46] especially not in the initial phase.

In the group with 8–16 farms in a parish, we find forty-eight churches, which are almost equally divided between *staðir* and *bændakirkjur*; of these churches, sixteen had two clerics, nine of them were *staðir*. It is likely that most of those gained their status in the early years of the formation of parishes.

In the group with 0–7 farms, we have forty-four churches, thirty-three *bændakirkjur*, and eleven *staðir*. I would suggest that most of them became parish churches in the second half of the twelfth century. This is because their parishes were so small. One-quarter of the churches in this group did not have any *tollr*-paying-farms, c. 10% of all the parish churches in the bishopric. It is problematic to explain why this is. It is difficult to argue that the *máldagar* would have ignored the *tollr*-paying-farms' information. The tithe was fundamental for the Icelandic Church, just as it was for the Church in other parts of Europe, it was therefore essential to have as accurate as possible information. Then the question arises; why would the bishops of Hólar accept parishes of this size? The most likely explanation is that the persons administrating these churches, all of which were *bændakirkjur*, were the friends or relatives of the bishops. It is also worth stressing that there is no evidence that any of these parishes were struggling financially.

45 When Jón Vilhjálmsson was bishop in c. 1430, there were c. thirteen clerics at Hólar, DI 4., nr. 463 (1430). Very little is known about the number of individuals living in cloisters in Iceland (Jónsson, 'Um klaustrin á Íslandi', 174–265), but there were probably five to ten individuals living in each monastery (Sveinsson, *The Age of the Sturlungs*, 112).

46 Thomas, *The Parish and the Chapel in Medieval Britain and Norway*, 37.

The Parish and the Hreppr

As mentioned in the introduction, the parish organization could easily be adapted to other social structures. In Iceland, the most important social unit was the *hreppr* (commune), which the parish system had to be adjusted to fit. We do not know how many communes there were in the Free State, but around 1700 there were 163, and there is much evidence which indicate that the number had remained constant since the Middle Ages.[47] Of the 163 *hreppr*, forty-six were in the bishopric of Hólar: twelve in Húnaþing, twelve in Hegranesþing, ten in Vöðlaþing, and twelve in Þingeyjarþing.

There is some uncertainty as to precisely when the system of communes was introduced. Some scholars think it came into being as early as the middle of the tenth century, whilst others believe it originated at the end of the tenth century or the beginning of the eleventh.[48] There is general agreement that the organization of communes was already in an advanced stage of development when tithes were introduced. The communes then received the right to distribute the tithe revenue intended for the poor. Unlike in other European countries, the Church itself usually distributed this part of the tithe.

There is a strong similarity between the communes and the European pesants guilds. However, the main difference is that unlike the guilds, the communes were never religious communities. According to *Grágás*, every *lǫghreppr* was supposed to have at least twenty farmers who paid assembly-attendance-dues. Each commune formed an independent geographical unit led by five commune leaders (*sóknarmenn*), who were elected for one year at a time. The communes possessed the right to self-government for a number of internal matters, which gave them a significant degree of independence from the chieftains. Three regular meetings had to be held each year, with additional meetings to be held if necessary. Extraordinary meetings could also be held if required. At these meetings, cases were settled by majority decision.[49]

According to *Grágás*, the communes had two main tasks. The first of these was to arrange a form of mutual insurance between the farmers. To this end, all

47 Lárusson, *The Old Icelandic Land Registers*, 101, 120, 341, 129, 136, 148, 158, 163, 175, 187, 199, 214, 223, 243, 265, 285, 307, 308–314, 315–321, 322–329, 330–333, 334–340; Björnsson, *Saga sveitarstjórnar á Íslandi I*, 89–92.

48 For an overview of the discussion about hreppr, see, Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga saga I*, 103–109; Björnsson, *Saga sveitarstjórnar á Íslandi I*, 9–54; Stein-Wilkeshuis, "Common Land Tenure in Medieval Iceland," 578–583; Pedersen, "A Medieval Welfare State?" 89–111. The following discussion on *hreppr* is based on Sigurðsson, "The Making of a 'Skattland': Iceland 1247–1450".

49 Sigurðsson, "The Making of a 'Skattland': Iceland 1247–1450," 200–201.

the householders in the commune were to jointly pay half the compensation needed in the case of two types of loss: if a farmer lost more than a quarter of his cattle and horses; or if parts of his farm, dwelling, outhouse for washing and baking, or food store burned down. This compensation was not to be paid out more than three times to the same farmer and it should never constitute more than 1% of the wealth of each contributing farmer, even if it did not cover half the damage. If the farmers wished to give more, they could do so on a voluntary basis; although this latter element was removed with the introduction of the new law codes in 1271 and 1281. In the years 1262, 1263, and 1264 Iceland came under the rule of the Norwegian king, and in the two decades that followed new law codes were introduced.

The second main task of the communes was to take care of the poor and the elderly. The leaders of the communes had to distribute the tithes and food to the poor, as well as organize their movements around the commune. Every farmer who paid assembly-attendance-dues had to provide hospitality for the poor for a certain period of time, the duration of which was related to his wealth.

In *Jónsbók*, from 1281, we read that:

> [l]egal communes are to be the same as they have been in the past; there are to be no fewer than twenty householders in each commune, and none of them shall have less property than ten hundreds. It is lawful to divide the commune into smaller divisions, if they wish, for tithe allocation and food gifts to the poor. Five men who have seemed best suited for this shall be appointed to administer and be in charge of whatever concerns the commune and to allocate all the tithes to which the indigents are entitled, the food gifts, and the catch on Holy Days.[50]

Jónsbók did not alter the internal organization of the communes to any great extent, except for removing the paragraphs about mutual help and the *hreppadómr*, a court dealing with minor issues inside the *hreppr*.[51]

There were forty-six *hreppr* and 109 parishes in Hólar bishopric, and there are no instances where the parish and the communes' boundaries were identical. Some of the parishes overlap two commune boundaries. However, this did not

50 *Jónsbók (2010)*, 145; "Löghreppar skulu vera svo sem að fornu hafa verið. Eigi færi bændur í hrepp en tuttugu. Skal engi þeirra eiga minna fé en tíu hundruð. Rétt er að skipta hreppum smæra til tíunda og matgjafa ef þeir vilja. Fimm menn þá er best þikkja til fallnir skal nefna til að hafa stjórn og forsjá fyrir því er hreppinum varðar, og að skipta tíundum öllum og matgjöfum þeim er fátækir menn eiga, og af heilagra daga veiðum." *Jónsbók (2004)*, 146.

51 *Grágás*, 81, 151, 183–185. The *hreppstjórar* in the latter part of the Late Middle Ages corresponds to the *bondetalsmann* or "farmer's agent" who assisted the bailiff of the fiefholders in Norway (Wærdahl, *The Incorporation and Integration of the King's Tributary Lands into the Norwegian Realm c. 1195–1397*, 192).

cause any confusion, mainly because it was the commune that was the basic economic unit for co-operation both between householders inside the commune and also between householders in a region. As mentioned above, it was the commune which was given the responsibility to distribute the tithe revenue intended for the poor. Belonging to both a parish and a commune obviously created different categories of belonging, but there was almost never any tension between these two identities. This was principally because there was a clear division between these two units; the priest was responsible for pastoral care, while the leaders of the commune undertook their own secular duties. It can be argued that the changes enacted in *Jónsbók*, the removal of the paragraphs about mutual help, ensured that there was as clear a boundary as possible between the parishes and the communes.

Conclusion

In his book *A History of the English Parish. The Culture of Religion from Augustine to Victoria*, Norman J. G. Pounds claims that in medieval England, there were some 8,500 parishes, "but their number must remain uncertain," their geographical pattern was "fluid, as large parishes broke up and smaller and poorer merged with their neighbours. In origin the parish was a unit of ecclesiastical administration and pastoral care. It was an area large enough in population and resources to support a church and its priest, and yet small enough for its parishioners to gather at its focal church. Yet this ideal was difficult to achieve and impossible to sustain."[52]

The situation in Iceland in the Middle Ages is different; we have a good overview of the number of parishes in both bishoprics. They were remarkably stable with only very small changes in the parish size, as a result of the Black Death. There is considerable variation in the size of the parishes in the bishopric of Hólar, ranging from parishes with no *tollr*-paying farms to thirty.

The introduction of the parish system in the diocese of Hólar was a process that lasted for a century. For the bishops, it was important to adjust the new system to local needs, and because the parish system was so flexible, they could do so without any substantial opposition.

As emphasized in the introduction to this volume, standardization is a multifaceted process involving various perspectives, interpretations, and participants. When examining the standardization process, the emphasis typically lies on the

52 Pounds, *A History of the English Parish*, 3. Cf. Pounds, *A History of the English Parish*, 37.

practice of establishing a standard, particularly in terms of defining rules, policies, and formalizing operational procedures. Standardization is also, as Andrew L. Russell stresses, the "process of articulating and implementing technical knowledge." Standards can be implemented through "consensus," imposed, or a "combination of both." Russell also underlines that the precise "meaning of the term 'standard' varies depending on context: it can refer to a screw thread, a unit of measurement, a regular set of practices, or a way of looking at the world."[53]

The parish system was implemented by the Church across Europe; however, as all scholars have emphasized, there was great diversity, though within "certain limits."[54] The limits themselves were different in different places in Europe. What lay at the heart of the parish system was the functions of the parish church. It was "supposed to be the focal point for medieval Christians, and their encounters with the Church began with baptism shortly after birth and continued, via Sunday Mass, major and minor feast days, Communion and confession at Easter, until they were buried in the parish churchyard."[55] In short, it was the pastoral care that became the standard.

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Abbreviations

DI = Diplomatarium Islandicum. Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn I–XVI. Edited by Jón Sigurðsson, Jón Þorkelsson, Páll Eggert Ólason, and Björn Þorsteinsson. København & Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafjelag, 1857–1972.

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53 Russell, "Standardization in History: A Review Essay with an Eye to the Future," 247–248.

54 Pounds, *A History of the English Parish*, 37.

55 Thomas, *The Parish and the Chapel in Medieval Britain and Norway*, 39.

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Part 2: **Embodiment**

Line Cecilie Engh, Mark Turner

6 Flexibility, Predictability, Standardization: The Difficult Art of Creating Stable Selves

Abstract: This chapter explores why standardization is so imperative for cognitively modern human beings, why standards are so difficult to achieve, why the fluid equilibria we call standards are tenuous, and how we achieve them at all, for a while. Human behavior is astonishingly complex, which makes it highly unpredictable. To engage with each other, people must somehow generate the requisite level of predictability. Human creativity creates the problem of unpredictability, but it also provides the solution: Cultures exploit human creativity to invent systems and institutions that generate some stability and predictability. To be successful, these systems of standardization must allow flexibility but deliver predictability. We discuss how medieval monastic communities put in place standardizing systems that allowed imaginative exploration of potential selves yet delivered stable, coherent selves needed in the moment of action, choice, or self-presentation. Medieval monks immersed themselves into blended viewpoints with saints to explore the actualizability and realizability of potential selves. Creating a standardizing system that successfully walks the tightrope between flexibility and predictability is difficult. The medieval monastic communities are key examples of successful standardization, models of how to design a system that persistently balances flexibility and predictability to deliver a measure of stability.

Keywords: Cultural standardization, the predictability problem, conceptual integration, blended viewpoint, medieval and monastic pedagogy

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Line Cecilie Engh, University of Oslo
Mark Turner, Case Western Reserve University

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Introduction. Matrices of Selves

One of the most pervasive technologies in the Middle Ages was that of seals, *sigilla* (Figure 6).[1] Farmers, fishmongers, business owners, merchants, noblemen, bishops, monastic houses, cathedral chapters, government officials, and kings all used seals, which they would imprint employing their own seal matrix. Although unique to each owner, seal matrices were highly standardized. The medieval seal was a serial object: a technology of replication in which representational identity centered on the logic of sameness.[2] As Birgitte Bedos-Rezak explains, "seal iconography utilized a limited range of distinctive types, themselves established on the basis of a limited range of stereotyped personae, and the engraved seal-die (matrix) itself repeatedly projected its owner's identity by reproducing identical impressions."[3]

The seal-making device was usually carved or cast in a hard material such as stone or metal. Referred to as the seal *matrix*, it is etymologically connected to the Latin word for "mother" and metonymically to "womb," indicating the ability to shape or impress on a receptacle its own likeness and image. The seal itself was usually of wax (or lead). The image of a seal pressed into wax became a popular metaphor among leading medieval writers, among them Anselm (d. 1109), Honorius Augustodunensis (d. *c.* 1140), and Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141), to speak of pedagogy and how the mind is impressed by training, studying, and education.[4] Hugh of St Victor, canon regular and head of the school of the abbey of Saint Victor in Paris, writes in his manual for novices ("On the Instruction of Novices," *c.* 1125–1130):

> Why do you think, brothers, that we are instructed to imitate the life and conduct of the saints [*bonorum*], unless so that through imitation of them we may be re-formed [*reformemur*] to the likeness of a new life? In them the form [*forma*] of the likeness of God is expressed [*expressa*], and therefore when we, through them, are imprinted by imitation [*per imitationem imprimimur*], we are also shaped into the image [*imaginem*] of the same similitude. But it should be known that unless wax is first softened, it does not receive the form [*formam*], so also a man is not bent to the form [*formam*] of virtue by the power of another's action unless first through humility he is softened away from the hardness of all pride and contradiction [. . .] We who seek to be reformed, like a finely sculptured seal, through the

1 Whatley, "Introduction," 3, writes that seal impressions in lead and wax survive in "overwhelming quantities" in archives, museums, libraries, and private collections. Bedos-Rezak, *When Ego Was Imago*, xxvii, estimates the number of medieval matrices and seal impressions to be in the "millions."

2 Bedos-Rezak, "Medieval Identity," 1491.

3 Bedos-Rezak, *When Ego Was Imago*, 111–112.

4 See Novikoff, *Medieval Culture of Disputation*, 58–59, who points out that the metaphor goes back to Plato, albeit with a different conceptual emphasis.

Figure 6: Ecclesiastical seal from the Chapter of Nidaros dated 1281. Diplom NRA AM fasc.5 nr. 11. Reproduced with kind permission from the National Archives of Norway.

> example of the saints [. . .] find in them the traces of actions [. . .] that arouse the admiration of human minds, like outstandingly carved sculptures. We should recreate their outstanding form inwardly in ourselves.[5]

The leading theme here is the conceptual pair *form* and *reform*.[6] Hugh urges the novices to learn by example and imitation how to live "a new life," a change of identity. In Hugh's use of the wax seal metaphor, the matrix was the *forma* ("form") that shaped the self; just like wax receiving an image, monastic selves were re-shaped and re-formed through imprinting. The crucial function of the matrices, that is, the saints, was to serve as patterns for behavior and thought. Saintly people were standards: examples, or models, to imitate. The aim was to restore the likeness of God: the self modeled itself on the saints who in their turn were modeled on Christ. Note the emphasis on humility in the passage. This central monastic virtue followed the paradigm of humility established by Christ's descent. Humility, that is, the softness and malleability of the shapeable wax, contrasts with the unformable hardness of pride, the sin of the Fall. Essentially this is a restoration of the *imago dei*, the likeness of creation, imprinted on the self.

We emphasize two important aspects of Hugh's striking image of the self as a wax seal – impressed and conformed through the imprint of the saints – that will return throughout this chapter. First, the cited passage subtly points to a deeply embedded notion in medieval ontology: *representation* as *presence*.[7] Just as Christ's body is represented and present in the Eucharist, just as God is represented and present in man as created in the image of God, so the wax seal represents and presents the self. Broadly speaking, sealing was a process for designating identity, representing authority, and guaranteeing authenticity.[8] The imprinted image of a medieval seal was "a receptacle preserving the cont(r)actual mark of its origin, in-

5 *De institutione novitiorum* 7, PL 176:933AC: "Quare putatis, fratres, vitam et conversationem bonorum imitari praecipimur, nisi ut per eorum imitationem ad novae vitae similitudinem reformemur? In ipsis siquidem similitudinis Dei forma expressa est, et idcirco cum eis per imitationem imprimimur, ad ejusdem similitudinis imaginem nos quoque figuramur. Sed sciendum est quod nisi prius cera emollita fuerit, formam non recipit, sic et homo quidem per manum actionis alienae ad formam virtutis non flectitur, nisi prius per humilitatem ab omni elationis et contradictionis rigore moliatur. [. . .] nos qui per exemplum bonorum, quasi per quoddam sigillum optime exsculptum reformari cupimus [. . .] operum vestigia invenimus [. . .] quae humanas mentes in admirationem sui pertrahunt, quasi quasdam in se eminentes sculpturas ostendunt. Quod ergo in illis eminet, in nobis introrsum recondi debet." (Translation in Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 97–98; our modifications)

6 On Hugh's text, see also discussions in Bedos-Rezak, *When Ego Was Imago*, 149–150; Novikoff, *Medieval Culture of Disputation*, 58; Sullivan, "Hugh of St. Victor," 175.

7 See also Belting, *Likeness and Presence*.

8 Whatley, "Introduction," 4; Bedos-Rezak, "Medieval Identity," 1511.

deed the *presence* of its causal agent, that is, the model, the prototype."[9] In the case of Hugh's aspiring novices, this mark was no other than the divine standard. In her remarkable study of the social and symbolic significance of medieval seals, Bedos-Redzak writes:

> The human creature, conceived as sealed and therefore as replicated image, is ontologically constituted to participate in its informing prototype, capable of tending toward the prototype's realization. In terms of seal metaphors, human identity is about creation, impression, oppression, and reformation. Creation is the process by which Man is made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). Impression, that is, the soul formed and signed by the seal of God, expresses the human capacity for good. Oppression, that is, an opposition to or the breaking of God's seal through Man's sinfulness, involves dissimilarity and alienation. Reformation presents the hope that likeness to God is an end capable of human accomplishment.[10]

Second, the seal in the Middle Ages was not just an object, but a process of imprinting and formation, as follows from the above quotation.[11] In a parallel way, medieval writers like Hugh stressed the painstaking *process* of reforming, or molding, the novices; significantly, conversion to monastic life was exactly that, a *process*, rather than an event.

Selves are processual. In the section below called "Zoom out," we offer the argument that selves are created through matrices of blends and stories, and we examine the underlying cognitive framework that operates in such processes. In the subsequent section, "Zoom in," we apply the theoretical analysis of the prior section to specific cases: two extraordinary twelfth-century monastic "guides," namely, William of St. Thierry and Bernard of Clairvaux.

Zoom out – The Root of the Problem and Strategies for Managing it

The medieval seal matrix illustrates the balance of flexibility and predictability. Balancing flexibility and predictability is a difficult design problem. Flexibility must be allowed because human beings are inherently creative. But there must be constraints on this flexibility if there is to be a level of predictability that will make fruitful human interaction possible. All cultures and people, however different, face this design problem, because the problem flows from the very mental

9 Bedos-Rezak, *When Ego Was Imago*, 4. Our emphasis.
10 Bedos-Rezak, *When Ego Was Imago*, 149.
11 See also Bedos-Rezak, *When Ego Was Imago*, 3.

operations that make human culture possible in the first place. Balancing flexibility and predictability is a shared concern. Anyone studying any human situation is actually engaged in studying our common cognitive processes and such common conditions as they inevitably produce.

Before we can understand standardization, we must ask the root question: Why do human beings need cultural standardization at all? Norwegian spruce trees, black ants, and ring-tailed lemurs do not need cultural standardization, despite their great complexity and impressive behavior. The black ant and the lemur do not spend their mental powers constantly laboring with the process of precipitating successive selves in successive moments that are substantially different but not intractably unlike. On the contrary, evolution and normal developmental suites solve that problem for the ants and the lemurs, without their doing any creative cognitive work.

Culture and cultural standardization are relatively recent phenomena, evolutionarily. Fifty thousand years ago, somewhere near the beginning of the Upper Paleolithic Age, or perhaps rather earlier, depending on what we discover in the archeological record in places like Blombos and Border Cave, unmistakable archeological evidence began to accumulate of a remarkable set of human singularities: art, science, religion, refined tool use, advanced social cognition, music, dance, fashions of dress, language, and mathematics. Human beings began to demonstrate an unprecedented ability to be imaginative and creative in whatever they encountered. Cognitively modern human beings throughout the world since that time have demonstrated this remarkable ability, as a routine part of the human endowment.

The result of these cognitively modern mental operations is a variance in human behavior and a speed of innovation unprecedented in the evolutionary record. Of course, biological mechanisms are exceptionally innovative, but they require evolutionary time scales. They are relatively slow. Once evolution produces the advanced mental operations that make innovation and hence robust culture possible, the resulting speed of individual and cultural evolution makes biological evolution look as if it is standing still.

The astonishing flexibility and creativity of the human mind are a central theme of the world's literatures, philosophies, religions, and social sciences: even when we train human beings thoroughly and place them in the most compelling conditions, we cannot rely on their compliance. This core unpredictability presents the central difficulty for any hope of explaining how groups of people can interact at all, or for designing such interactions. Given the breath-taking range of possibilities, how can there be an equilibrium between even two people, much less thousands?

Christoph Engel in *Generating Predictability* (2005), offers an answer: Cultures establish institutions to constrain the possibility spaces, so that there can be successful families, tribes, and societies. It is impossible to model human collective

action unconstrained by cultural institutions, because the possibilities for human collective action are too great. As Wittgenstein writes and Geertz quotes,

> We [. . .] say of some people that they are transparent to us. It is, however, important as regards this observation that one human being can be a complete enigma to another. We learn this when we come into a strange country with entirely strange traditions; and, what is more, even given a mastery of the country's language. We do not understand the people. (And not because of not knowing what they are saying to themselves.) We cannot find our feet with them.[12]

As Engel argues, the root of the problem, the great source of human innovation and flexibility, is the mental operation of conceptual integration, also called *blending*. Engel writes, "The concept of blending pushes the analysis of plasticity even further. It is meant to explain the cognitive foundations of human creativity."[13] Blending theory (or conceptual integration theory) is developed by Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier. Engel quotes:

> The essence of conceptual integration is its creation of a new mental assembly, a blend, that is identical to neither of its influences and not merely a correspondence between them and usually not even an additive combination of some of their features, but is instead a third conceptual space, a child space, a blended space, with new meaning. This new meaning is "emergent" meaning, in the sense that it is not available in either of the influencing spaces but instead emerges in the blended space by means of blending those influencing spaces.[14]

Mental space networks are the womb of blending

Blending occurs in a mental space network. Mental spaces are small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding, imagining, and acting.[15] When someone says, "When I was six years old, I weighed fifty pounds," they are prompting us to build two mental spaces, one with the speaker now, another with a six-year-old, and an identity connector between the speaker and the six-year-old. Despite the manifest differences, the word "I" can be used of both of them, suggesting a stable self across the interval.

Blended spaces – called "blends" – often arise in mental space networks. A blend is a new mental space that contains selected elements from input mental

12 Ludwig Wittgenstein, as quoted in Geertz, *Interpretation of cultures*, 13. The original is available at Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*.

13 Engel, *Generating Predictability*, 37.

14 Turner, *Cognitive Dimensions*, 17.

15 See Fauconnier's books *Mental Spaces*; *Mappings*; *Ten Lectures*.

spaces but that often develops new meaning of its own that is not drawn from those spaces.[16]

For example, suppose a poet named Halli and a monk named Bernard are both quite happy in their different lives. Halli can nonetheless think that he would himself be miserable if he were Bernard, because Halli is a night owl but Bernard, who lives in a monastery, must arise before daybreak to celebrate Matins, and Halli would hate that. Now there is a new person in the blend, Halli-as-Bernard, who is miserable, even though misery is not in any of the inputs. This new idea of the blended man is not available from any other space in the mental web. It is unique to the blend. Halli-as-Bernard (and hence miserable) is a new idea, and a very complicated one. In the mental spaces that have Bernard (living in a monastery, arising before daybreak, and so on), Bernard is not miserable; quite the contrary. In the mental spaces that have Halli, Halli is not miserable; quite the contrary. But in the blend, there is a person who is miserable. This person and his misery emerge in the blend, and that *emergent* meaning is the main focus of the conceptual integration network.

Projection from input mental spaces to the blend is *partial* and *selective*. In the blend, Halli is Bernard, but only in very complicated ways: There is an element in the blend that has Halli's personal identity, but no longer Halli's job as court poet, because then, Halli could not be a monk. It has Halli's emotions, but Bernard's monastic lifestyle, and that part of his activity that has to do with celebrating divine office. Whether or not Halli is even Christian is not important to the blend. What we project to the blend is mostly left up to imaginers as they explore new ideas, often jointly. People often try out different projections from the same mental spaces, trying to find a good blend. Disagreements and misunderstandings arise. Blends are sometimes hotly contested in culture, as we see in the current legal wrangling over how to conceive of the blend *intellectual property,* which is the subject of thousands of court cases.

Blending is a creative process. But blending is not an exotic, exceptional, cognitively-expensive event, used exclusively in rare moments of high creativity. On the contrary, it is a basic mental operation, routine, non-costly, constantly deployed in everyday cognition by every cognitively modern human being, almost always without conscious notice.

16 See Turner, *Literary Minds*; Fauconnier, *Mappings*, Fauconnier & Turner, *The Way We Think*; Turner, *Origin*.

Compression

A blended space is typically a tight, packed little compression. It contains much less information than the full conceptual integration network in which it sits. From it, we can reach up mentally to manage and work on the rest of the vast mental web. *Compression*, as a term in cognitive science, refers not specifically to shrinking something along a gradient of space or time, but instead to transforming diffuse and distended conceptual structures that are less congenial to human understanding so that they become more congenial to human understanding, better suited to our human-scale ways of thinking. One of the most fascinating and important questions in cognitive science is: how can human beings, in very local here-and-now conditions, with bodies that are completely here-and-now, manage to have thoughts that stretch across vast expanses of time, space, causation, and agency? The answer is: compression to human scale.

Some bundles of thought are tractable and manageable by the human mind. They are at human scale. Other bundles of thought are not tractable, because we cannot wrap our minds around them easily all at once. Most mental webs would be utterly intractable for us to grasp except that we can make a human-scale blend, drawing on different mental spaces in the web. The mental web is not at human scale, but the blend is, and so the blend gives us a way to think about the mental web. We can carry the packed, mental compression with us, and unpack it to connect to what we want to think about. The blend gives us a handy, tractable bundle. It helps us access, organize, manipulate, and adjust the mental web that it serves. For example, in the vast mental web of imagining future possibilities, Halli can have a little blend in which he is actually a monk, going through the motions and being miserable, and since this is something Halli wants to avoid in life, the blend is useful to Halli. The blend in this case is a human-scale mental simulation. Halli can now do his best to steer clear of both it and anything like it.

We offer the example of the Halli-is-Bernard blend to launch us, but it is dangerous to generalize from it more than a little. Although the example is clearly a blend, and even leaps out at us as a blend, essentially all blending is invisible to consciousness and does not look at first like blending. The counterfactual "If I were . . ." is only one linguistic prompt for blending. There are many prompts like it, of various kinds. In fact, blending is a mental act and does not require any communication, or signals, or language. On the contrary, our ability for full human language is a product of our ability for blending. Also, blends do not have to be counterfactual, hypothetical, false, or fictional. On the contrary, many blends constitute what we feel to be utter fact, ground truth, and common sense – such as the idea of a stable, abiding self.

The root of the problem

As Engel writes,

> Blending is necessarily selective. It is a dynamic process that runs at high speed. The outcome is not predetermined. As a result of this mental mechanism, it is likely that the individual changes his worldview in unexpected ways and at unexpected moments. Typically, this will have repercussions for future behaviour. The resulting predictability problem could not be more obvious.[17]

How can the predictability problem be solved? The answer is to use human creativity to manage itself: Cultures invent institutions, standardizations, for the purpose of generating sufficient predictability.[18] In the last 10,000 years alone – almost no time at all from an evolutionary viewpoint – cultures have invented contracts, confession, classrooms, courts, constitutions, retail counters, certified public accountants, conjugal arrangements, co-tutelles, consent decrees, coins, confirmations, coronations, . . . One of the central purposes of institutions is to enforce patterns that constrain possibilities and generate predictability.

Consider finance and trade, one of the areas most dependent upon cultural standardization. Finance and trade depend upon extreme narrowing of possibilities. Game Theory,[19] for example, begins implicitly with the fact of amazing human flexibility and the crucial need to control it through rules and scripts – games, by analogy with board games – so that choosers will be led to show some predictability of behavior and therefore be able to interact. Game Theory focuses on only a very small subset of highly structured situations that have standardization, rules, control, and enforcement – like chess, tic-tac-toe, or a common-value auction for a specific kind of physical object across a small number of professional buyers trained in such purchases, who know each other and know that the winner will try to realize a monetary profit on the object, and who all know that they all know all of this. In finance and trade, we see standardization of currency, weights, measures, markets, contractual arrangements, backed up by the most energetic cultural systems of judges, courts, commissions, licensing, concessions, aristocrats, police, fines, incarceration, and punishment. Given human creativity, innovation, and flexibility, cultures have found it extraordinarily challenging to standardize finance and trade. Even under severe efforts to discipline behavior, failures are widespread and routine. Game-theoretic models have been proposed

17 Engel, *Generating Predictability*, 38.
18 Denzau & North, "Shared Mental Models."
19 Rasmusen, *Games and Information*.

for the operation of constraints and standardizations in fields such as allocation of security forces, allocation of health care services, and the design of political, legal, social, and market institutions.[20] Despite the widespread use of such game-theoretic models to propose predictable patterns in human behavior, we very often observe real behavior, from voting to the divergence of political parties' platforms to market bubbles and crashes, that fails the game-theoretic predictions of how human beings will operate under such standardization.[21] Further, it is a common finding that experimental subjects, in tightly controlled settings, do not make choices that comport with Nash equilibrium strategies, or indeed, von Neumann-Morgenstern utility maximization.[22] Finance and trade need some flexibility, if they are to take advantage of opportunities or improve. But even the slightest allowance of flexibility risks opening the floodgates to fraud, theft, corruption, chaos, market collapse, war.

As Engel, Wittgenstein, Geertz, and others suggest, a principal pressure point for standardization is setting standards for selves and for interactions between selves. Consider the idea of a self. It is not at all fixed: we know we have very different thoughts and behaviors at different times, in different contexts, with different people. As reviewed in chapter 4 of Turner's *Origin of Ideas* (2014), the basic mental operation of conceptual blending allows us to construct in any moment an idea of self. The possible inputs to this conceptual blend are very many, including, of course, memories of previous selves, but also ideas of other selves, including friends and acquaintances, as well as selves which we encountered through reports, news, books, fiction, songs, movies, fairytales, or generic conceptions of character. Activation of ideas is highly variable in the brain; the potential inputs vary moment to moment. Projection to the blend is highly selective, and emergent meaning can develop in the blend.

One very common pattern of blending used in conceiving of a self has analogies and disanalogies across all the different selves one has been, in reality or imagination. The analogies are compressed in the blend into an *identity*, and the disanalogies are compressed into *change* for that identity. We say, "I have lost my French." What can this possibly mean? Under blending, it can mean that one instance of the self could speak French, a later instance of the self is less good at it, there are accordingly analogies and disanalogies across various input spaces, the analogies are compressed to an identity (a self), and the disanalogies are compressed to *change* for that self. This is the same compression pattern that we use

20 Roth, "Market Organization"; Fudenberg and Tirole, *Game Theory*; Kagel and Roth, *Handbook of Experimental Economics*.

21 Camerer, *Behavioral Game Theory*.

22 Plott, *Equilibrium*; Smith, "Rational Choice."

when we say, somewhat inaccurately, that "dinosaurs turned into birds" or "His girlfriend gets younger every year" (on the reading that we are not in a science fiction novel in which she ages in reverse, but rather that there are analogies across all the girlfriends in the input spaces, which are compressed to one element in the blend, and the disanalogies across those elements in the input spaces are compressed to *change* for that one element in the blend). The idea, in the blend, of a stable self is an extremely useful and fit illusion, one strongly supported, even required, by cultures.

To count as a normal person, we must constantly manage our viewpoint and focus. The mental web for the distributed self is very large, and offers us many places in which to situate our viewpoint and focus. This cognitive work is almost always unconscious. We can move an old, familiar viewpoint into the present self by blending. These methods of constructing a self extend analogously to constructing other selves and constructing patterns of interaction across selves.

Standardization: Strategies for managing the problem

Given the astonishing creativity of human beings, the according difficulty of predictability, and the corollary difficulty of arranging for cooperation or even suitable competition, how have human beings proceeded? What are the strategies for managing the problem?

The mental operation of blending actually includes one feature that makes it conservative: The human being must understand the blend, at least enough for it to serve as a basis for thinking and acting. The blended space cannot be so conceptually alien as to be unintelligible. That means that the inputs to the blend must already be understood, and projections to the blend and relationships across the blending network must not be beyond human conception.

But this conservative feature of blending actually offers no help for the problem of predictability, as described by Engel and others, because the levels of creativity we do see in blending networks is quite sufficient to create sweeping predictability problems. Moreover, the constraint on intelligibility loosens pretty quickly: What is only barely intelligible in one moment can become familiar, even entrenched, providing a solid basis for further innovation built on top of it. This is the standard pattern of the evolution of concepts such as *number*, of grammatical constructions in a language, of cultural rituals. The rate of innovation is only temporarily dampened by the constraint of intelligibility, because what is unfamiliar becomes well-known.

A second built-in constraint on innovation through blending arises from the fact of death and generations: Whatever the adults invent will survive only if it

can be transmitted to the next generation, and that generation starts pretty much from scratch, with the same basic mental operations human beings have had since the Upper Paleolithic. Accordingly, to succeed, cultures need to arrange for learning sequences, cognitive migration paths, that can carry newborns through a lifecourse. More complexly, these cognitive migration paths must allow for innovation, since it will arise in any event, and since the next generations will encounter some new circumstances and cannot use only old routines. It is quite a challenge for a culture to design a migration path that works but is inherently flexible and vague, a path that is actually beyond the predictions of the generations that designed it. The value of the role *Bishop of Rome* must change over time, since even the Pope dies, but that change can be designed so as to look acceptable: The new Pope wears the same unique clothing as the preceding popes, gives an Urbi et Orbi blessing at the appointed time after the election, and so on. The cultural institution, it seems, can be arranged so that change, but *stable* change, is built in, and the change itself can be, to some extent, predictable.

Culture cannot stop innovative conception of selves, but it can establish standards about whether they will be acceptable to the rest of the community. Hence Hugh of St. Victor stresses the importance of good role models, most especially the saints, serving as matrices for selves. Learning by imitation, or imprinting, required humility, deliberately setting out to imitate examples. Such imitation, however, did not follow a finished script, recited mindlessly, in parrotlike conformity, as we will see. Nor was imitation limited to one single saintly model. There are many different saints, and one was permitted to blend the self with any of them, producing quite a range of altered selves, but nonetheless, for the most part, alterations that were approved or accepted as opposed to punished.

There might be many serviceable selves, and the brain may be running many of those incompatible possibilities in parallel. People are wayfinders: At each point where a choice is necessary, the self may differ, and inhabit a different imagined story. The possibility of these alternative selves in alternative stories is very large; what is needed is not a fixed self or a fixed story, but stable and acceptable innovation. A person needs a suitable self to precipitate in the moment of action, and we often perceive that it does. This means not that the brain was exclusively dedicated to that self, but only that a coherent self precipitated to serve the moment of action. A different precipitation might occur in the same circumstances next time. A human being about to act needs a sense of a stable self, one that will make a choice leading to the next choice point, where the self will be different but not randomly so. Stability is important; uniqueness, stasis, and rigidity are not. Part of designing *stability* is to allow thinkers to conceive not only of changed selves but also the degree of cultural acceptance or rejection of those changed selves.

Designs for standardization often look like attempts to find a more acceptable and successful alternative to the *leviathan* approach to standardization: concentrate power in an authority sufficiently powerful to threaten all the others, credibly, with unacceptable consequences if they do not conform. The problems with the leviathan approach are obvious and legendary: kings or dukes or popes or generals who grow corrupt or crazy, succession to incompetent heirs or wars over succession, and, of course, resistance from the highly innovative subordinates. Macbeth's murder of Duncan. The War of the Roses. The Avignon Papacy . . .

Contrary to the draconian efforts to induce predictability, standardization designs that are more flexible, open to negotiation, often prove more robust. When we turn to actual, ecologically valid situations of selves interacting, we see that their design and operation make room for selves as wayfinders, navigating from choice point to choice point in life and precipitating a suitable self making a suitable choice at each point, but perhaps a somewhat different self at each point. To help us understand the negotiations between creativity and constraints, consider a modern and familiar example: the restaurant. It is a standardization that balances flexibility and predictability:

- The type of restaurant is a constraint. Most restaurants are unable to find suitable agreement between the owners and the customers by saying, "Tell us what you want, and we will tell you whether we will make it for you." Indeed, although the restaurant may in principle be capable of making almost anything you can imagine, it tends to impose severe constraints on customer choices by its name, style, design, and many other markers.
- The menu is a balance of flexibility and predictability, allowing choices, but also laying down strict limits to open-ended human creativity.
- The menu also constrains the momentary choosing of a self. The menu constrains the customer by proposing a limited number of possible selves. For example, the customer may not have thought about having something "light." But the menu will say, "For those who want something light." The customer now asks, "Am I someone who wants something light?" and constructs a self and a choice in response.
- The dessert cart is a balance of flexibility and predictability. It obviates the need by either managers or customers to know or think about the customers' preferences or the ranking of those preferences. The purpose of rolling out the dessert cart is to put people into an immediate moment of being somebody: you are here now, and you can point at any of these, or dismiss the cart, but that's the extent of the possibilities.
- Corkage fees are a safety valve, allowing flexibility at a price. The menu will prompt for selves, but sometimes the customer must have even more flexibility. Accordingly, you can often bring your own beverage to the table. The res-

taurant here gives up on an agreement to choose only what is on the menu and allows the flexible person to escape the menu for a fee.

- Possible acceptable selves are proposed to the customer by the restaurant environment. When you come to the bar table, there might be a little standup card with a couple drinking cold beer, or a caipirinha. You are a wayfinder and can choose a person and a story. You are not the people on the card, and not a photograph, either, but can imagine such people, who are probably fictional, and blend them with yourself, and review the possibility thereby activated. Perhaps you say, "I'll have that," or, "well, not a beer, but how about a cold Bombay Sapphire gin with Thomas Henry tonic and a slice of lime? Plenty of ice." Restaurants, among other places, often specialize in trying to put wayfarers into moments where a self in a story will precipitate.
- Delegates operate in the restaurant, to help keep things stable. There is a kind of agent in wayfinding situations to whom one delegates without even being specific about the delegation. For example, a bartender or a mother can be such an agent. The bar itself is a kind of dessert cart: You often see the whole selection on the wall, so know the flexibility and the limits. The bartender can remember the Armagnac you had three weeks ago and present it to you again. This is a way to make collective action possible in an environment where there are many possible selves available to the customer.
- The vegetable dish case is a balance of flexibility and predictability. Consider a restaurant that has a case presenting the day's cooked vegetable dishes. Patrons do not need to walk up to the case, but they can. If they do, perhaps the dining room manager gives a quick description of each. Suppose the diners do not respond, and keep looking at this and that. So the dining room manager proposes a sampler for two diners of everything (which isn't on the menu), as a starter. Perhaps the customer proposes a sampler for two diners of everything except one of the particular dishes in the case. People looking at the vegetable dish case are inventing possible wayfinding points, and negotiating. The result can be a quick agreement, an equilibrium.
- The food court is an awesome design of flexibility and predictability. The food court puts customers into immediate situations of choosing what self to be. The customer walks past all the foods, reviewing them, and then decides. Traditionally, small restaurants in Greece operated on a similar design. The customer inspected the foods being cooked in the kitchen.

As our restaurant example shows, mechanisms of constraint and mechanisms of flexibility are both necessary to generate successful interaction between stable selves. Our restaurant example, however, is at a small scale. Conversely, the introductory example of the seal matrix, like the examples from medieval monasticism

we shall give below ("Zoom in"), are at very large scale. These examples are about learning and pedagogy, values and ethics, and ultimately salvation. But the basic cognitive processes we have discussed here are the same in the medieval monastery as in the modern restaurant – involving the crucial mechanisms of constraint and flexibility, the exploration of possibility spaces and wayfinding – only in the case of the monasteries, of course, the processes run to greater complexity and on a greater scale.

Many readers might be surprised (with the exception of medievalists) that our examples of flexible design and accommodation of creativity – the seal matrix ("Introduction") and viewpoint blends with saints ("Zoom in") – should come from medieval monasticism, since both the period and the institution are often conceived of as being rigid and inflexible. But medieval monasticism was no more rigid than the modern restaurant. There can hardly be found a more telling example of institutional stability, astonishingly adaptive and flexible in the face of instability and constant change, than that which we call (with a capital "C") "*the* Church" or the "Catholic Church": the word itself prompts for an identity connector between extraordinarily different things throughout history, a compression for a vast mental web, an abiding blend, with one element in the blend and change for that element.

Zoom in – Viewpoint Blends with Saints. *Conformare*, *Uniformare*, *Transformare*

The illustrative, introductory example of the seal matrix, like all examples of cultural systems of standardization, shows great cognitive complexity. It evinces both the opportunities and the challenges that come with human creativity. In the section above ("Zoom out"), we studied the cognitive operations that create such opportunities and challenges and we focused on systems that successfully walk the tightrope between too much predictability and too much flexibility. Too much predictability fails because people are creative; change will happen: A brittle system will crack and shatter if it cannot absorb the power of human cognitive innovation. Too much flexibility fails because people cannot find their feet with each other: They don't know where to start or how to interact because they have insufficient foreknowledge of the range of behavior they might encounter. Human beings need to generate predictability, as Engel argues; they need something like a menu or a Catholic Church. In this section, we consider a few other examples of mostly successful systems of stabilization, to emphasize that successful standardization is not fixity: It is a system of flexibility and predictability.

Monastic reform communities in the twelfth century walked this tightrope to provide constrained but flexible opportunities to create new selves – transformed men and women (most of these communities did not take child oblates, only adult converts).[23] Through liturgy, reading, and prayer, the communities imagined, immersed, and blended themselves into hagiographical and biblical stories. Thereby they created and explored potential selves and potential realities that served an ongoing process of cultural standardization: In the sources often signaled by concepts of *formare* ("to form") and its cognates *uniformare* ("to make uni-form"), *reformare* ("to re-form"), *conformare* ("to con-form"), and *transformare* ("to trans-form"). Entry into monastic life was a reset button so to speak: A new life, patterned on the "perfect man" (*vir perfectus*), Christ, like we saw in Hugh's seal matrix.

It is not only the culture or the restaurant or the monastic community that must walk the tightrope between flexibility and predictability; so must the person, the diner, the individual monk. This is not easy. Accordingly, these institutions provide on-site guides: The sommelier in the restaurant, the abbots or theologians in the monastic community. All cultures provide such guides. Here, we look at two exemplary guides in the medieval period: William of St. Thierry and Bernard of Clairvaux. They guided wayfinding monks and novices through matrices of stories and selves. Monastic stability was not only repetition or fixity – although there was a lot of both; it was a coherent migration path: constrained, yet flexible:

- Constraints and limitations on stories and selves were set by the house or order itself and by the rule and usages it followed, e.g. Cluniac, Cistercian, canons regular, Premonstratensian, Carthusian, Franciscan, Dominican, etc. Each house or order had its own stories and role models that were emphasized, laying constraints on its monks or nuns or canons, just as the pizzeria lays constraints on its diners.
- Private reading and study were a crucial source of stories and selves, and it was constrained: There were only certain books available to the monks and nuns in the library holdings; the library did not (and could not) contain *all* books. The individual book collection provided an array of choices for stories and selves, but also limited them, just like a menu in a fish restaurant.
- The liturgy blended the participants' viewpoint with that of saints and biblical characters in sacred stories. People could immerse themselves into blended

23 Scholarship on the twelfth-century monastic reforms is extensive; for discussions relevant to the perspective of creating new selves, see the special issue of *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* 31 (2019) edited by Engh et al.; on monastic education of children, see Cochelin, "Using the Body to Mould the Mind."

viewpoints to explore potential selves, just as the diner can precipitate a self by looking at what other diners have ordered, or looking at representations of successful diners who have made their choices and taken the next step, to actual dining. The dessert cart and the vegetable table make specific choices present, just as the readings and offices of the saints make certain inputs present to the monk's construction of self. The wine and bread are present in both the restaurant and the mass, and in the second case, they carry the presence of the divine.

- Churches and monastic buildings were highly structured spaces, with images and visual cues offering sign posts or road maps to their viewers. Monks and nuns could blend the images of saints with the self, just as the diner can consider which self to be by studying the picture of the happy tipplers presented on the card on the bar table.
- Monastic vows were a lifelong obligation, but in some cases monks could leave the cloister for longer or shorter periods with special permission, or they could voluntarily leave the order definitely, although that was frowned upon, or be expelled. The price to pay would be social disgrace and loss of whatever goods they had brought with them to the monastery, and even excommunication. Restaurants charge a corkage fee meant to be prohibitive but also a safety valve. So did the monastic orders.
- The monks and novices could turn to trusted delegates, guides for help in constructing the selves, just as the diners turn to the waiter or barkeeper for recommendations. The rest of this section presents two such specialized monastic guides.

William of St Thierry (d. 1148), the author of *The Golden Epistle*, was a Benedictine abbot who later became a Cistercian monk. Like Hugh of St. Victor, William was a high-profile twelfth-century reformer, and, like Hugh, he wrote on the formation of novices – on how to construct stable, abiding monastic selves. In the part called "Advice for novices," William addresses aspiring monks:

> If you will take my advice, you will choose for yourself a man whose life is such that it will serve as a model to impress upon your heart, one whom you will so revere that whenever you think of him you will rise up because of the respect you feel for him and put yourself in order. Think of him as if he were present [. . .] Let him be present to you whenever you wish and let him come sometimes when you would have preferred him to stay away [. . .] For you will be driven to correct even all your thoughts, as if they were open to his gaze and visited by his rebuke, when you consider that he is watching.[24]

24 *Epistula ad fratres de Monte-Dei* 1.9, PL 184:325AB: "Elige tibi tu ipse consilio meo hominem, cujus vitae exemplar sic cordi tuo insederit, reverentia inhaeserit, ut quoties ejus recordatus fue-

Like Hugh, William talks about using a role model as an example to correct and ameliorate the self, but unlike Hugh's highly abstract and metaphorical notion of the self as soft wax formed by the seal matrix, William is more specific. William's purpose is to make better inputs active in the mind so they can be inputs to the construction of the self. He explicitly sets up a blending machine for selves, where the role model will always be a guiding input. His passage helps us see how this process was supposed to happen. First, you must choose the role model; the choice should be based on that person's conduct of life, which should serve as an example (*exemplar*) to the novice.[25] Note that the exemplar is an imagined person, but not imaginary. Second, you must memorize him: "impress him upon your heart." The phrasing points emphatically to concepts of memory and remembering and, accordingly, to rhetoric and its use in the monastic training of the mind through creative, "artificial" memory, explored by Mary Carruthers.[26] The point is to create an imagined role model that you can hold on to with your memory: one who is always re-presented in your mind, and therefore present to the self – watching you, monitoring your inner self from the outside.

Note that there is blended viewpoint between the novice monk and the imagined model: The aspiring monk views himself through the eyes of his role model. The monk needs to attribute mental attitudes and states to the imagined model,[27] presumably based on stories that are read and heard about the person, and then create a blend where the model is always present so that his mental viewpoint is always relevant, thus incorporating the model's judicious attitude into his own self.

We see a remarkably creative and flexible aspect of William's monastic teaching: The wayfinding novice may carry this compressed mental tool around with him, use it to navigate with. William could take advantage of our mostly unconscious human capacity – to constantly manage our viewpoint and focus to create selves in stories. Blended viewpoint assembles matrices of stories and selves, allowing the person to creatively and imaginatively explore possibility spaces. On the one hand, this flexible imaginative exploration allows the novice to be crea-

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ris, ad reverentiam cogitati assurgas, et temetipsum ordines et componas: qui cogitatus ac si praesens sit [. . .] Hic praesens tibi adsit quandocunque volueris: occurrat saepe et cum nolueris. [. . .] Nam omnes cogitationes tuas cum ab eo videri cogitabis: ac si videat, ac si arguat, emendare cogeris." (trans. Berkeley, *The Golden Epistle*).

25 The person is in the masculine, *homo*, implying a universalized male, which, however, could in theory also encompass a female; the gendered dynamics of exemplar thinking are fascinating, but unfortunately outside our scope; for a relevant discussion, see Eriksen et al., *Eksemplets makt*.

26 Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* and *The Craft of Thought*.

27 This kind of metal attribution is known in Cognitive Science as Theory of Mind or "mentalizing."

tive and variable; but on the other hand, the novice must not drown in the expanse; the novice still must be able to precipitate out of all these possibilities one coherent, capable self to meet any moment of action, choice, decision, or self-presentation. Designing a system that has both this imaginative creativity and successfully performing agents in real situations is quite difficult. William was a notable guide to such novices because of his specific system for exploiting creativity but delivering stable selves.

In the next example, William of St. Thierry, in the same text, urges the monks to blend their viewpoint with biblical authors during reading, prayer, and liturgy:

> You will never enter Paul's meaning until you have imbibed his spirit by constant application to reading him and by giving yourself to constant meditation. And you will never understand David [i.e., the Psalms] until you assume the affections of the Psalms in your own experience. And this applies to all Scripture.[28]

Note that the viewpoint blends here require full imaginative immersion so that there should be no distance or distinctness between the reading monk and the biblical text. This kind of reading aims at full emotional and cognitive participation. The goal was to internalize and appropriate biblical texts: to re-enact the text, and, ultimately, to embody and inhabit the text.[29]

Modern scholars have long called attention to a striking instance of blended viewpoint; they refer to it as the psalmic "I."[30] As you recite or chant in the divine office, you adopt the Psalm's first-person point of view. For example, the Night office opens with a verse from Psalm 50:17: *Domine, labia mea aperies* ("Lord, open my lips," which continues, *et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam*, "and I shall sing your praise"). As the monks or nuns sing, this is exactly what takes place: The Night office becomes an actualization of the biblical verse, a realization of the desire – David's desire – to praise the Lord. The psalmic "I" of monastic prayer and liturgy served as a possibility space for the reader/celebrant to immerse him- or herself into another self in order to fully take in the meaning and the first-person emotion claims of the Psalms, to make them his or her own.

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28 *Epistula ad fratres de Monte-Dei* 1.10, PL 184:327D: "Nunquam ingredieris in sensum Pauli donec usu bonae intentionis in lectione ejus, et studio assiduae meditationis, spiritum ejus imbiberis. Nunquam intelliges David, donec ipsa experientia ipsos Psalmorum affectus indueris. Sicque de reliquis."

29 Fulton Brown, "My Psalter, My Self," 75; Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 77; Engh, "Imaginative Immersion," 148.

30 E.g. Mays, "A Question of Identity"; Nightingale "The 'I' and 'Not I'"; Doriani, "'Then Have I . . . Said with David'"; Engh, "Imaginative Immersion," 145–149.

Our last example, and the next guide, is Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153), Cistercian abbot, incomparable writer of sermons, and cognitive engineer par excellence. In a sermon on the Feast of All Saints, Bernard asked, addressing his own monks in the monastery of Clairvaux: Why should we venerate the saints? He answers:

> It is quite clear, brothers: the saints do not need to be honored by us, nor is anything added to them by our devotion. We venerate their memory to our advantage, not to theirs. Do you wish to know how greatly that is to our advantage? I confess that a great longing flares up in me when I think of them [. . .] People say: what the eye does not see, the heart does not yearn for. My memory is my eye! To reflect on the saints is in some way to see them. This is our portion in the land of the living [Ps 141:6], and it is no mean portion if affection accompanies memory, as it should. Thus, I say, our citizenship is in heaven, but ours is not like theirs. They are there in fact, but we in desire. They are there in reality; we are there through memory.[31]

At first glance, Bernard seems to be reiterating William and Hugh's message that in reading about and meditating upon saintly models, or matrices, we keep them in mind as examples of virtue – by remembering them, we learn from them and become better. While this of course is true, Bernard's use of memory as a tool to shape the future, to sculpt potential saintly selves, is an incredibly complex example of blended viewpoint. Bernard breaks completely with any strictly sequential unfolding of time. Distinctions of time and space collapse, causality collapses. Bernard builds a possibility space that is imaginative and flexible, exploring latent, multi-potential reality.

"My memory is my eye," says Bernard. The eye indicates presence – in both time, *now*, and space, *here*. As an agent of wayfinding, he situates or moves viewpoint (the deictic center), blending it with the saints' viewpoint. But at the same time, the saints are not *here*, emphasized in the passage by the monastic subjects' longing, yearing, and desire, which instead carries a reference to the *future*. Astonishingly, it is the memory, the *past*, that guides the viewpoint. There is blended viewpoint with the saints, Bernard implies, since their memories are now ours;

31 "In festivitate omnium sanctorum. Sermo 5.5" in SBOp 5:364: "Prorsus ita est, dilectissimi: honorum nostrorum Sancti non egent, nec quidquam eis nostra devotione praestatur. Plane quod eorum memoriam veneramur, nostra interest, non ipsorum. Vultis scire quantum interest nostra? Ego in me, fateor, ex hac recordatione sentio desiderium vehemens inflammari [. . .] Vulgo dicitur: Quod non videt oculus, cor non dolet. Oculus meus, memoria mea, et cogitare de Sanctis, quodammodo eos videre est. Sic nempe portio nostra in terra viventium, nec modica sane portio, si tamen, ut decet, memoriam affectio comitetur. Sic, inquam, conversatio nostra in caelis est; verumtamen non sic nostra, sicut illorum. Ipsorum enim substantia ibi est, nostra autem desideria; ipsi per praesentiam, nos per memoriam ibi sumus." (Trans. Edmonds, *Sermons for the Autumn Season*, 171)

through the reading and meditation on the saints' lives, their experiences become our own. Therefore the saints' *present*, which is our *future*, namely *heaven*, can be accessed and anticipated, here on *earth* and in this life ("the land of the living": an allusion to Ps 141:6) through our memories, blended with those of the saints.

Hovering between this world and the next, between the present (here, now) and the future (there, then), Bernard's liminal, monastic selves explore latent and manifest selves – potential selves – with the whole range of saints at their disposition (it is, after all, the feast of *all* saints). Through the management of focus and viewpoint, the community explores latent and manifest presence. The saints are in heaven manifestly, "in fact" (*substantia*) and "in reality" (*per praesentiam*), whereas we are in heaven latently, in the future though our desire; but our latent presence in heaven becomes manifest only through our memory (*per memoriam*). Representation is presence, even when the representation is exclusively mental. Saints and selves are held onto in the mind, using memory as an active, creative tool.

This concept of memory bears only partial resemblance to the familiar model of memory as the mind's storehouse of things we have experienced in the past. In fact, the medieval boundary between memory and imagination was, from the point of view of our modern notions about them, highly shifting and fluid. The kind of remembering that Bernard is speaking about is affective, empathetic, and wildly imaginative and flexible. These are memories not of the past, but of the future. But the monks' blended memories are not "personal" or idiosyncratic. They are created through the repertoire of the liturgy, monastic readings, and visual prompts in the monastery. Herein lie the constraints, and the predictability of the system.

Monastic communities sought to balance flexibility and predictability in this hugely ambitious project of conforming selves to comply with the divine standard, with the saintly matrix. On the one hand, the communities cultivated, even demanded, imaginative and creative engagement from their members, while, on the other hand, they placed severe constraints on the individual's choices and personal freedom. High requirements to personal dedication and devotion intersected with a minutely regulated and austere ascetic lifestyle, creating a spiritual elitism that surely was not always easy to manage. The specific problems that arose, and the threats to stability that the reformed communities ran into, are evasive in the sources. But they are there: moments of wildness, too much creativity, and brittleness, too much discipline.

In 1131, a monk at Clairvaux shattered during Holy Mass, in the presence of the visiting Pope Innocent II.[32] As the choir was chanting, the monk suddenly shouted out, "Say all: I am Christ!" (*Dicite: Ego sum Christus*), to the general shock and horror of all present. The episode was quickly written off as an (unsuccessful) attempt by the devil to create damage and confusion. Perhaps overly creative, or perhaps exasperated by the high demands placed on him, the poor monk had overstepped a line, and we never hear of him again. Moments of wildness and brittleness – and combinations of these – also emerge from the testimony of anti-monastic satire. Often these targeted the laxity and hypocrisy of monks, nuns, canons, and friars.[33] But sometimes the critique regarded an excess of alterity and distinction from the rest of the Church, which suggested, at a deeper level, an implicit threat to the overarching stability envisioned by the idea of unity in diversity. For example, Walter Map's biting attacks on Cistercian communities targeted the order's alleged greed; but it is the way Map, satirically, albeit shockingly, contrasts the Christian God (*noster*, "our God") with "*their* God" (*deus eorum*) that is profoundly disturbing, implying a distorted piety, an over-zealous order run wild.[34]

Conclusion: Successful Standardization Requires Systems to Balance Flexibility and Predictability

Engel pointed out the root problem: Human cognition is astoundingly creative and variable; cultures must generate predictability. He also identified the main solution: Institutions must be designed that accept, foster, and exploit creativity at the same time that they provide constraints and guides to produce reasonable predictability, tractable migrations, stable selves. The medieval monastic communities are key examples of such design solutions, providing possibility spaces for imaginative exploration of the self, yet also providing guiding stories, role models, and blending patterns to produce reasonably predictable as well as creative monks and novices.

All people face challenges and difficulties. The threats to medieval people were daunting, by all accounts. But cultural standardization led to survival and success: Generations actually produced other generations and bequeathed them flexible institutions. We see in the medieval period extraordinary creativity in de-

32 For references and discussion of the incident, see Verbaal, "Liturgy and Rome's Second Revival," 101–103.

33 See, e.g., Hering, "Criticism of Monastic Life," 58–61.

34 Walter Map, *De nugis* 1.25 in *Anecdota Oxoniensia*, 44.

signing new institutions that not only acknowledge but promote invention, as a necessary power of a system for precipitating reasonably predictable selves to carry the enterprise forward. We marvel at the invention of guides like William and Bernard. They do not lay down the law of leviathan and execute those who fail it. Instead, they offer conceptual inputs for blending patterns that produce stable selves who present themselves in stable stories, in communities of others who are doing the same. It is not a fixed, static, or brittle system, but rather a dynamic and flexible standardization that provides a tractable balance of flexibility and predictability.

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Abbreviations

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SBOp = Sancti Bernardi Opera. Edited by Jean Leclercq et al, 8 vols. Rome: Editiones cistercienses, 1957–1977.

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Kristin B. Aavitsland, Kaja M. Hagen

7 Setting the Standard: Devotional Measures in the Medieval North

Abstract: This chapter takes its departure from a special instance of authoritative standard in medieval culture: the so-called *mensura Christi*, a length measure claimed to reflect the stature of Christ, distributed in various media throughout Europe at least from the thirteenth century and onwards. Assuming a character between image and relic, the measure of Christ, true man and true God, embodied the paradox of the incarnation. Christ was the ultimate moral standard and a model to imitate. In the late Middle Ages (fourteenth to sixteenth centuries), Christ's measure as well as that of any other person aiming for sanctity came to play decisive roles in a plethora of devotional practices. To illustrate this phenomenon, the authors examine three instances of devotional measures from the medieval North with respect to their inherent agency, their claim to authority, and their capacity of representation. Furthermore, they discuss devotional measures' relation to other, more mundane practices of measuring, aiming to come to terms with a premodern conceptual connection between standard (measure), sanctity, and ambitions of societal change.

Keywords: Standards, measurements, medieval devotional practices, *mensurae Christi*, St Olaf, medieval Iceland, medieval Nidaros

Introduction: A Measure of Christ in an Icelandic Manuscript

Measuring by common standards is necessary in any society, medieval or modern, for generating order and predictability. In medieval societies, the Church was often the main guarantor of standards, validating legal and mercantile measures. The Church had indeed the means to do so: Administering the mysteries revealed in Scripture and passed down by Tradition, the Church safeguarded divine truths about the very nature of measurements.[1] However, as we shall demon-

1 See below, p. 154.

Kristin B. Aavitsland, **Kaja M. Hagen**, University of Oslo

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strate in this chapter, the Church also provided tangible measures of the divine itself. Such sacred measures would, in various ways, articulate and promote the ultimate standard, that of God, both as a mirror for human activity and as a tool for salvation. One instance of a sacred measure is found in a fragmented encyclopedic manuscript from early fourteenth-century Iceland, where a thick, black line runs vertically along the outer margin of the page (Figure 7). It is accompanied by a text in Latin informing that "if prolonged sixteen times, this holy line shows the measure of Christ."[2] The same piece of information is repeated in Old Norse on the opposite side of the line: "This line is one 16th part of the height of Our Lord Jesus Christ and shows how tall he himself was of bodily stature."[3] The black line cluttering the manuscript page proves to a highly abstracted, yet strikingly palpable and concrete, representation of Christ. Claiming to measure a holy person's body, indeed, to measure the incarnated God himself, the black line on the manuscript page may be understood as something between image and relic.

Measures believed to represent the physical length of Jesus Christ, but also that of saints and even of holy objects, were distributed in various media for devotional purposes in the medieval West from the tenth century as well into early modernity.[4] Such measures appear as distinct fractions of the whole length of what is measured (mostly one twelfth or one sixteenth), either in manuscripts, as we have seen, or in single prayer leaves.[5] Entire lengths circulated as ropes and ribbons, or were reproduced in monumental formats, such as frescoes, panel paintings, grand roods, and architectural installations.[6] The vertical line in the margin of the Icelan-

2 "Sancta hec linea sedecies ducta mensuram Christi monstrat," AM 732b 4to, fol. 7r. For the entire text, see below.

3 "Þessi lina er hinn 16. hlutr af hæð drottins vars Iesu Christi ok syner hversu har hann sialfr hefur verit a likams vaxt," AM 732b 4to, fol. 7r. Both the Latin and Old Norse text are transcribed in *Ai* III, 65–66. Translation by Kristin B. Aavitsland.

4 Bacci, "Vera croce," 235. For early modern (sixteenth- to seventeenth- and even eighteenth-century) survey of measures of Christ, see Boroffka, *Die Länge Christi*.

5 For early manuscript instances, see Bacci, "Vera croce," 235 and Lugli, *The Making of Measure*, 145. For devotional measures reproduced on parchment and paper as single prayer leaves and amulets, written and printed, see Bühler, "An Orazione"; Boroffka, *Die Länge Christi*, 103–138.

6 For devotional measuring ribbons, see Boroffka, *Die Länge Christi*, 139–172. In the late Middle Ages, the established iconographic motif of Christ's measure consisting of a ruler with the fraction of the measure, a formulaic inscription, and a full-length miniature image of the body whose measure is represented, migrated from manuscript format to monumental paintings on church walls. In the greater scale, however, the representation of Christ's length was given by his very figure, not by a ruler that had to be multiplied. Such examples are found as panel paintings in a number of churches in the kingdom of Aragón, dating from the fourteenth to early sixteenth century, cf. Torán, "La Longitud de Cristo," 55. In three late medieval Danish churches, the length of Christ appears in the medium of mural painting: one is in St Nicholas in Køge, a second in St

Figure 7: AM 732b 4to, fol. 7r. The Arnamagnæan manuscript collection, Copenhagen University.

dic manuscript is indeed among the more modest-looking in this special category of measurements, which we choose to label *devotional measures*.[7] They rise intriguing questions about the functions and authority of standards and standardization. Therefore, they are especially interesting to investigate regarding this book's general topic: *standardization* as an analytical concept for capturing significant cultural processes in medieval culture. What kind of phenomenon are measures like the one found in this Icelandic manuscript? How do devotional measures relate to other contemporary practices of measuring, and what is the relationship between measures and standards? How can the study of such devotional measures enrich the concept of standardization that this book aims to develop? These are questions which this chapter intends to address.

In the following, we will closer examine the Icelandic instance of a *mensura Christi* (Figure 7), before we present two additional examples of devotional measures in the medieval North, attempting to contextualize them. Through these three cases we aim to contribute to the understanding of the connection between standard, measure, and sanctity in medieval societies. As will emerge, three features of devotional measures stand out as particularly significant: First, devotional measures explicitly invite engagement and devotional actions, hence they are agents of contrition and conversion. Second, they claim to be authoritative and hence valid and trustworthy, although on other grounds than modern standards. Third, they are, qua measures, stand-ins for absent bodies. Although they appear in highly diverse material forms and physical contexts, and do indeed also measure different things, they always entail representation, also when they come in aniconic forms, like the line in the Icelandic manuscript. *Agency*, *authority,* and *representation* seem to be constitutive aspects of devotional measures – and perhaps also of measures in general. The examples examined below all demonstrate the three different aspects at work. One of these aspects will be particularly highlighted in each example.

Nicholas in Vigersted, and a third in St Bendt in Ringsted. These paintings date from c. 1400 to c.1500 and share formal and iconographical traits with the Spanish examples and with each other. A very different medium is the mensura Christi in St John Lateran in Rome, where a marble slab resting on ancient columns form a canopy whose height matches that of Christ, cf. Horsch, "The new relics," 428.

7 Other scholars have applied other terms to describe such measures. Anna Boroffka names them "metric relics" (metrische Reliquien), cf. Boroffka, *Die Länge Christi*, 11. Caroline Walker Bynum includes measures of Christ and the saints in the wider category of "similarity relics," cf. Bynum, *Dissimilar Similitudes*, 36. As will become evident below, measures of devotees are also included in this discussion, hence we have found the notion "devotional measures" most apt for what we are after in this paper.

Measuring Christ: Agency of Devotional Measures

The Icelandic manuscript with the *mensura Christi* presented above is presently in the holdings of the Arnamagnæan Manuscript Collection of Copenhagen University. This manuscript (AM 732b 4to) is a nine-folio fragment of an encyclopaedia with texts in Old Norse as well as Latin, dated to the early fourteenth century (c. 1300–1325). Researchers assume that it originates from one of the Benedictine monasteries in Northern Iceland (Þingeyrar or Munkaþverá).[8] The manuscript's content makes a monastic setting for its production as well as its use highly probable. In addition to the measure of Christ which appears on fol. 7r, the manuscript contains scientific knowledge of various sorts: texts on *computus* (calendar calculation), measures, cosmography, and astronomy, as well as mnemonic verses and figures like a wind diagram; a hemispherical world map; a concentric table listing the elements, the planets, and the celestial spheres; a diagram illustrating the lunar circle during the year, and other similar figures.[9] The disparate contents of the manuscript have one common feature: an urge to measure, calculate, and list phenomena in the world according to conventional – that is standardized – modes. The inclination to measuring and counting is characteristic of the encyclopedic culture booming in Western Christianity from the thirteenth century onwards, and it reflects an important condition of Christian medieval cosmology. The measurability of all natural things revealed their truth because measurability is a constitutive feature of all things created. Several scholars, among them the thirteenth-century bishop and scientist Robert Grosseteste (1175–1253), believed that describing the creation by measuring it was a way to get closer to its creator.[10] In the century previous to Grosseteste's, the highly influential theologian Peter Lombard (c. 1100–1160) established about all things and beings that they are "entirely bound to a place and can be circumscribed," i. e. measured.[11] The sole exception from this rule is of course the creator of all things and beings, the eternal God, who by definition transcends the earthly and hence is immeasurable: God is "entirely independent of place and cannot be circumscribed," the Lombard stated.[12] This fundamental opposition between the creation and the creator, the circumscribed and the uncircumscribed, is fundamental to a Christian outlook of the world. Hence, the *mensura Christi*, appearing among the expositions of mea-

8 Aavitsland, "Civitas Hierusalem," 427; Johansson, "Om nordisk och lärt."

9 On the cosmographic diagrams in this manuscript, see Kedwards, *The Mappae Mundi*, 53–60.

10 Lugli, *The Making of Measure*, 112.

11 "Corpus vero omnino locale et circumscriptibile," *Sentitiae* 1.37.6, *Magistri Petri Lombardi Parisiensis episcopi Sentitiae in IV libris distinctae*, 270.

12 "Deus vero omnino inlocalis et incircumscriptibilis," ibid.

surable and calculable matter in our Icelandic manuscript, claims the impossible: to measure Christ, who is measurable man and immeasurable God at the same time. The material form of the Icelandic *mensura Christi* is nothing but a broad ink line on parchment. It entails, however, no less than the paradox of Christ. The mystery of the incarnation makes God available to calculability and hence to human senses.

According to our way of describing things, the black line claiming to be one sixteenth of Christ's corporal height measures ca 12 cm. Multiplied by 16 gives 192 cm. If this is to reflect the stature of Jesus of Nazareth, he must have been a very tall man, especially in the ancient world.[13] Was he meant to be imagined thus, as a kind of giant, larger than life? Literary sources from early medieval continental Europe seem to confirm this assumption: descriptions of the physical appearance of Christ insist on his remarkable height.[14] Moreover, medieval visual culture often depicts Christ as considerably larger than his apostles, for example, according to decorum and a generally acknowledged value perspective (Figure 8). Not only is Christ the incarnated God: in the flesh he did realize the human potential in its fullness, hence he fills a larger measure. The purpose of Christ' measure is clearly not to transmit information about "the historical Jesus," but to prompt devotional action, as we shall see below.

From where did the *mensura Christi* on this manuscript page take its claim of validity? The note besides the measure gives an explanation: The measure was "taken after the quantity of the golden cross in Constantinople."[15] This very piece of information often accompanies measures of Christ in any medium, like a certificate of origin. The said cross is documented in several sources from the tenth century onwards.[16] It belonged to the treasury of Hagia Sophia and was allegedly commissioned by Emperor Justinian (527–565), who had it covered with gilded silver and set with precious stones. Its size famously reproduced the length of Christ's body, taken after his empty grave in Jerusalem.[17]

13 Michele Bacci points out that in some earlier manuscripts (eleventh and thirteenth centuries), Christ's measure taken from the cross in Constantinople ranges from 180 to 185 cm, cf. Bacci, "Vera croce," 236.

14 Bacci, "Vera croce," 237.

15 "Hec est mensura longitudinis Christi sumpta in Constantinopolim ex aurea cruce ad eius quantitatem," AM 732b 4to, fol. 7r. The same claim is made by several other carriers of the *mensura Christi*, both earlier and later than this one, for instance in a 13th-century manuscript in Florence, Biblioteca Laurentiana, discussed by Lugli, *The Making of Measure*, 48, 147 and 276, note 5.

16 Bacci, "Vera croce," 235.

17 Boroffka, *Die Länge Christi*, 63.

Figure 8: Value perspective: Crucifixion scene from the painted ceiling of Ål Church, c. 1250. Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, inv. no C11707. Photo: Eirik Irgens Johnsen.

This Constantinopolitan *crux mensuralis* is reported to be observed for the last time is around 1200, in an account from archbishop Anthony of Novgorod's pilgrimage to the imperial city.[18] Soon after, in 1204, Constantinople was sacked during the Fourth Crusade. Venetians and Franks looted the churches of the imperial city, and subsequently the Latin West overflowed with Byzantine relics. From this point onwards, Justinian's measure cross disappears as a physical object. However, it lives on as a textual one all over Europe, also in the North, as the manuscript under discussion here exemplifies. Another Icelandic manuscript, dating two generations after, lists the gilded silver cross "as long as Christ's body" (*iafnlàngr lìkama Cristsz*) along with other relics in the treasury of Ægisif – the Norse name for Hagia Sophia.[19] Although long lost, the Constantinople cross continued

18 Antonius Novgorodiensis, *Liber qui dicitur Peregrinus*, 220; see also Severinsen, "Frelserens højde," 4; Bacci, "Vera croce," 236; Lugli, *The Making of Measure*, 48, 147.
19 AM 194 8vo, dated 1387. The text is transcribed in *Ai* I, 25.

to be mediated as a metric standard for devotional ends well into the sixteenth and even seventeenth century.[20] The devotion to the length of Christ emerging from Constantinople seems to have lasted for more than a millennium.

However, the materiality of medieval measures in general and the *mensura Christi* in particular, implied a certain disparity across media, times, and places. Hence, the measure in the Icelandic manuscript does not correspond precisely to other *mensurae Christi* preserved from medieval Europe, which also differ among themselves: according to our understanding of measure, they are not the same – so how can they all claim to be true?

Michele Bacci has compared the devotion to the *measurae Christi* and their truth claims with the devotion to icons as truthful images of Christ and the saints in the Greek tradition.[21] The icons are not identical, but still the same, regarded veracious and manifesting presence. Moreover, the great variety the measures of Christ come with is hardly surprising is in a culture without universal standards, as we moderns are used to. Although not exactly the same, medieval measures still *promise sameness*, as Emmanuele Lugli convincingly has demonstrated in his recent, groundbreaking study of medieval measuring and its cultural implications.[22] Medieval measures are in fact not standards, as we think of the term. Rather than a precise standard, a medieval metric unit may be conceived of as a *range*, a canonical measure existing across different objects.[23] In medieval culture, the purpose of all kinds of measuring is qualitative rather than quantitative: to improve the life of communities and individuals along the winding road to ultimate salvation.[24] This purpose is especially evident regarding the distribution and reproduction of the measure of Christ the Saviour. In our bilingual fourteenth-century Icelandic manuscript, instructions on how to use this special measure are specified in the marginal rubrics. The Latin rubric states that "every day you discern this sign you will not die a sudden death, and you will be saved."[25] This is expanded on in Old Norse:

20 A common form of mediating Christ's length was ribbons to wear and rolled-up paper strips inscribed with prayers, see Hoffmann- Krayer and Bächthold-Stäubli, *Handwörterbuch,* vol. 5, 900; Horsch, "The new relics," 452.

21 Bacci, "Vera croce," 236.

22 Lugli, *The Making of Measure*.

23 Lugli, *The Making of Measure*, 22–24.

24 Crosby, *The Measure of Reality*, 77.

25 "In quocumque die hoc signum cernis non subitanea morte peribis et salvus eris," AM 732b 4to, fol. 7r; *Ai* I, 25.

> Every day you have this before your eyes, you will not experience sudden death, and you will not be bewitched or catch any disease, and you will not be wrongly sentenced by your chieftain or superior. And likewise, if you have this line before your eyes in the time of your death, you shall have eternal help and mercy for the sake of the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ and before his own merciful judgment.[26]

As we see, the reader is advised to have the measure of Christ before his or her eyes during all their days, and especially in the hour of death. In both languages, the wording – Latin *cerno* and the Old Norse *hafa fyrir augum* – indicate closer inspection than merely throwing a glance. The rubrics claim, then, that contemplation of this line gives protection and secures salvation.[27] The measure requires active and frequent engagement from its spectator and promises reward in return: it has *agency*. The accompanying text is, however, is not specific about what kind of action the measure prompted, other than watching it carefully, contemplatively, and daily. Considering other late medieval devotional practices venerating the body of Christ, like saying prayers for each body part or honoring his wounds by saying the Lord's prayer and Hail Mary for each of them,[28] it is not unlikely that the devout would do something similar in front of this measure of Christ. He or she could have repeated a set of prayers sixteen times and would thereby have cognitively "touched" the whole length of Christ's body.[29] Contemplating Christ's body implied to recognize that this mutilated human figure is the very means of salvation. Christ gave his body over to an evil death, and thereby both death and evil were defeated. For the medieval devout, the body of Christ thus was the one valuable guideline and pathfinder in life, mystically present in

26 "A hverium dege eða degri sem þu ser hana fyri augum þer þa muntu eigi braðdauðr ok egi munti verþa fyrigjorningum eða riðu sottum ok eigi muntu verÞa fyri rængum domum af hǫfðingjum eða fyri-maunnum. Ok sva ok ef þu hefir þessi lina fyri augum þer a dauða stundu þinne, þa muntu aðlaz eilifa hjialp ok miskun fyri hit haleita nafn drottins vars Iesu Christi ok fyri hans sialfs miskunar dom," AM 732b 4to, fol. 7r; *Ai* I, 25.

27 The prescription in AM 732b 4to is repeated almost verbatim in an Icelandic book of magical formulae ("Tryllebog") from the seventeenth century, cf. Severinsen, "Frelserens højde," 47, 5, note 1. Similar devotional measures with prescriptions are found in several manuscripts and amulets from late medieval Europe. In these instances, the length of Christ is represented graphically as a line or bar, just as in the Icelandic manuscript, and here too, the true length of Christ, mentally accessible if multiplied by a given number, would bring healing or serve as an apotropaic shield; see Skemer, *Binding Words*, 142–143; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 245 and 274–275.

28 See for instance the Danish abbess Anna Brade's prayerbook (1497), transcribed and published in *Middelalderens danske bønnebøger*, vol. 2, 133–139. For a discussion of late medieval devotional practices, see Skinnebach, "Haptic prayer."

29 For the haptic dimension of devotional measuring, see Lugli, *The Making of Measure*, 153–158.

the sacrament, of course, but also, like here, as a *vademecum* to be consulted all days.[30]

The agency of the *mensura Christi* in AM 732b 4to is perhaps best understood in light of its immediate environment on the manuscript page. It conspicuously appears next to a circular figure, inscribed with the label *vòlunðarhús*, house of Vǫlundr (Figure 7). This is the Old Norse equivalent of the classical and medieval term *domus Daedali*, house of Daedalus, which refers to the paradigmatic master builder's labyrinth at Crete, but also to mazes and labyrinths in general.[31] In ancient and medieval culture, the labyrinth is a figure with several and seemingly contradictory interpretations. The marvel and ingenuity of the Cretan prototype makes the labyrinth an exemplary artifact, a symbol of complex and intricate artistry. Furthermore, the maze-walker's experience of disorientation and the ever-present possibility of getting lost, and the hope for liberation and transcendence of labyrinthine confusion makes it a suitable metaphor for the dangers and hardships of human life, or for the hazardous road to the Jerusalem, earthly and heavenly.[32] And finally, the labyrinth's capacity to hide its content – be it the frightening monster Minotaur or a desired treasure – makes it a *topos* of impenetrability.[33] In medieval monasticism these three strands of metaphorical meaning – artistry, the hazardous road to salvation, impenetrability – converge in the paradoxical figure of Christ: God and man, maze-maker and maze-walker. Christ/Daedalos is the wise master-builder; Christ/Theseus defeats the monster inside.[34]

The diagrammatic labyrinth next to the *mensura Christi* is designed on a scheme often seen in manuscripts as well as on church floors from the thirteenth century onwards: It is unicursal and consists of a series of concentric circles bisected at the cardinal points, so that the labyrinth's general design makes up a cross inscribed by a circle. This is of course a form ripe with cosmological meaning: the circle is the perfect shape of the world, stamped with cross, sign of Christ salvific passion.[35] The long and winding road of the labyrinth is contained in the circular, ordered perfection of the circle. Hence the figure eloquently expresses the most fundamental characteristic of the labyrinth: its paradoxical tension be-

30 Cf. Gullbekk, Walsh and Moen's chapter in this volume for Christ's sacramental presence.

31 For the correspondence between Vǫlundr and Daedalus, see Simek, *Altnordische Kosmographie*, 53; see also Simek, "Völunderhús – Domus Daedali," 323–368.

32 Conolly, "At the Center of the World."

33 For a taxonomy of the metaphors connected to the labyrinth in ancient and early medieval culture, see Reed Dodd, *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, 64–91.

34 These interpretations are elaborated on in various versions of the medieval *Ovide moralisé* and their literary derivatives, see Reed Dodd, *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, 145–191.

35 The city-plan of Jerusalem one leaf away in the same manuscript is also designed on the symbolic circle/cross-template, cf. Aavitsland, "Civitas Hierusalem," 425–435.

tween chaos and order, both equally authentic: it is chaotic from the perspective of the maze-walker (man), ordered and perfect from the perspective of the maze-maker (God). This makes the diagrammatic labyrinth extremely apt for monastic contemplation. In our monastic manuscript, the labyrinth is the roadmap offering the full overview of a landscape that from the reader's point of view may be experienced as confusing. The measure of Christ next to it is the compass to guide the way: "The maze is a prison unless guidance is offered," Penelope Reed Dodd explains in her discussion of diagrammatic labyrinths in devotional settings.[36]

To the devout and according to the teachings of the Church, the man Jesus Christ, by through his life, death, and resurrection, restored the perfection with which humankind originally was created, and thus and reconciled humanity and divinity. Hence, he was of course the paragon of every human and the moral standard anyone should live up to. On this page of the Icelandic manuscript, the measure of Christ is presented as a visualization of this standard. As bodily comparison and mirror, it calls to conversion by inviting its beholder to measure oneself against the standard of Christ.

Measuring St Olaf: Authority of Devotional Measures

Saints are individuals acknowledged to have been especially successful in living up to the standard of Christ – their Christlikeness is indeed what constitutes their sanctity. Not surprisingly, the practice of distributing and honoring the measure of Christ in various media also influenced devotion to saints. In some sources the term *mensura* refers to a "life-sized effigy" of the Virgin or other saints.[37] Measures of saints' bodies or body-parts were objects of devotional practices also when mediated in aniconic ways.[38] This seems to have been the case with one of the most venerated saints in the medieval North, St Olaf, King of Norway, who died as a martyr in 1030. His cult was firmly established and widely spread soon after his death. Until the Lutheran reformation in 1537, his shrine, placed in an

36 Reed Dodd, *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, 73.

37 E.g. "picturam mensura beate Marie," DMLBS.

38 Several examples of saints' measures are mentioned in Hoffmann-Krayer and Bächthold-Stäubli, *Handwörterbuch*, vol. 2, 63. A noticeable example of measuring practices continued up to the eighteenth century is the measuring of St Rose of Viterbo, whose body was taken regularly out of its coffin to be measured, Lugli, *The Making of Measure*, 154. For measuring of saints' bodies and body parts, see also Bynum, *Dissimilar Similitudes*, 235–238.

octagonal martyrion recalling the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, was a major destination of pilgrimage in Northern Europe. It was the pride of the Christchurch at Nidaros (modern Trondheim), the metropolitan cathedral at the center of the northernmost and geographically largest archbishopric in Christendom. According to local tradition, St Olaf's measure is said to have been honored in form of a stone whose length reflected his stature, inserted on the northern exterior wall of the cathedral housing his shrine. As is often the case when studying medieval Scandinavia, sources are very scarce and rather late, in this event even postmedieval, so the following argument is put forward with due caution. The case serves, nevertheless, to highlight ways in which measures were imbued with authority in medieval culture.

In his thorough description of the cathedral at Trondheim, published in 1762, the topographer and antiquarian Gerhard Schøning describes "a white marble slab, which is inserted in the wall by the old church's northern portal, and according to common hearsay be the length of St Olaf's height."[39] It is impossible to verify whether Schøning's information reflects a tradition dating back to medieval times or refers to postmedieval folklore.[40] However, given St Olaf's extraordinary status in the devotional practices of medieval Norway and the documented post-reformation longevity of lore connected to his person, it is not unthinkable that Schøning describes a belief with medieval origins.[41] This assumption is strengthened by the fact that the two possible candidates for Schøning's white marble slab belong to the thirteenth-century structure of the cathedral.

Schøning may have referred to a rectangular white marble slab, 230 cm long and 24 cm high, inserted horizontally in the exterior nave wall of the third bay, at the east side of the northern portal (Figure 9). The slab is set just below the bay's window, c. 3 m above the ground. The construction of the cathedral's Gothic nave was initiated in the second half of the thirteenth century, and since the quality of the masonry joints of this wall is clearly medieval, the inserted marble slab seems to be an original feature.[42] The slab is only visible from the exterior, where it stands conspicuously out from its greyish soapstone surroundings. Another, per-

39 ". . . den hvide Marmor-Steen, som er indlagt i muren hos den gamle Kirkes nordre Dør, og skal efter almindeligt Sagn, være saa lang, som St: Oluf var høie," Schøning, *Beskrivelse*, 340. Translation by the authors.

40 Schøning, *Beskrivelse*, 340. About Schøning's method and attitude to common knowledge and popular beliefs, see Eriksen, *Topografenes verden*, 78–80.

41 For the rich post-reformation St Olaf folklore, see Bø, "Heilag-Olav."

42 Schøning suggests that the stone was inserted into the wall in 1611, because an account from that year, listing expenses related to construction work in the church, mentions a "stone of St Olaf:" "for St: Olufs Steen at lade indlegge," Schøning, Beskrivelse, 340. Building archaeologist Øystein Ekroll rejects this assumption on archaeological grounds in a recent article, assuming

Figure 9: Nidaros Cathedral, the northern nave portal with the white marble slab to the left, possibly measuring the length of St Olaf. Photo: Øystein Ekroll, Nidaros Cathedral Restoration Workshop.

haps more plausible possibility is that Schøning referred to an even narrower marble slab west of the portal, three bays away at the northern wall of the western tower, of which only a fragment is preserved today. On this wall, a narrow groove or slot, 215 cm long and 2 cm deep, runs horizontally, ca 150 cm above the

that the "stone of St Olaf" mentioned in 1611 refers to another stone which traditionally also has been regarded worthy of devotion, cf. Ekroll, "Olavsrelikviar," 290–300.

Figure 10: Nidaros Cathedral, the northern nave wall from the portal to the northern tower. The slot with a marble fragment is incised in the wall to the far right. Photo: Ingvild Cecilia Aavitsland.

ground. To the far left a lump of marble is still visible. Purportedly, the white stone once filled the whole length of the slot as an unbroken band (Figure 10).[43]

Surrounding the slot with the allegedly now-lost marble ribbon is a cluster of graffiti, which strengthens its hypothetic identification with the measure of St Olaf. Around, and especially above the slot, crosses and other marks, as well as runic and Latin inscriptions are incised (Figure 11). This graffiti has been only partially researched, so until a full survey of these inscriptions is available, no definite conclusions can be drawn about its content. However, the conspicuous quantity of graffiti and crosses indicates that the spot had some devotional significance. We have several Scandinavian examples of graffiti in connection to objects believed to be particularly powerful. One instance is from the wooden church of

43 The considerable length of both stones (230 cm and 215 cm respectively) may perhaps reflect a value-perspective similar to that which applied to visualizations of Christ (cf. above): like Christ, St Olaf may have been imagined as larger-than-life. To an an even larger degree than usual for eleventh-century martyrs, liturgy, iconography, and devotional literature through the medieval centuries construed the royal saint very explicitly as an *imago Christi*, cf. Ekroll, "St Olav, Nidaros, and Jerusalem," 281. In the later Middle Ages, St Olaf's Christo-mimetic character was made so explicit that his martyrdom in the battle at Stiklestad sometimes was represented as a crucifixion, cf. Folgerø, "Alterskapet fra Andenes."

Figure 11: Nidaros Cathedral, the wall of the northern tower, slot with a marble fragment surrounded by graffiti. Photo: Ingvild Cecilia Aavitsland.

Røldal in Norway, where a famous wonderworking crucifix hung on the wall inside the chancel, inaccessible for the laity for the entire liturgical year, except for Midsummer's eve, the feast of St John. On the ambulatory wall surrounding the chancel, a multitude of crosses, house marks, and other forms of graffiti is carved into the wood.[44] The cluster of graffiti surrounding the now lost marble inlay on the Trondheim cathedral evidently indicates some form of similar devotional activity. Carving one's name, mark or a symbol onto a sacred spot is a way of participating in the cult performed at the place: "By setting his knife into to stone to carve, [the carver] uses the inscription as a way to communicate with God or the saints," Karen Langholt Holmqvist states in her study of the runic inscriptions in Trondheim Cathedral.[45]

44 Hagen, *Miraculous Crosses and Crucifixes in Late Medieval and Early Modern Norway*, ch. 10; Zachrisson, "Mellan fromhet och vidskepelse," 117–118.

45 Holmqvist, "Names and prayers," 219.

Figure 12: The relation between city and cathedral: Detail of map of Trondheim (former Nidaros) from 1658, showing much of the medieval city plan. *Frederik den femtes Atlas*, vol. 4, 27, Nidaros Cathedral Restoration Workshop.

More research is needed to support our hypothesis that either the slab to the left side of the Northern portal or the now-lost marble ribbon to the right side indicated the measure of St Olaf. However, the fact that both are placed on the northern façade seems significant, as we will explain in the following.

The northern façade with it possible white measuring stones is facing the city, so the alleged measure of St Olaf was obliviously meant to be seen when proceeding towards the cathedral (Figures 12 and 13). As will become evident in the third case study, the division between relics and objects reflecting divine measures were often blurred. In Nidaros, citizens as well as visiting pilgrims approached the cathedral, the marble slab(s) offered not only an image but also a presence by proxy of the patron saint of Norway.

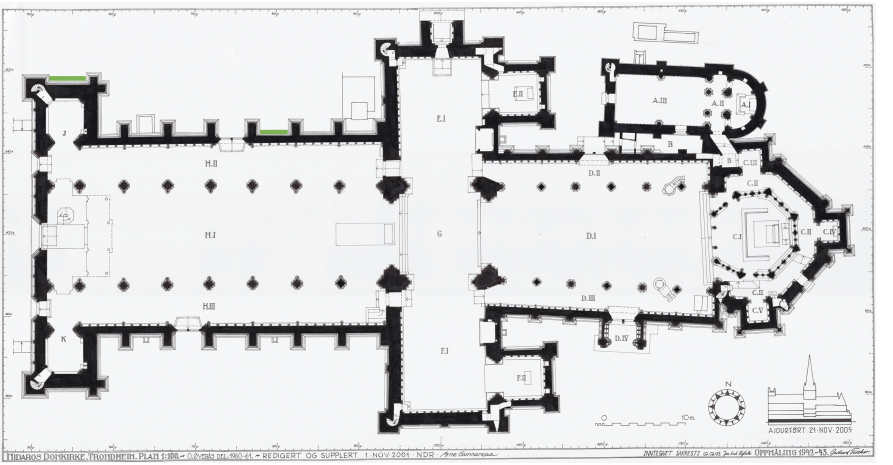

Figure 13: Plan of Nidaros Cathedral with the positions of the possible placements of St Olaf's stone marked out in green. Photo: Arne Gunnarsjaa, Nidaros Cathedral Restoration Workshop, modified by Kaja M. Hagen.

Sources to the pontifical liturgy and processional routes at Nidaros are incomplete, so knowledge about use of the northern portal is scarce and unprecise.[46] However, in the one context we know of a specific use of this portal, devotion to the measure of St Olaf seems fitting. The *Nidaros Ordinal* (c. 1200) states that for the Ash Wednesday ritual for public penance, the penitents are to wait for the bishop and the clergy "outside of the church door, in the west or the north", *ad ostium ecclesie occidentale vel septentrionale*.[47] The bishop then lets the penitent men and women into the church, one by one, where they prostrate in front of the choir screen.[48] If the northern portal, facing the city, was indeed used for the ceremonial entry for penitents at the beginning of Lent, it is possible to imagine that the measure of St Olaf, patron of the archdiocese and image of Christ, accommodated a penitential mirror for the men and women gathered outside and waiting for the bishop to let them in. As St Olaf's violated body was sanctified by his surrender to Christ, contemplation of his bodily measure provides a yardstick for conversion that is indeed appropriate for penitents preparing to imitate the suf-

46 On ecclesiastical processions in Nidaros and the Nidaros province, see Andås, "Prosesjoner."
47 ON, 199–200; Andås, "Art and Ritual," 68.
48 The indoor prostration prescribed in the ON deviates from other European ordinals, commending that the penitents prostrate outside the church, which is theologically and liturgically more logical. The ON prescription is probably an adaption of the ritual to Nordic climate. For a thorough description and discussion of the ritual of public penance in the ON, see Andås, "Art and Ritual," 68–72.

fering of Christ, literally standing at the threshold of Lent. From the thirteenth century on, lay penitence seems to reflect the long-standing monastic tradition of *measuring as penance*, documented at least from the ninth century in authors like Hrabanus Maurus.[49]

St Olaf's alleged measure inserted into the wall of the metropolitan cathedral at Nidaros can also be seen in the context of the Church's role as sanctioning body of standards – moral as well as metric. Episcopal authority was an obvious guarantor for metric standards, devotional and secular alike. As we stated in the introduction to this chapter, the Church also validated measures for legal, mercantile, and technological activities.[50] One example of the latter is Bishop Pál Jónsson of Skálholt, who sometime between 1195 and 1211 introduced a common yardstick in his Icelandic diocese to avoid unjust practices.[51] Across the Nordic church provinces iron measures and stone weights are preserved at the entrance to churches of a certain prominence, especially from the thirteenth century onwards.[52] One well-preserved example is the iron rod authorizing the length of an ell (*ǫln*) attached to the entrance of Ringsaker Church in Eastern Norway (Figure 14). Such yardsticks testify to the connection between authorized standards and the authority of the church. Similar arrangements are generally seen all over Europe at the same time: from rural Iceland to the urban communities of Italian city states, commonly agreed measures were on display in the public space of the church, and the range of their validity corresponded to the jurisdiction of the diocese in which they were found. Although no secular metric standards are preserved from Nidaros

49 Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 231–234. For the "secularization" of monastic penitential practices in the wake of the Gregorian reforms and the rise of the Mendicant orders, see Swanson, *Religion and Denvotion*, 51–66.

50 Emanuele Lugli, *The Making of Measure*, has shown how metric standards and acts of measuring were constitutive for the emergence of urban culture in medieval Italy; in the fields of economy and commerce, building and city-planning. Moreover, he demonstrates that the idea of standardization and the practice of measurements were also fundamental for societal institutions, common ethical principles, and, indeed, for religious contemplation. Lugli's argument is closely connected to the medieval Italian *communes*, whereas the political and societal context of late medieval Scandinavia is a rather different one. Yet, several of his observations seems to be valid also for the Nordic material, not least because the media of common metric standards are similar if not identical in the north as in the south, and because the institution sanctioning metric standards was the same: the Roman church's distributed authority, embodied by the bishops.

51 «Á dögum Páls biskups, þá er Gizurr Hallsson hafði lögsögu, þá gekk mest af sèr ránglæti manna um álnir, bæði útlnezkra ok islenzkra manna, at eigi þótti svá lengr vera mega; gaf [þá] þat ráð til Páll biskup, at menn skyldi hafa stikur, þær er væri tveggja álna at lengd. [. . .] ok voru þá lög á lögð, eptir því sem ávallt hefir haldizt síðan;» Páls saga biskups, kap X, *Biskupa sögur*, 312.

52 Iversen and Brendalsmo, "Den tidlige kirkeorganisasjonen," 127; "Þingvellir", KLNM VIII, 46.

Figure 14: Mensural iron rod at the left side of portal to Ringsaker Church, Eastern Norway. Photo: Lars Erik Hald Haugen.

Cathedral, the arch see would supposedly have a particular authority in sanctioning such measures.

The role of the Church as a guarantor of standards was, however, more fundamental than simply providing a public space or common ground to accommodate useful tools for standardization in trade, crafts, and judicial affairs. The Church – and the Christian faith – contributed immensely to "the idea that measurements ought to be trusted," as Emanuele Lugli points out.[53] For this purpose, it had Scripture at its disposal: Biblical texts, and the exegetical tradition emerging from the study of them, are strikingly preoccupied with measures, calculations, and metric standards: God provides the children of Israel with exact measures for their campsite as well as for his own dwelling among them, be it the tent of the tabernacle (Exod. 26–27) or the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6). Prophets and visionaries in both Old and New Testaments are having heavenly structures measured out for them (Ezek. 40–48; Apoc. 21). Human and angelic metric standards are referred to and compared (Apoc. 21:17). Indeed, measurement is the means by which God has created his well-ordered universe, the much-quoted author of the Book of Wisdom states: "thou hast ordered all things in measure, number, and weight" (*omnia mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti*, Sap.11:21). God himself speaks to Job out of a whirlwind, rhetorically asking him who laid out the measures of the world and "stretched the line upon it" (*quis tetendit super eam lineam*, Job 38:5). The Christian God emerges as an architect who designs the world by measuring it: rather than a bare recording of a given object's length, height, or weight, the taking of measures is understood as a creative process with the capacity of transforming and sanctifying what is measured. In the exegetical tradition, prominent commentators from St Augustine in the fourth century to St Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth contribute to and thoroughly elaborate this idea. Human measuring, then, is a way of reflecting God's work, a means to imitate God.

Ultimately, secular measures shared the same source of authority as devotional measures: the divine order of Creation. We suggest, then, that difference between medieval devotional and secular measures is one of degree, not of substance.[54] The ecclesiastically sanctioned, authoritative standards on public display across the archdiocese of Nidaros could perhaps be seen from the same perspective: both the marble slab(s) possibly reflecting St Olaf's measure (Figures 9 and

53 Lugli, *The Making of Measure*, 111.

54 Michele Bacci even suggests a possible bridge between devotional and secular measures, reminding about a hypothesis put forward by G. Uzielli in 1889, that the *braccia* introduced as authorized measure unit in the late medieval communes of Central Italy was calculated to be a third of the *mensura Christi*, Bacci, "Vera croce," 236.

11) and the iron rod representing the authoritative ell in Ringsaker (Figure 14) invite engagement in transformative processes. Be it measures taken for crafting of materials, for exchange of goods, for conversion of souls – the Church's standards, secular and devotional alike, facilitated occasions for human beings, God's fallen creatures, to re-present and re-create the godlike perfection they had lost.

Measuring Oneself: Representation of Devotional Measures

The two foregoing examples show that the origin of medieval measuring as well as its ultimate aim was divine perfection, and that (penitential) engagement with devotional measures accommodated for moral transformation in the devout. However, devotional measures did not always reproduce the bodily length of the persons who were objects of devotion, like Christ or St Olaf; the length of the devout individual's body was also sometime involved in devotional practices. This is reflected in certain usages of the medieval lexicon regarding measurements. One of several meanings of the term *mensura* and its related verb *mensurare* connects to the specific practice of offering candles or wax tapers to altars and tombs of saints. Such candles and tapers, often given *ex voto*, were simply called *mensurae* if their wicks reproduced the measure of the donator, and accordingly, *mensurare* could signify to measure oneself in order to prepare a wax taper of this kind.[55] The gift, then, represented the giver in the most tangible way: the length of the wick stood in for the donator, indicating that the donator was giving herself.

Apparently, the taking of measures was of vital importance for donation of ex-votos as well as for a plethora of devotional healing practices at least from the thirteenth century onwards, and possibly also earlier. This phenomenon has just recently gotten systematic scholarly attention, thanks to the work of researchers like Caroline Walker Bynum, Anna Boroffka, and Emanuele Lugli.[56] Becoming aware of the significance of measures and sizes in devotional settings allows for a fresh look at sources that are well known to the study of the medieval arch diocese at Nidaros, and to pay attention to details that often have gone unnoticed. In our last example we aim to do exactly this, turning to a particularly costly gift reported to have been given as an *ex-voto* to the cathedral and its patron St Olaf.

55 DMLBS.

56 Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 98ff; Bynum, *Dissimilar Similitudes*, 240; Boroffka, *Die Länge Christi*; Lugli, *The Making of Measure*, 109–158.

The object itself, a huge silver crucifix, is now lost, but it is mentioned in several written sources from the twelfth to the sixteenth century. When exploring this object from the point of view of devotional measuring, a complex rhetorical situation emerges in which the representational capacities of measures come into play. However, the scant information we have on this object does not permit any definite conclusions, so what follows should rather be regarded as a hypothetical devotional framework for an object which remained one of the greatest gems of the metropolitan cathedral of Nidaros, until it was confiscated by the Danish king along with other treasures from Nidaros in wake of the Lutheran Evangelical reformation.[57]

This large silver crucifix is first mentioned in *Geisli* ("Sunbeam"), the 71-stanza long poem or *drápa*, written to the honor of St Olaf by the twelfth-century Icelandic priest and skaldic poet Einarr Skúlason.[58] This carefully composed laudatory poem was probably first performed in face of the crucifix itself, during the solemn celebration of the foundation of Nidaros archdiocese in 1153.[59] Like the other liturgical and narrative sources from the twelfth- and thirteenth century, *Geisli* connects the crucifix to one of the first miracles reported to have happened on St Olaf's intercession.[60] The story behind the donation of the crucifix goes like this: Around one generation after St Olaf's death, his nephew Guttorm Ketillson, who also was friend and advisor to king Harald Sigurdsson of Norway (r. 1045–1066), invoked "God and his kinsman the blessed King Olaf" before a battle in Ireland, in which his own forces were outnumbered.[61] Guttorm vowed to donate a tenth of the booty to the cathedral and his uncle's shrine at Nidaros if he was granted victory. He went into battle with his tiny army at the feast day of St Olaf, and miraculously he defeated the superior force. Guttorm then fulfilled his promise by having a rood made, covered with silver and gold from the enormous booty gained, and he donated this precious object to "the house of the holy martyr" as an act of penance for his soul.[62] "It has stayed there since, as a memorial of Guthormr's victory and the miracle performed by the blessed King Òlàfr," Snorri Sturluson states by the middle of

57 Metal objects from Nidaros Cathedral were shipped to Copenhagen in 1540. The most valuable object in the shipload were the shrine of St Olaf and the large silver crucifix, cf. Friis, *Norriges Beschriufelse*, edition 1881: 35; Dybdahl, *Nidaros kostbarheter*, 52.

58 For *Geisli*, see Jon Gunnar Jørgensen's chapter in this volume, 229–249.

59 Ekroll, "St Olav, Nidaros, and Jerusalem," 281.

60 On the sources relating the story of this miracle and the mutual connection between them, see Jørgensen, "Passio Olavi og Snorre," 161 (table 1).

61 *Haralds saga Sigurþarsonar*, Chapter 55, Hkr, 480–481. The English translation is by Finlay and Faulkes, cf. Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, 82.

62 "þergar þes hælga manz hús [. . .] sér til salo-bota," *Gamalnorsk homiliebok*, 113.

the thirteenth century, almost two centuries after the donation allegedly took place, obviously referring to it as present in the cathedral in his own days.[63]

As we see, the twelfth- and thirteenth-century sources provide the silver rood with a provenience going back to the royal saint and his kin. The crucifix itself must have been truly spectacular. Not only was it shining with luminous metals; it was also of a considerable size. Several sources comment on its huge dimensions. A Norse sermon from the beginning of the thirteenth century refers to Guttorm's cross as "in all ways larger and taller than the height of a man."[64] Snorri Sturluson even gives precise information about its measures, although his record remains somewhat enigmatic. He reports that Guttorm's rood was made "of the same height as himself or his forecastle man, and that image is seven ells high."[65] It is not clear what exactly is meant here, but a possible interpretation would be that Snorri gives two different sizes for the rood: one for the Christ figure – which was "of the same height as himself or his forecastle man," and another for cross to which it was attached – which was "seven ells high" (above three meter).[66] This interpretation is justified, we claim, by several extant crucifixes from medieval Norway that has life-size Christ figures and crosses withing the range of the measure Snorri reports, as we shall see below. Most significant in this context is Snorri's claim that a measure was taken of the donator for the crafting of the rood. In a manner comparable to donating candles whose wick matches the height of the donator, Guttorm seems to have had an image of Christ mirroring his own height – or that of his forecastle man (his next-in-command). In either case, the measure establishes a tangible and representational link between the thanksgiver and Christ, to whom all thanksgiving is due: the measure represents the donator, and the rood represents Christ.[67] The union of the two may be interpreted as an articulation of the donator's commitment to Christ.

Guttorm Ketillson belonged to the Scandinavian political elite in the eleventh century, the time when Christianity gradually gained foothold in this part of the world. To the later Scandinavian chroniclers, this era of conversion and its political leaders were of paramount importance for legitimation of religious and politi-

63 Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, 82.

64 "allz costar er hon lengri ok mæiri en manzvaxtar," *Gamalnorsk homiliebok*, 113.

65 "roðu eptir vexti sínum eða stafnbùa síns, ok er þat líkneski vii alna hátt", Hkr, 481.

66 Depending on whether the ell or *alen* refers to *alen-stikke* (47.4 cm) or *tommelalen* (55.3 cm), both commonly used measures in medieval Norway, the rood measured between 331.8 cm and 373.1 cm, cf. Hagen, *Miraculous Crosses and Crucifixes in Late Medieval and Early Modern Norway*, ch. 4.

67 The Christ figure as well as the cross itself was considered a valid representation of Christ, see below.

cal authority. In narrative from about 1300 describing the Christianization of Iceland, a practice with similarities to Guttorm's donation of a rood made-to-measure is described with a clear legitimizing function. This narrative, included in the compilation called The Greatest Saga of Olaf Tryggvason (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*) reports that when the national assembly of Iceland (*Alþingi*) passed the introduction of Christianity in the year 1000, a group of vested clergy carried two crosses in procession. One of the crosses was made to measure the height of the local Christian leader, chieftain Hjalti Skeggjason, who was present at the *Alþingi* himself. The other cross measured the height of the absent missionary king of Norway, Olaf Tryggvason (r. 995–999).[68] These crosses, made to match the measures of the two political leaders and missionary pioneers, clearly manifested their commitment to and identification with Christ.[69] Carried in procession at this decisive event, the crosses worked as tangible tokens authorizing the new faith and its political legitimacy. According to the fourteenth-century chronicle, the two crosses were still present in Iceland three centuries after the alleged event. Although neither Hjalti nor Olaf Tryggvason were ever acknowledged to be saints, we must assume the crosses purportedly made after their measures were imbued with an aura of authority comparable to that of relics. Represented by their measures molded into the form of the cross, Hjalti Skaggjason and Olaf Tryggvason were commemorated as offering themselves to Christ, aiming to become Christ-like. Guttorm's *ex-voto* rood, whose Christ-figure supposedly matched the height of its donator, must have worked rhetorically in a similar way.

The rhetorical potential of Guttorm's rood in Nidaros Cathedral probably included yet another aspect, provided by the other measure Snorri mentions, namely that of the cross itself. It was remarkably large: as already mentioned, Snorri claimed it to measure seven ells – above three meters. Covering a cross of this size with precious metal foils is of course so lavish that it verges on the extravagant. But as we saw above, *painted* roods of similar sizes were not unheard of in medieval Norway. In fact, the reported size of the Guttorm's votive crucifix corresponds with the range of the largest wooden crucifixes preserved from thirteenth and

68 "Eptir messuna gengu þeir til lògbergs skryddir .vij. lærdir menn ok baru fyrir ser tuá krossa mikla. Þa hína sómu sem nu ero i Skarði env ytra. Merkir anarr hæð Olafs konungs T(rygva)s (sonar). en anar hæð Hialta Skeggia s(onar)." *Óláfs Saga Tryggvasonar en mesta,* vol. 2, 189–190 (Ch. 228).

69 Whether these crosses were crucifixes or plain crosses lacking Christ's image is not said. In written sources from medieval Norway, different forms of the word *rood* (*roð* or *roðan helga*) as well as *cross (kross*, *crux*, *helligkoersz*, etc.) were used for denoting both cross and crucifix. The *crucifix* seems not to have belonged to the Old Norse lexicon.

fourteenth centuries.[70] Could it be that the silver cross at Nidaros, given its prominent connection to St. Olaf and the authority of the arch diocese, was construed as model – a measure – for large crucifixes elsewhere in the church province? As we saw above, the size was an important feature of Guttorm's votive cross, communicated to the medieval worshippers, not only in the sagas, but also in sermons. Did Guttorm's prestigious rood function as a regional *crux mensuralis* in a way comparable to that of the the silver cross in Constantinople?

If we accept this possibility, another question arises. Of the group of preserved large roods in Norway, many have life-size images of Christ. The sheer scale of these figures strongly suggests a very tangible reenactment of the Golgotha-event. Accordingly, the crosses to which they are attached, (originally) measuring three meters and more, would probably be considered reflecting the size of the True Cross that once stood on Golgotha. The question is whether Guttorm's large and precious rood also was conceived of as a devotional measure in this respect, mirroring the True Cross by its dimensions.[71]

A last point should be made about the rhetorical situation Guttorm's crucifix created in the cathedral. Einarr Skuláson states in *Geisli* that it was placed in "Krists í kirkju [. . .] miðri," that is in the middle of Christchurch (Nidaros Cathedral), probably by the entrance of the chancel.[72] The crucifix, itself a stand-in for Christ, was, literally speaking, central to the liturgy. It played a decisive role in several rituals throughout the liturgical year, and according to the *Nidaros Ordinal* (c. 1200), processions were to end either in front of or to the left of the cross.[73] Its position *in medio ecclesia* associates to yet another widespread devotional practice in the late Middle Ages, quoting Luke 4:30, where Christ avoided his enemies and was able to walk unharmed through the midst of them ("transiens per medium illorum ibat"). This specific Gospel quotation was considered a particu-

70 The largest of the monumental crosses and crucifixes preserved all measure close to or above three meters: Borre (1240–1255) has 301cm, Våler (1250–1270) measures 273 cm, Hof in Vestfold has 300 cm, Rødven (1250–1275) has 290 cm. Some preserved crosses have been dramatically reduced as the arms have been sawn off, such as the crucifix from Norderhov with its current height at 255 cm, its original size must have been well beyond three meters, and Fåberg, which currently measures only 159, whereas its life-size Christ figure is 182, cf. Hagen, *Miraculous Crosses and Crucifixes in Late Medieval and Early Modern Norway*, ch. 4.

71 Hagen, *Miraculous Crosses and Crucifixes in Late Medieval and Early Modern Norway*, ch. 4.

72 "Satts, at silfri skreytta/ seggjum hollr ok golli/ hér lét Gutthormr gerva/ — grams hróðr vas þat — róðu/ Þat hafa menn at minnum/ meir; jartegna þeira/ mark stendr Krists í kirkju/ — konungs niðr gaf þat — miðri," Einarr Skúlason, *Geisli*, stanza 34.

73 *ante crucem*, see ON 243: 4–9; 264: 33–265: 2; 280: 14–18; 336: 5–10; 355: 26–31; *in sinistra parte crucis, see* ON 220: 3–14.

larly effective means to avoiding the snares of the devil in everyday life.[74] The large Nidaros rood, evoking Christ's presence in the middle of the church, was not only included in the liturgical life of the cathedral trough processions and rituals; it was also a visualization of the protective and salvific powers of the cross – and of Christ himself.

Taken together, the written sources documenting Guttorm's rood in the middle of Nidaros Cathedral and close to St Olaf's shrine, seem to indicate a devotional setting in which sizes and measures are involved in a kind of mirror-play: Guttorm (or his forecastle man) is not only offering himself by the proxy of his measure; he also makes himself very explicitly into an *imago Christi* by letting the Christ figure assume his own length. By doing so, Guttorm also mirrors his kinsman, the royal martyr resting in his shrine adjacent to the rood, who was an acknowledged, miracle-working image of Christ. This rhetorical situation invited the devout approaching the rood *in medio ecclesiae* to measure themselves against this authoritative yardstick of self-offering. At certain moments during the liturgical year, the full representational potential of the rood was ritually activated, like when the antiphon for *laudes* in the office of St Olaf's feast day 29 July was sung, recalling Guttorm's miraculous victory and his donation to his kinsman's shrine, given as penance for his soul.[75]

This case brings forth the representational quality of devotional measures. Stating the measure of something or someone is an issue of exchange, of offering a proxy or stand-in for the prototype. In this sense, measuring fosters commutative thinking, and commutability is fundamental for devotional measures to work. In medieval devotional culture, "measuring was not only a contemplative device," Emmanuele Lugli points out, "[. . .] but an indexical process of translation that enabled a living body to enter in contact with a spiritually enhanced one."[76]

Standards, Measures, and Sanctity

Before concluding, we would like to underpin the foregoing argument by pointing out that the connection between devotional and secular measures, between standards and sanctity, is reflected in the medieval vocabulary of measurement. In biblical exegesis as well as in other kinds of scholarly texts, the terms applied for describing standards and measures form a cluster of interrelated concepts. Some of

74 Skemer, *Binding Words*, 90; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 286.
75 Iversen, "Transforming a Viking," 419; see also Ekrem, "*Passio Olavis* tilblivelse," 130.
76 Lugli, *The Making of Measure*, 154.

these terms center on control and governance, as *canon* and *regula*, which both denote yardstick, ruler, norm, model, rule, and law. Other terms in this cluster of measure-words favor the proportionate and moderate: *Mensurare*, *moderari*, and *regulare* are verbs that signify to measure, but also to restrain, show moderation and keep within certain limits. The corresponding nouns have multiple meanings and wide-ranging applications, but the dimension of proportionality is evident in most: *Mensura* denotes either an act of measuring, an instrument of measure, or an authoritative standard, but the word also signifies norm, boundary, and extent not to be exceeded. *Modus* means mode, means, or manner, but also proper measure and limit; *moderatio* is an act of regulating, but also moderation and restraint.[77] A similar cluster of medieval measure-words is found in vernacular texts from the countries in the North. Some of the terms are derived from their counterparts in the Latin cluster, like *máti*, which is an Old Norse derivative of *modus*: mode and manner, but even more measure, moderation, delimitation. Old Norse *mál* denotes measure or instrument of measure, but it also signifies limit and adequate amount. A verb related to measuring is *marka*, meaning to demarcate and mark out, related to the noun *merki*, meaning sign, indicator, limit.[78] These Old Norse words have a high number of derivates in modern Scandinavian languages.

Most of the terms in the measure-cluster have a clear normative dimension indicating that measures are not neutral or applied for purely descriptive ends. To measure and moderate is to avoid extremes, aim for the middle ground, mark out the adequate and proportionate. Thus, the vocabulary of measurement invites an understanding that the application of (divinely) authorized measures has a potential for improvement and transformation. In this context, St Augustine's definition of evil as something that lacks measure is especially striking. Drawing on the conviction formulated in the Book of Wisdom that all created things are ordered after a God-willed measure, St Augustine construes existence as good in itself, whereas evil is defined as non-existence and hence without measure and order.[79]

It is this normative aspect which makes medieval measures into (moral) standards. They are instruments of just governance, which secure the common good and help overcoming the human inclination to fraud and injustice – or, in short: sin. Thus, measures eventually contribute to the ultimate end of any human interaction, which is salvation. On the individual level, the close linguistic connection between just measure and moderation is significant: imposing self-control is a prerequisite for moral transformation (conversion), which ultimately

77 DMLBS; LLNMA.

78 "Merki" also signifies standard in the same meaning as medieval Latin standardus/um (vexillum).

79 Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII* (6 *De malo*), in PL 40:13.

is salvific: measures, also when materialized in stone or on parchment, work sanctification.

All the three cases of devotional measures discussed in this chapter are about specific length units inviting practices that aims at moral and existential transformation – or, in less general terms: that aims at virtuously living up to the divine standard of Christ. This is hard, but not impossible: Since medieval measuring does not offer exact metric units, as we moderns would expect, but rather a *promise of sameness* (cf. above), aiming for this highest possible standard is within reach.[80] What it requires, according to the millennium-old tradition of Christian virtue ethics, is self-discipline and – exactly: measure.

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Abbreviations

Ai I–III = *Alfræði islenzk: Islandsk encyklopædisk litteratur*. 3 vols. Edited by N. Beckman and Kristian Kålund. Copenhagen: S. L. Møllers Bogtrykkeri, 1908–1918.
Hkr = *Heimskringla: Noregs Konunga Sogur*. Edited by Finnur Jónsson. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1966 [Copenhagen: Gad, 1911].
LLNMA = *Lexicon Latinitatis Nederlandicae Medii Aevi*. Edited by J.W. Fuchs, Marijke Gumbert-Hepp, and Olga Weijers. Leiden: Brill, 1977.
ON = *Ordo Nidrosiensis Ecclesiae*. Edited by Lilli Gjerløw. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1968.
PL = Patrologia Latina. Edited by J-P Migne, 221 vols. Paris, 1841–1855.

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80 Lugli, *The Making of Measure*, 111.

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Line Cecilie Engh

8 The Soft Standards of Liturgical Sensescapes: Edifying Cistercians in the North

Abstract: The Cistercians were champions of standardization. Their emphasis on unity and uniformity permeated both the legislative and the physical-material aspects of the order, even as it spread across vast areas with very different social, economic, cultural, and linguistic contexts in the twelfth century. This chapter aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the Cistercian emphasis on common standards and conformity in the twelfth century, with specific focus on the two Norwegian houses Hovedøya (1147) and Lyse (1146), by discussing "hard" and "soft" standards in relation to the liturgy: on the one hand, centralized, top-down rules and legislation, and on the other hand, more flexible processes of learning, interpretation, and engagement with the built and natural environment. The main argument is that while Cistercians found themselves under many top-down constraints – and were held to their standards by their motherhouse and annual general chapters – they did display flexibility and horizontal learning as determined by their local situation and sensescape.

Keywords: Cistercian liturgy and architecture, sensescapes, soft / hard standards, horizontal learning, flexibility theory, Lyse, Hovedøya, material exegesis

Introduction

The starting point for this chapter is the general recognition that the liturgy and architecture of the Cistercians shared some common features.[1] Although scholars

1 In the past decades, scholarship has challenged the assumption that all Cistercian monasteries had to follow a standardized program, a "model plan" with strict rules about style. Instead, recent work highlights diversity: adaptions and modifications brought on by local conditions or evolving needs; see especially Coomans, "Architecture," 160–164, and Kinder, *Cistercian Europe*.

Note: My gratitude goes to my fellow standardizers (contributors to this volume) and to Lene Myrdal for valuable feedback and advice during the research and writing of this chapter. I also thank the two readers of an earlier version of this chapter; their comments have been invaluable to improving it.

Line Cecilie Engh, University of Oslo

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disagree, sometimes hotly, over the extent of uniformity throughout the Cistercian order and whether variance, especially from the thirteenth century onwards, constituted a decline, very few challenge the basic idea of a *forma ordinis* – a term used by the Cistercian General Chapter from around 1200 – that regulated the exterior forms of their practice.[2] The term *forma ordinis*, "the form of the order," did not only refer to buildings and monastic ground plans, but included behavior, clothing, and diet. It was a standard of sorts, one regarding a common spirit rather than a fixed style, that especially found expression in early Cistercian churches of the Clairvaux branch of the order. (Figure 15) Compared to twelfth-century Benedictine abbeys, Cistercian abbey churches were characterized by simplicity of design, structure, and decoration, and by geometric proportions, excellent acoustics, and lots of light.[3] This exterior simplicity framed an equally simplified liturgy, constituting a sensescape designed to avoid distractions and fix the community's attention on the contemplation of God.[4]

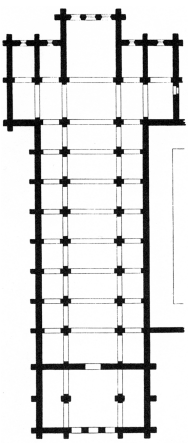

Figure 15: Plan of a Cistercian abbey church: Fontenay, a daughter house of Clairvaux. Illustration: Georg Dehio/Gustav von Bezold, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

In this chapter, I argue that the twelfth-century quest for religious unity and uniformity – epitomized by the Cistercians, but by no means unique to them – required

2 See esp. Untermann, *Forma Ordinis*; Coomans, "Architecture," 153–154.

3 The Cistercian "model plan," sometimes called the "Bernardine" plan, refers to a strict architectural church design consisting of a square east end, a nave (with or without aisles), and a transept with rectangular eastern chapels; it is characterized as "anti-Cluniac" because it was based on a characteristic square, rather than rounded apses, and lacked ambulatory, radiating chapels, towers, and crypt; see Coomans, "Architecture," 156.

4 Esp. Kinder, *Cistercian Europe*; on "sensescapes," see below.

not just "hard" but also "soft" standardization. I borrow these two concepts – hard and soft – from the area of law and governance, where "hard law" generally refers to legal obligations that are binding and legally enforceable, whereas "soft law" is used to denote agreements, principles, and codes of conduct that are not legally binding.[5] In my understanding, both hard and soft standardization seek to establish and maintain stability and predictability, but while the former term highlights centralized processes with little room for variation, the latter calls attention to more informal processes, which are open to interpretation and adaption. My approach emphasizes the soft standards embedded in monastic social and spiritual practice, rather than the hard standards of legal and normative codes, such as the statutes of the Cistercian General Chapter, which traditionally have received most attention from scholars. I focus on explorative, horizontal processes that were ubiquitous, yet messier and more elusive. I refer here to processes of learning and enculturation, drawing inspiration from the term "horizontal learning," which stresses knowledge transmitted and acquired in a context of informal, non-hierarchical interactions.[6] In addition, I draw on the argument – presented by Turner and myself in the current volume – that while complex human interactions presuppose predictability and constraint, they also presuppose flexibility. In this view, standardization and the maintenance of standards require that there be some normativity and common ground, but not fixity and rigidity.[7]

The present chapter begins with a discussion of the hard standards that regulated the liturgy: the legislative and normative Cistercian documents that dealt with discipline and (dis)obedience, especially the statutes of the General Chapter and *Carta caritatis*, or that retrospectively confirmed codified practice, such as the foundation documents of the order, especially *Exordium magnum*.[8] The latter and larger part of the chapter discusses soft standards, considering, first, Cistercian sites, focusing on the main Cistercian houses in Norway, Hovedøya and Lyse, followed by a section on horizontal learning and enculturation through what can be termed "material exegesis." Cistercian sites and architecture display adaption and flexibility, while still retaining similarity, if not identicalness, across the order's houses. Furthermore – and this is crucial to my argument – architectural and geophysical surroundings were not just targets for standardization but also agents of

5 See, e.g., "Hard law/soft law," ECCHR (European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights) https://www.ecchr.eu/en/glossary/hard-law-soft-law/.

6 See Long et al, *Horizontal Learning in the High Middle Ages*; Sullivan, "Hugh of St. Victor."

7 See in this volume Engh and Turner, "Flexibility, Predictability, Standardization"; see also McCubbins et al., "Building a New Rationality"; Turner and McCubbins, "Selves and Choices."

8 Collected in *Twelfth-Century Statutes* and *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, both volumes edited by Waddell.

standardization. When monks blended and immersed themselves into their sensescapes, they were transformed and conformed. This happened not through rules and statutes, but through readings, sermons, and sensory engagement.

The concept of "sensescape" is useful for thinking about the ways in which we make sense of the world around us and the ways in which different contexts shape our perceptions, with an emphasis on the sensory dimensions of culturally constructed landscapes. The term was originally coined by David Howes as a theoretical approach to the anthropology of the senses.[9] Howes defines it as "the idea that the experience of the environment, and of the other persons and things which inhabit the environment, is produced by the particular mode of distinguishing, valuing, and combining the senses in the culture under study."[10] With the term sensescape, I wish to emphasize the multisensoriality of the liturgy and the built and natural environment that framed it. The monks encountered an array of more or less structured sensory stimuli – smells, music, spoken words, architecture, rituals, landscape, light, and climatic features. The sensory dimension of the liturgy and the liturgical environment were affordances, or tools, as Mary Carruthers has argued, that the monks could use for the purposes of meditation, devotion, and cognition.[11]

With the current chapter, I aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the Cistercian emphasis on common standards and conformity in the twelfth century by analyzing the dual processes of hard and soft standardization of the liturgy: liturgical measures and norms on the one hand and liturgical sensescapes on the other. But the chapter also has a more specific scope: to discuss Lyse and Hovedøya, using them as cases, or focal points, in the discussions of soft standards.

There is astonishingly little scholarship on these monasteries and on the Cistercians in Norway in general, and with few exceptions the studies of Hovedøya and Lyse that have been carried out have been limited to either economic or archaeological issues.[12] Nonetheless, the Cistercians were an important monastic

9 See, e.g., Howes, *Varieties of Sensory Experience*.

10 Howes, *Empire of the Senses*, 143.

11 Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, esp. 154–161 and 174–176.

12 Central publications dedicated wholly or in part to Hovedøya and/or Lyse are in Lange, *De norske klostres historie i middelalderen* (1847–1856); Nicolaysen, *Hovedø Kloster og Dets Ruiner* and *Om Lysekloster og Dets Ruiner* (1890 & 1891); Fischer, *Klosteret på Hovedøya* (1974 [1935]); Johnsen, "Omkring grunnleggingen av klosteret på Høvedøya" and *De norske cistercienserklostre 1146–1264* (1974 & 1977); Johnsen and King, *The Tax Book of the Cistercian Order* (1979); Eide (1986), "Hovedøya kloster: bidrag til bygningshistorien"; Foreningen til norske fortidsminnesmerkers bevaring, *Klosteranlegg i Norge, en oversikt* (1987); Garstein, *Mariu-klaustr i Höfudey* (1990); France, *Cistercians in Scandinavia* (1992); Nilsen, "Hovedøya før reformasjonen" (2003). In addition, some recent publications aimed at popular dissemination have appeared, notably Ger-

presence in Norway (unlike, for example, in Iceland or Finland). There were three principal Cistercian monasteries in Norway: Lyse, which was founded south of Bergen in 1146; Hovedøya in the Oslo fjord founded in 1147; and Tautra outside Trondheim founded in 1207. There are indications of two others: Munkeby near Trondheim[13] and Gran in Hadeland,[14] although their affiliations are unknown. It seems doubtful, however, that the nunnery Nonneseter in Bergen was Cistercian, as is often stated.[15]

Any discussion on Lyse and Hovedøya, or Cistercians in Norway in general, faces the challenge presented by the scarcity of textual sources.[16] A promising, but still largely unmined area of inquiry, are the numerous fragments, most of them from liturgical books, kept in Norwegian and Scandinavian collections, which testify to lively exchanges of books (and perhaps also scribes) between Norwegian, Scandinavian, and English houses.[17] Statutes from the Cistercian General Chapter that directly or indirectly refer to the houses in Norway are similar witnesses to the close connection between the Norwegian houses and the broader context of the Cistercian order.[18] In a remarkable study from 1977, the Norwegian historian Arne Odd Johnson presented findings indicating that Lyse and Hovedøya had tighter collaborations with their mother houses in England and with

vin, *Klostrene ved verdens ende* and *En dag i Herrens forgårder* (2007 & 2019); Lidén, *Lyse kloster* (2014); and Nybø, *Lyse kloster: en introduksjon* (2018), along with a few theses: Nybø, "Lyse kloster: en bygningsanalyse" (1986); Henriksen, "*Bene vixit qui bene latuit* " (2002); Bowitz, "Hovedøya Maria kloster " (2009); Langgåt, "Lyse kloster " (2009); and Hjeltnes, "Restaurering som forskyving" (2015).

13 France, *Cistercians in Scandinavia*, 92–98, writes that Munkeby in Levanger was founded sometime between 1150 and 1180, but was moved to Tautra in 1207, continuing as a grange under Tautra.

14 Rosborn, *Søsterkirkene*, 105–123, (re-)launches the thesis that one of the two so-called "sister churches" at Gran, dedicated to St. Mary, is the remains of a Cistercian cloister founded 1177.

15 See Ommundsen, "Nonneseter." Regarding Cistercian nuns, the source situation is very complicated, and unfortunately lies beyond the scope of this essay, although scholars now agree that women were indeed a vital part of the twelfth-century Cistercian movement; on nuns in Scandinavia, see France, *Cistercians in Scandinavia*, 159–184.

16 From Lyse we have a fragment, *Fundatio Lysensis monasterii* (c. 1300), which speaks of Lyse's founder Bishop Sigurd of Bergen, and a short section (*De Lysa*) in Hugh of Kirkstall's foundation history of Fountains Abbey (c. 1206). The former is published in Storm, *Monumenta Historica Norvegiae*, 171–172, the latter in Johnsen, *Norske cistercienserklostre*, Appendix A, 72–73. From Hovedøya we have the register of charters, but its contents have been destroyed in a fire (*Akershusregisteret af 1622*).

17 See Ommundsen, "Cistercian Manuscript Culture"; Gullick & Ommundsen, "Two scribes"; Karlsen, "Bøker og arkiver i middelalderens Oslo."

18 See the 14 statutes from 1157–1263 published and translated in Johnsen, *Norske cistercienserklostre*, Appendix C, 75–90.

the central chapter in Cîteaux than scholars had previously assumed.[19] Johnson's important, but unfinished work went counter to the predominant historiographical trends of the 1970s. Johnson was concerned with contexts that were European and ecclesial, rather than national. He also had a marked interest in intellectual and religious factors, not just economic ones. It is unfortunate that Johnsen's work has been overlooked. Scholarship on the abbeys in Norway seems to have suffered from an unhappy combination of source scarcity, the low priority of monastic studies, and national bias.[20]

Like Johnsen, this chapter explicitly assumes, even presupposes, that the Cistercian houses of Hovedøya outside Oslo and Lyse outside Bergen were an integrated part of a wider, European context. However, I emphasize that there was a productive reciprocity between, on the one hand, the hard, top-down standards of the central legislative and normative Cistercian documents and, on the other hand, the embeddedness and adaptivity of the Cistercians in the North. Based on readings of Cistercian documents, the material remains, and the texts likely held in the (lost) library collections, I will not just situate the Cistercian houses in Norway in a global, Cistercian context of hard standards, but also interrogate the flexible, soft standards that were involved in shaping a stable, common identity.

Liturgical Uniformity from Cîteaux to Hovedøya

The Cistercian order had its origin in Cîteaux (*Cistercium*), south of Dijon, shortly before 1100, and aimed at a stricter observance of St. Benedict's Rule. By the middle of the twelfth century, the Cistercian order may have had as many as 345 monasteries, a number that grew to about 600 around the year 1200.[21] Cistercian settlements in the northernmost frontiers of Latin Christendom – Norway, Den-

19 Johnsen, *Norske cistercienserklostre*; Johnsen & King, *Tax Book of the Cistercian Order*.

20 On national (and confessional) interpretative biases in scholarship, see, e.g., Imsen, *Den kirkehistoriske utfordring*, esp. 9–10. A telling example of this attitude is the stubborn identification, following Lange, *Norske klostres historie*, 302, of the first abbots at both Lyse and Hovedøya as Norwegian. Johnsen, "Omkring grunnleggelsen," 48, pertinently questions if nationality would have been an important criterion for the appointment. On this, see also the more recent work by Gunnes, "Ordre og klostre," and Mykling, "Universal and Local," esp. 81. No doubt, the source situation explains in part the scholarly lacuna and limited focus, but not completely since source scarcity is a rather general problem for the study of the early Cistercians, not just Norway; see, e.g., McGuire, "Cistercian Origins" and, more generally, debates on sources and dating triggered by Berman's *Cistercian Evolution*.

21 See, e.g, Jamroziak, "Centres and Peripheries."

mark, and Sweden – sprang up in the 1140s, during the second wave of the order's expansion. In 1143 Cistercian monks from the abbey of Clairvaux founded the twin abbeys of Alvastra and Nydala in Sweden. In 1144 the Cistercians arrived in Denmark, and in 1146 in Norway. By the beginning of the thirteenth century, at least eighteen Cistercian monasteries had been founded in Scandinavia, joined by two more in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[22] The first Norwegian settlements, Lyse south of Bergen (1146) and Hovedøya in the Oslo fjord (1147), distinguished themselves in that they were founded not directly from Cîteaux or Clairvaux, as had been the case in Sweden and Denmark, but from England: Lyse from Fountains, which was subject to Clairvaux, and Hovedøya from Fountains' foundation, Kirkstead.[23]

What is so remarkable about the spread of Cistercian foundations is the concurrent dedication to uniformity: food, clothing and observances were to be "everywhere the same."[24] The unity of the order was ensured by the visitation and filiation system, unique to the Cistercians. Many new twelfth-century reform movements formed groupings of communities, but these tended to be quite amorphous and fragmented. The Cistercians were the first to introduce a coherent network structure and a central representative body, the General Chapter at Cîteaux.[25] Their tight organization was based on the annual chapter meeting of abbots at Cîteaux, as well as regular visitations through the filiation system, laid down in *Carta caritatis*, "The Charter of Love," by which individual Cistercian houses were joined together in familial bonds, referred to as "mothers" and "daughters."[26]

This implied that the Scandinavian daughter houses received regular visits by the abbot from their mother houses (Fountains for Lyse, Kirkstead for Hovedøya, and Lyse for Tautra), and in addition were themselves obliged to perform visitations at the General Chapter at Cîteaux, although they, like the most remote monasteries of the order, eventually received exemption from making the long and perilous journey every year.[27]

We may assume (as most scholars do) that the two houses carried out their observances in accordance with the order's directions, not least because the filia-

22 See France, *Cistercians in Scandinavia*, 1–26.

23 On the houses in Norway, see France, *Cistercians in Scandinavia*, 77–98.

24 McGuire, "Constitutions," 93, quoting from Waddel, *Narrative and Legislative*, 458.

25 Jamroziak, "Centres and Peripheries," 69; cf. McGuire's claim, "Constitutions," 87, that they created the first monastic order in the west.

26 On *Carta caritatis*, see Burton & Kerr, *Cistercians*, 31–35; McGuire, "Constitutions."

27 Jamroziak "Centres and Peripheries," 69–70. See also discussions in Johnsen, *Norske cistercienserklostre*, 33, and 57–58, on Scandinavian abbots failing come to the General Chapter in Cîteaux.

tion system assured that the motherhouses surveilled the daughters, and any reports on misconduct would surely have resulted in disciplinary sanctions in the General Chapter's statutes. Indeed, Scandinavian houses are sometimes mentioned in the statutes. In 1199 the General Chapter punished abbots in Denmark "and neighboring regions" with demotion and fasting for not attending the Cîteaux assembly, and, the year after, the Chapter condemned monks in Norway – no doubt at Hovedøya – for saying mass for the excommunicated King Sverrir.[28] Contrarily, from the total lack of mention of Lyse in the statutes from its foundation until well into the thirteenth century, we may surmise that throughout this period it upheld its twin obligations of attending General Chapter at Cîteaux and receiving visitations from the abbot of the motherhouse in Fountains.[29] And since the disobedience of monks at Hovedøya regarded a different matter, it seems that Hovedøya did, too. The question is of significance since it points to tight connections and interactions within the order, in this case between the houses in Norway, in France (Cîteaux), and in England (Fountains, Kirkstead), which can be difficult to trace in the sources.

The Cistercian emphasis on uniformity was particularly pronounced regarding the liturgy, which the order insisted should be observed according to the same usages everywhere. Ideals and directives aiming at a standardized liturgy were expressed in statutes as well as in normative narrative texts. A text belonging to the latter group, *Exordium magnum*, probably composed toward the end of the twelfth century, links uniform liturgical practice to the foundation of Cîteaux and the order itself:

> Concerning the mode and order of divine services, they [i.e., the monks of Cîteaux] decided right at the beginning to observe in everything the traditions of the Rule, cutting away entirely and rejecting all appendages to the psalms, prayers, and litanies, which had been arbitrarily added [to the office] by less considerate fathers. Aware of human frailty and infirmity, after sagacious consideration, they found [these additions] to be more dangerous than salutary for the monks, since their multiplicity [*multiplicatem*] results in their entirely tepid and negligent recitation, not only by the slothful, but also by the diligent.[30]

28 Statute 34 from 1199, in Waddell, *Statutes*, 432, and Statute 24 from 1200, in Waddell, *Statutes*, 462; for discussion, see Johnsen *Norske cistercienserklostre*, 34–35.

29 See France, *Cistercians in Scandinavia*, 318; Nybø, "Lyse," 16–17.

30 *Exordium magnum* 1.20, CCCM 138:41: "Et primitus quidem modum et ordinem seruitii Dei per omnia secumdum traditiones regulae obseruare decreuerunt recisis penitus et reiectis cunctis appendiciis psalmorum, orationum, et letaniarum, quae minus discreti patres pro uelle suo superaddiderant, quae etiam propter fragilitatem infirmitatis humanae non tam ad salutem quam ad perniciem monachorum esse sagaci consideratione deprehenderunt, dum ob multiplicatem sui non solum a fastidiosis, sed ab ipsis quoque studiosis omnino tepide et negligenter per-

The emphasis on simplicity ("cutting away . . . rejecting appendages") is tightly linked to an ideal of uniformity. Note the term "multiplicity" (*multiplicatus*, *multiplex*), indicating not just many, but manifold, that is, non-standardized. Multiplicity, the *Exordium* implies, poses a threat to a strong and committed recitation, limiting the monks' focus and attention span. Just beneath the text's surface lurks the highly charged theological concept of confusion (*confusio*) associated with the city of Babylon, the antithesis of heavenly Jerusalem.[31]

As the Cistercians were rapidly colonizing all of Europe, the focus on uniform practice in liturgical celebration became the bulwark of the entire order's unity. *Carta caritatis* formulates what reads like a rule of standardization:

> And because we receive in our cloister [i.e. Cîteaux] all monks coming from other monasteries [i.e., monks from daughter-houses], and they likewise receive our monks in their cloisters, it therefore seems to us opportune, and this also is our will, that they have the usages and chant and all the books necessary for the day and night hours and for mass according to the form of the usages and books of the New Monastery [i.e. Cîteaux], so that there may be no *discord* in our conduct, but that we may *all live by one* love, *one* rule [*una caritate, una Regula*], and by *similar usages*.[32]

Here, the anxiety is not just about multiplicity: unruly, messy, manifold practices that undermine attention and concentration. On stake is the order's concord, threatened by the discord of conflicting observances. The emphasis on unity ("one love, one rule") and sameness ("similar usages") is clearly ideological, but has also a very concrete, practical aspect. A visiting monk or abbot could take his place in choir and follow the worship exactly as in his own house. All houses – from Cîteaux to Hovedøya – were to be uniform across space and time, at least in theory. When the monks in Norway celebrated the divine office or said mass, they knew that at that moment, monks in any Cistercian house, in the British Isles, in Italy, in France, or in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, were chanting the very same hymns.

The hard, top-down standardization of liturgy was implemented through attempts to control the communities' most important books. The third statute of the

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solverentur." (My modifications to translations in Lekai, *The Cistercians*, 249, and in Elder, *Great Beginning*, 92.)

31 See the introduction to this volume.

32 *Carta caritatis*, in Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative*, 444: "Et quia omnes monachos ipsorum ad nos venientes in claustro nostro recipimus, et ipsi similiter nostros in claustris suis, ideo oportunum nobis videtur, et hoc etiam volumus, ut mores et cantum et omnes libros ad Horas diurnas et nocturnas et ad missas necessarios, secundum formam morum et librorum Novi Monasterii possideant, quatenus in actibus nostris nulla sit discordia, sed una caritate, una Regula, similibusque vivamus moribus." (my emphasis, my modifications)

General Chapter prohibited any variant texts of the following books: "Missal, epistolary, evangeliary, collectary, gradual, antiphonary, Rule, hymnal, psalter, Night Office lectionary, and martyrology are everywhere to be uniformly the same [*ubique uniformiter*]."[33] The twelfth statute declared that no new community might be founded without these books: "the missal, Rule [of St. Benedict], book of Usages, psalter, hymnal, collectary, antiphonary, gradual."[34]

To protect against variance and diversity, officially sanctioned books were pronounced exemplars: the standard and authoritative version. In the 1140s Bernard of Clairvaux was given the task of assembling a new antiphoner, the books of chants for the mass and Office, for the burgeoning order. The older version, which had been revised under Stephen Harding's abbacy at Cîteaux (1108/9–1133) with the aim of providing a systematic and uniform structure for the liturgy and ensuring that the newly established daughter houses followed the same practices as the motherhouse, was deemed by Bernard as "corrupt" and "highly inconsistent" in both text and music.[35] In the prologue to the new antiphoner, Bernard admonishes all those who are to transcribe this antiphonary or sing from it not to divert from the new standard:

> We therefore wish that, from now on, the antiphonary as revised [*mutatum*] and contained in this volume, be adopted in our monasteries, both as regards texts and melodies; and, in virtue of the authority of the whole General Chapter, where this antiphonary was concordantly accepted and confirmed by all the abbots, we prohibit any change [*mutari*] whatsoever to be made by anyone and in any way.[36]

This short passage captures some vital features of standardization – not just in the Middle Ages, but also more generally. It exposes the normativity inherent in achieving a standard. The antiphoner contains a new standard, i.e., the hymns to be sung by Cistercian monks, and is at the same time an effort to enforce and

33 *Institutum generalis capituli* 3, in Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative*, 458: "Missale, epistolare, textus, collectaneum, gradale, antiphonarium, regula, hymnarium, psalterium, lectionarium, calendarium ubique uniformiter habeantur."

34 *Institutum generalis capituli* 12, in Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative*, 461: "libris dumtaxat missali, Regula, libro usuum, psalterio, hymnario, collectaneo, antiphonario, gradali."

35 "Prologus in antiphonarium," SBOp 3:515: "vitiosum, et incompositum nimis." Waddell has provided an English translation in "Prologue to the Cistercian Antiphonary," 161–162; on the antiphonary, see Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Cistercian Hymnal*.

36 "Prologus in antiphonarium," SBOp 3:515–516: "Ita ergo ut demum mutatum est et in hoc volumine continetur, volumus in nostris de cetero monasteriis tam verbo quam nota ubique teneri, et mutari omnino in aliquo ab aliquo, auctoritate totius capituli, ubi ab universis abbatibus concorditer susceptum et confirmatum est, prohibemus." (Trans. Waddell, "Prologue to the Cistercian Antiphonary," 161–162 my modifications.) See also Bell, "Liturgy," 260–261.

implement that standard. Hence Bernard's stern warning to users and scribes, prohibiting any change by anyone in any way (*mutari omnino in aliquo ab aliquo*). Bernard knew well that variations and diversity in texts and practices were inevitable in an ever-growing order. The statement reveals something about the difficulty not just in obtaining a new standard, but above all in maintaining it.

The passage also subtly evokes a theme central to the Cistercians, namely, reform.[37] The Cistercian order was an integral part of the reform movement of the twelfth century. Reform necessarily implies change: deliberate and designed change according to a new standard or norm, modeled, in this case, on an idealized biblical and patristic past which they attempted to actualize in the present. A tension, which we find expressed in Bernard's passage, arises from the desirability of *present* change (according to the new standard) and the ensuing undesirability of *future* change (falling away from the standard or de-standardization). To paraphrase, Bernard forbids making changes to the change.

As we have seen, the order attempted to regulate all aspects of liturgical celebrations – usages, books, chants – across the widespread Cistercian houses of the mid-twelfth century. The point here is not whether the Cistercians succeeded or not in their endeavors to impose liturgical uniformity across the order, but rather that it was so paramount to them; at stake was what they deemed the unity of the order. Their efforts at standardization were in some cases hierarchical, as in the filiation system (where mothers held authority over their daughters), in other cases sanctioned in elective organs as the General Chapter.[38] Both, however, point decisively in the direction of hard standards – they are formal, often rigid, and highly normative, and in this way different from the soft standards that are more flexible and adaptive and characterized by horizontal learning processes, as we shall see in the following discussions of Cistercian sensescapes.

Cistercians in Site

The Scandinavian houses positioned at "the extreme ends of the world,"[39] as one text spoke of the Swedish abbey of Nydala, partook in a common Cistercian way

37 See also Waddell, "Reform of the Liturgy."

38 On the filiation system as hierarchical model, see Jamroziak, "Centres and Peripheries," 71–72; on gendered concepts of authority, esp. maternal imagery, in the Cistercian order (Cîteaux as *mater omnium*), see the works by Bynum, esp. *Jesus as Mother*, and Newman, e.g., "Marriage, Maternity."

39 *Exordium magnum*, quoted in France, *Cistercians in Scandinavia*, 2.

of life (food, dress, daily rhythms, etc.). This was imposed on them through the hard standards of statutes, regulations, and common liturgical usages. The normative and legislative texts that have been discussed in the former section are usually the point of reference for scholars considering the liturgical conformity and uniformity of the Cistercians. From the centralized, hierarchical point of view of hard standards, local variation presents a challenge to standardization. For example, the Cistercian liturgical hours were based on the rising and the setting of the sun, which varies much more in Scandinavia than in southern Europe. Thus, *Ecclesiastica officia* charged the sacristan with the duty to keep track of the hours (*horologium temperare*) and sound the waking-call for brethren at the appropriate time, independent of sunrise or sunset.[40] The sacristan, then, must have had access to some kind of timepiece, likely a water clock, but its inaccuracy would have prevented any real regulation of the canonical hours. Not until 1429, when the first mechanical clocks made their appearance, did the General Chapter attempt to establish uniformity by requiring the sacristan to give the call for rising at 2am in all houses all year round (1am on Sundays and feast days).[41] Here, the challenge to standardization – and for the monks, the latent threat to liturgical unity – was resolved by a technical solution based on quantification and normalization.

In this vein, most scholarship approaches Cistercian monasteries and liturgy with assumptions about hard standardization. Through their foundations, the Norwegian houses were associated with the Clairvaux branch of the order – as granddaughter (Lyse) and great-granddaughters of Clairvaux (Hovedøya and Tautra). Hence scholars typically underscore that the physical layout of Hovedøya and Lyse correspond, albeit loosely, to the Clairvaux standard, or at least to the models following this standard as found in the English branch of the order.[42] (Figures 15, 16, and 17) Exceptions and variations in this regard are problems that scholars need to explain. Thus, we know that that some of the deviations are due to small scale, such as the aisleless church and compressed layout of Lyse, or to adaption to topography, such as the eastern wing at Hovedøya (containing chapter house, parlor, *dormitorium*, etc.), which was located further to the west than usual on account of a rock protrusion at the south-eastern end of the monastic

40 *Ecclesiastica officia* 114.1–3, 318–319; see also Kinder, *Cistercian Europe*, 55–56; Lidén, *Lyse kloster*, 25–26.

41 Kinder, *Cistercian Europe*, 56.

42 On Lyse, see Fischer, *Hovedøya*, 32; Nybø, "Lyse," 33, states that Lyse echoes the original church at Fountains (Fountains I).

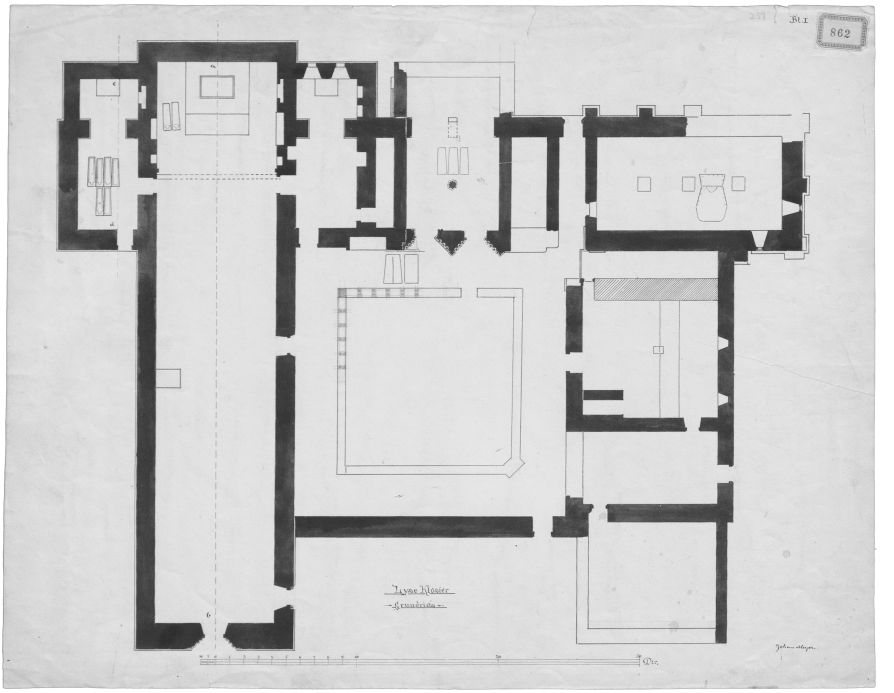

Figure 16: Plan of Lyse monastery. Abbey church to the left; cloister and monastic grounds to the right. Illustration: Johan Meyer, Fortidsminneforeningen.

site.[43] Hovedøya's church has especially been discussed because of its conspicuous deviations. During excavations it came to light that the original apse was rounded, and only later turned into a cruciform church with a square east end and transepts conforming to Cistercian church plans. The church at Hovedøya, moreover, has two naves, an unusual feature, as well as a stone tower, in breach of Cistercian rules.[44] Gerhard Fischer, who excavated and documented the site in the 1930s, argued that the founding monks converted a pre-existing church (dedicated to St. Edmund) on the island, adapting it to their own use. By now generally accepted, Fischer's thesis explained the non-conform features at Hovedøya.

43 Nybø, "Lyse," 199, finds that the core complex in general follows standard Cistercian patterns, and that compromise is mostly due to the small scale. On Hovedøya, see Fischer, *Hovedøya*, 38–42; France, *Cistercians in Scandinavia*, 87; Garstein, *Mariu-klaustr i Höfudey*, 8.

44 On proscription of towers (statute of 1157), see also Coomans, "Architecture," 153, 156.

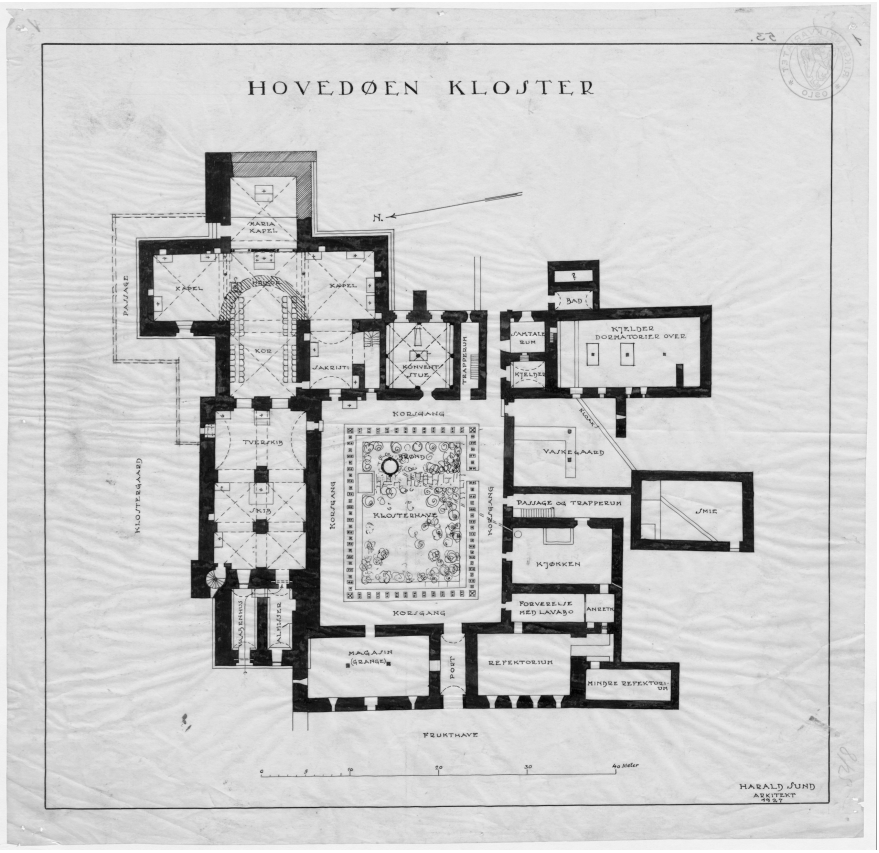

Figure 17: Plan of Hovedøya monastery. Note the original rounded apse of the church (in light grey) and the unusual position of the eastern wing of the monastery. Illustration: Harald Torbjørn Sund, Riksantikvaren.

But, from our viewpoint, that of soft standards, these findings point to the adaption and flexibility of the Cistercians.[45] If conformity ever came into conflict with viability, the latter prevailed, as Kinder has shown. Kinder argues that since the Chapter statutes were few and usually negative in nature (proscriptions rather than prescriptions), individual abbeys had the freedom to make building decisions for themselves.[46] Variation, and adaption to variation, should not simply be seen as a

45 Cf. the theory of flexibility and predictability, in the chapter by Engh & Turner in the present volume.

46 Kinder, *Cistercian Europe*, 195.

challenge (or threat) to standardization. In the case of the Cistercians, flexibility and local embeddedness were paramount to creating a successful standard.

What indications do we have of the Cistercians' embeddedness in their geophysical environment and landscape in the North, and how does this play out with respect to notions of the unity and identity of the order? Various Cistercian texts emphasize the geographical periphery and harshness of the climate at the northern settlements.[47] We have a Danish source, the Øm chronicle, that describes in detail the weather conditions and the difficulties of winter travel in the North.[48] The *Exordium magnum* likewise speaks of the rough winters, but also complains about the harsh religious climate in this periphery of Christianity, inhabited by "uncultivated and wild men" who were still in thrall to pagan rites.[49] All this was perfectly suited to the order's rhetoric of taming empty and salvage landscapes, as well as their provisions that envisaged a distance to towns and habitation.[50] Many Cistercian sites – including Cîteaux itself, but also Clairvaux and Clairvaux's daughters, Fountains and Kirkstead (mothers respectively of Lyse and Hovedøya) – were referred to, borrowing from Deuteronomy 32:10, as "places of horror and vast solitude." Few regions provided the Cistercians with the same opportunity for delving into remoteness and hardship as Scandinavia. Indeed, some foundations were soon abandoned (for instance, the tiny islands of Kalvø in Lake Skanderborg and Lurö in Lake Vänern) due to the hazards of the winter conditions, whereas the enduring foundations in Norway – Hovedøya and Lyse, and later Tautra – were more comfortably settled in proximity to the towns of Oslo, Bergen, and Trondheim and connecting routes.

Embeddedness in the northern landscape and climate is difficult to assess due to the scarcity of textual sources. However, the monks' flexibility, adapting to their local circumstances while maintaining a global Cistercian outlook, can be surmised more indirectly. For even if there are few extant texts, we do have the sites themselves – and their names.

All abbeys of the Cistercian order were dedicated to the Virgin Mary, but the monasteries also had individual names. Since the Cistercians settled in remote and unpopulated areas, the monks often named the location themselves. But

47 For this and the following, see France, *Cistercians in Scandinavia*, 2–6.

48 France, *Cistercians in Scandinavia*, 4.

49 *Exordium magnum*, quoted in France, *Cistercians in Scandinavia*, 3.

50 *Exordium parvum*, in Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative*, 435: "non in civitatibus nec in castellis aut in villis sed in locis a frequentia populi semotis." ("not in cities, nor in walled settlements or villages, but in places removed from populated areas."). Also *institutum* 1 of the General Chapter, in Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative,* 458: "In civitatibus, castellis, villis, nulla nostra construenda sunt coenobia, sed in locis a conversatione hominum semiotis." ("None of our monasteries are to be built in cities, walled towns, villages, but in places removed from human habitation.")

Figure 18: The Hovedøya ruins. View towards the nave of the church seen from the original apse. Photo: Tord Østberg.

Figure 19: The Hovedøya ruins in winter landscape. View from west. Photo: Tord Østberg.

sometimes they took over prior foundations with pre-existing names, as was the case at Hovedøya. In some such cases (but not all), the Cistercians renamed the site they settled in, or at least "Cistercianized" it. Names of abbeys can tell us something about how the Cistercians perceived and interpreted their physical

surroundings, using them as devotional tools and spiritual markers. A paradigmatic example is Clairvaux (*Clara valles*, the "clear valley" or "valley of light"), which was situated in a valley, like so many Cistercian foundations, recalling Isaiah 40:4 ("every valley shall be exalted"). The name of Clairvaux evoked a mental and emotional landscape based on inversions of light and dark, ascent and descent, giving the environment a Christological frame. Two Clairvaux filiations in the North owe their name to their valley sitings: *Nova vallis*, "the new valley" (Nydala), and *Tuta vallis*, "the safe valley" (Tvis). The abbey of Lyse was likewise situated in a valley but owes its name to the nearby fjord, Lysir.[51] Safely sheltered from the open sea and icy mountain winds, the area came to be known as Lysedal ("valley of light"). (Figure 20) Note the echo of Clairvaux; no wonder the monks adopted Lyse as name for their monastery. Even if they had tried, the founders could hardly have chosen a more Cistercian name – one which emphasized their spiritualized landscape and offered a mirror for self-understanding.[52]

Relevant here is also the attraction to islands, reflected in the naming of Cistercian houses in Scandinavia.[53] Of the twenty-nine Cistercian sites in Scandinavia, eight contained reference to their insular location in their names ("ø"/"ö" or "holm"), usually latinized to *insula*. These include the Danish foundations Holme (*Insula Dei*, "God's island") and Guldholm (*Insula aurea*, "the golden island"). The name of the abbey of Øm in Denmark, deriving from the Danish word for island, was also an adaption of an existing name, notably given a latinized form, *Cara insula* ("dear island"), which carried a characteristic affective emphasis.[54] This insular attraction was quite distinct for Scandinavia, in contrast to the allusion to either valley or water/fount commonly found elsewhere (e.g., Senanque, "holy water" in France, Mellifont; "fount of honey" in Ireland; and of course Fountains itself).[55] It reflects the Cistercians' adaption to the particular geo-physical features and landscapes of the North. Islands were practical. In Norway especially, the only suitable habitation were the coastal areas: all three Cistercian houses were situated by the coast, two of which were islands (Hovedøya, latinized variously as *Houetheia*, *Howozeiae*, etc., and Tautra, *Tuta insula*). Furthermore, islands provided easy access to travel and transportation routes.

But perhaps equally important were the spiritual allusions. Patristic writers, such as Jerome, with whom Cistercian monks were well acquainted through their

51 Nybø, *Lyse kloster*, 8.

52 See also Burton & Kerr, *Cistercians*, 56–62.

53 See France, *Cistercians in Scandinavia*, 24–25, also Burton & Kerr, *Cistercians*, 58.

54 On this, see France, *Cistercians in Scandinavia*, 10, 23–24.

55 See also Kinder, *Cistercian Europe*, 85.

Figure 20: *Fra Lyse kloster* (1827), Johan Christian Dahl. KODE Art museums and composer homes. Photo courtesy Dag Fosse / Kode.

readings and studies, had spoken figuratively of the Church as an island surrounded by waves of enemies. In a commentary on Psalm 96 attributed to Jerome it is stated:

> Just as islands have been posed in the middle of the seas, so also the churches have been posed in the middle of the seas of the world, and they are assailed by waves of persecution. These islands are assailed every day, but they are not submerged. They are indeed amid the seas, but they have Christ who cannot be moved as their foundation.[56]

It is easy to imagine the appeal that this spiritual landscape had to Cistercian insular settlers in Scandinavia. It must have reverberated with their self-understanding: assailed by the world around them but not submerged, clinging to the foundational

56 *Breviarium*, "Psalmus 96," PL 26:1116B: "Quomodo enim insulae in medio mari positae sunt: sic et Ecclesiae quasi in medio mari saeculi istius positae sunt: et ita persecutionibus, quasi diversis tunduntur fluctibus. Verum istae insulae tunduntur quotidie, sed non subruuntur. In mari quidem sunt, sed habent fundamentum Christum qui moveri non potest." (My translation) Also in Jerome's commentary on Job 28, PL 26:701C: "praeter solam Ecclesiam, quae propter saevientium fluctus inimicorum, insula dicitur in Scripturis, quemadmodum et navicula per figuram in Evangelio nominatur."

rock, Christ. Perhaps, as one scholar suggests, the early Cistercians in Scandinavia saw themselves as "living on islands amidst non-Christians,"[57] where the inhospitable climate, both religiously and otherwise, provided an inciting blend of remote wilderness (recalling the desert-like places of the fathers) and self-sacrifice (recalling the martyrs of the early Church persecuted by pagans).

Locations and site names emphasized, as in the above examples, a physical topography that reflected Cistercian spirituality, often recalling biblical landscapes. Their landscapes were perceived, experienced, and thus shaped by spiritual and biblical standards. These standards were not top-down, like the General Chapter statutes; nor were they bottom-up either. They were horizontal, soft standards, based on shared interpretative engagement.[58] They were locally embedded, yet global; authoritative, yet open-ended and flexible. Cistercian monastic locations, just like the monks themselves, were embodiments of standards, offering imitative and mimetic participation in spiritual ideals, guided by authoritative interpretations but also flexible learning processes, to be discussed in the following section.

Building Monks, Building Unity

The standard that Cistercian monasteries followed, while adapting to the specific local circumstances and environments, was more elusive than the "model" plan proposed in older scholarship. It was a spiritual standard, so to speak, designed to facilitate the monks' process of interiorization based on concepts of simplicity and silence.[59] As noted earlier, the ideal was *simplex* as opposed to *multiplex*, order as opposed to confusion. The silence that imbued medieval Hovedøya would not have been an absence of sound, for the soundscape was filled with chirping birds, the rustling of the wind, distant waves, bells, and of course the perpetual murmur of monks reading, since private readings were done aloud in a low voice. In the Cistercian monastery, interior spiritual processes were both reflected and sustained by the senses and sensescapes; they were sensual and spiritual at the same time.[60] Rather than any auditory or visual void, this silence was first and foremost freedom from disturbance and distraction, allowing the monks to cultivate their attention during reading, prayer, and liturgy. (Figure 21)

57 Nyberg, *Monasticism*, 125.
58 Cf. Stock's notion of "textual community," *Implications of Literacy*, 90.
59 See Kinder, *Cistercian Europe*, 143, 385; also Kinder, *Architecture of Silence*.
60 Engh, "Divine Sensations."

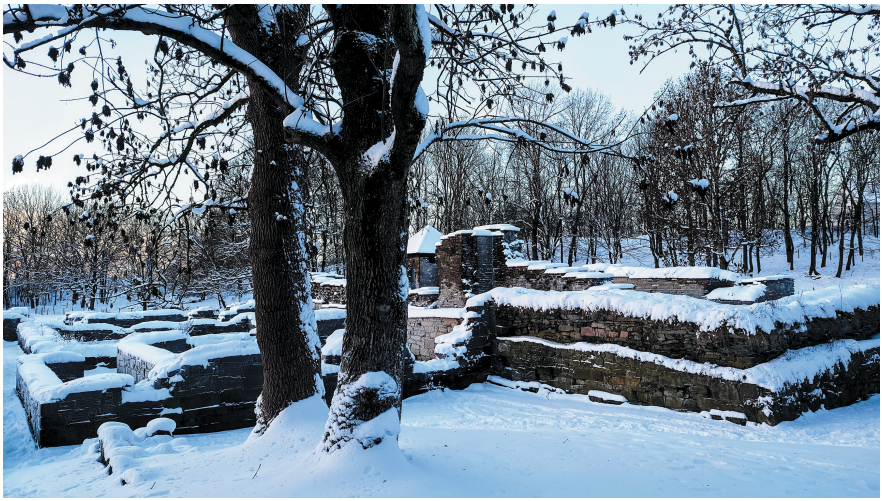

Figure 21: A sensescape of silence. The Hovedøya ruins in winter landscape. View from south-east. Photo: Tord Østberg.

Crucially, the liturgy regulated and involved all aspects of the monk's life, from morning to night, from Advent to the feast of St. Andrew, from entry into cloister to death, invoking all his senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste.[61] If asked about the purpose of the liturgy, the monks at Hovedøya and Lyse would have replied that it served to glorify God. But at a deep level, albeit less explicit, the liturgy was also about learning.[62] Liturgical learning took place through the lections and chants of divine office, but also through the slow ruminative reading of *lectio divina*, the oral and aural experience of text, and the kinesthetic experience of the surrounding liturgical sensescapes. In other words, both books and the physical environment were tools for devotion, learning, enculturation, and, more broadly, for building unity in the Cistercian order. Here, I'd like to develop on Mary Carruthers' point that Cistercian emphasis on conformity was not only, perhaps not even primarily, an expression of the order's authoritarian and centralizing outlook, but an effort to provide working structures within which teaching and learning could take place.[63]

How did the monks "read" (and learn from) their primary liturgical sensescape, the church? What did it teach them? We may begin by establishing that

61 See Palazzo *L'invention*.
62 See Reilley, *Art of the Book*, 15–16; Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, esp. 71–73.
63 Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 255.

Cistercian enculturation was shaped in two ways. One way, as we have seen, was through hard standardization: rules and regulations, including conforming to rules about dress, conduct, and liturgical usages; must-have books and no-variant books; and architectural constraints. The other way was through processes of horizontal learning, where knowledge entered the community and then disseminated through it without strict adherence to a hierarchical or centralizing structure.[64] The imaginative, interpretative layers of meaning of Cistercian sensescapes, discussed in the prior section, is certainly an example of one such process. Another example is the monks' interiorizing engagement with church architecture, based on their readings and sermons.

We may not know much about daily life and events at Hovedøya and Lyse, apart from practices prescribed by the rule and the order, and we know even less of the private thoughts and experiences of the single monks, lost to us forever. But we do know that the monks read, and we know, at least more or less, *what* they read – and we may surmise how their devotional readings filtered their interpretations and thus their sensory experience of their architecture. It is this filtering that will be discussed here in the final section of this chapter.

There is not much evidence on the Cistercian libraries of Scandinavia, and the book collections were probably small compared to those of the large monasteries.[65] An inventory from Tautra (1531–1532) reports that "seventy old books" (the minimum number of volumes in the abbey's possession, then) were stored "in an attic-room," but unfortunately the source does not supply any further specifications regarding these books.[66] The book collections of Lyse and Hovedøya are likewise lost, along with the catalogs, but we do know that both monasteries kept a book room or *armarium*. The *armarium* at Lyse was simply a niche in the wall, or a cupboard, situated by the foot of the night stairs from which the monks accessed the south transept of the church, a plan which corresponds to other early Cistercian arrangements where architectural provision for books was modest.[67] Hovedøya's *armarium* was likewise positioned next to the night stairs and the

64 In the present discussion of horizontal learning, I am indebted to Kinsella, "Teaching Through Architecture."

65 As Ommundsen, *Cîteaux*, 274, pointed out in 2009 (still true today), the history of the books used and produced by the Cistercians in the North has still not been written. On book collections in Scandinavia, see France, *Cistercians in Scandinavia*, 233–254, esp. 247; on Cistercian libraries in Norway, see Johnsen, *Norske cistercienserklostre*, 60–63; on Cistercian book collections in general, see Bell, "Libraries and Scriptoria."

66 DN 11. 653 (Tuteröen 1531–1532), nr. 583; "Jtem lxx gamble bøger vp vti ein ram"; see also Johnsen, *Norske cistercienserklostre*, 63–64.

67 This seems to be scholarly consensus, see France, *Cistercians in Scandinavia*, 252; Nybø, "Lyse," 60; Fischer, *Hovedøya*, 32–33; but see Lidén, *Lyse kloster*, 20 who questions whether books

passage into the south transept.[68] The liminal position in both monasteries, at the junction of the church, the cloister, and the monks' quarters, bespeaks the centrality of books, even in small abbeys far north.

What might the *armaria* of Lyse and Hovedøya have contained? In general, Cistercian book collections consisted of the order's narrative and legislative documents, the all-important biblical and liturgical books, and commentaries and sermons: all a vital part of monastic reading and formation.[69] The Cistercians may have been acutely aware of their own distinctness, but they were also very much part of a broader intellectual and devotional movement in the twelfth century. Cistercian libraries contained not just texts by Cistercian writers, but also by patristic, Carolingian, and contemporary monastic writers. A few of these contained explanations of the liturgy, liturgical spaces, and architecture: for the most part liturgical commentaries and dedication sermons, which we may term "material exegesis."[70]

The most outstanding example of material exegesis from the early twelfth century is *Gemma animae* by Honorius Augustodunensis (d. *c.* 1140), one of the most widely read and copied writers in his time. Honorius' didactic works, including the text we shall look at in a moment, were written to provide books precisely for small monastic foundations with small libraries, such as Lyse and Hovedøya, giving comprehensive overviews to monks in training and study.[71] Honorius' commentaries were widely copied and read, and we have strong evidence of its use in libraries of England, especially around York.[72] This is significant because, as discussed, there were close connections between Fountains abbey in Yorkshire, Kirkstead abbey in Lincolnshire further south, and their daughter houses Lyse and Hovedøya. The monks who came from England to Norway would certainly have brought books with them, and further book exchanges would have taken place between the

actually were kept here since they would have been exposed to potentially damaging weather conditions.

68 See Fischer, *Hovedøya*, 42 and the plan, 49.

69 For an overview of Cistercian reading and *lectio divina*, see Leclercq, *Love of Learning*; on the relation to liturgy, see Waddell, "Early Cistercian Experience," 102; on the detailed management of books and reading, see Kinder, *Cistercian Europe*, 134–135.

70 The term "material exegesis" came up several times at sessions at IMC Leeds 2021 and represents a welcome alternative to the more common (but no more medieval) term "liturgical commentary," which would seem to exclude for instance sermons; see also Kinsella's critical statements, "Teaching Through Architecture," 147.

71 Kinsella, "Teaching Through Architecture," 145–146.

72 Kinsella, "Teaching Through Architecture," 147.

houses.[73] There is more: parts of Honorius' *Gemma animae* were translated and inserted into the Old Norse Homily Book of the twelfth century, testifying to its circulation in Norway.[74] It seems safe to assume that Honorius' commentaries, or excerpts from them, would have reached Hovedøya and Lyse.

In the architectural section of *Gemma animae*, Honorius mentally places his readers inside the church building and lets them identify with both its physical and spiritual properties:

> This house is built of hard stone, and the Church is built [*colligitur*] of those who are strong in faith and works. The stones are stuck together with cement, and the faithful are fastened together with chains of love.[75]

The monks are invited to imagine and blend themselves into the physical edifice and building materials of the church. The emphasis is visual, as Honorius throughout the passage steers the monks' viewpoint through demonstrative pronouns, such as *haec*, "this" house. The architectural section of *Gemma animae* (chaps 122–149) proceeds as an imaginative walk from east to west, beginning at the high alter where mass is celebrated, then moving through the church and to the adjacent buildings outside, and finally to the cloister.[76] The subsequent section (chaps 150–171) follows the liturgical movement of the monks themselves, beginning in the atrium and moving into the church, alighting on various liturgical objects. The frame for the section is the liturgy for the dedication of a church, repeated each year on the same date. Here Honorius mobilizes the full sensory dimension of the liturgy: sight (doors, pavement, vestments, vessels), hearing (antiphons), taste (salt, wine), touch (moistening, sprinkling), smell (perfumed oils, incense), linking them to virtues and biblical characters and events, and to places and objects in the church edifice.

Scholars have described the mnemonic functions of monastic architecture as part of a non-verbal, multimodal communication with the monastic subject.[77] The

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73 On evidence of these exchanges, see Gullick & Ommundsen, "Two scribes," 46–47. An important testimony to exchange is the fact that Fountains Abbey held a copy of *Passio et miracula Sancti Olaui* (produced in the late twelfth century), now at Corpus Christi College in Oxford (Corpus Christi College MS 209).

74 See Gunnes' introduction and comments in *Gammelnorsk homiliebok*, 15, 176.

75 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae* 129, PL 172:586A: "Domus haec ex duris lapidibus construitur, et Ecclesia ex fortibus in fide et operatione colligitur. Lapides caemento conglutinantur, et fideles vinculo dilectionis compaginantur." (Trans. in Spurrel, *Symbolism of Medieval Churches*, Appendix 6, 143).

76 See Kinsella, "Teaching Through Architecture," 150–153.

77 This scholarship is indebted to Carruthers; for a more recent contribution, see Gilchrist, *Sacred Heritage*, 145–175.

Figure 22: The Hovedøya ruins. Monastic walls (storeroom with dormitory above). Photo: Tord Østberg.

symbolism of *Gemma animae* is essentially typological, but never static, or fixed. Significantly, the figural signification attached to each place or thing is flexible, so that each monk should attach his experiences and elaborate and embed those experiences within stone and timber.[78] In this regard, Honorius' work was not original (in the modern sense): his approach and allegorical readings are echoed in many other liturgical commentaries, both prior and posterior. The *Mitrale* by Sicard of Cremona (d. 1215), for example, follows much the same scheme of urging the readers to blend themselves into the church edifice and fabric:

> The walls of stone and cement are the communities of the religious, faithful and strong in good works, united by the bonds of love [*charitatis*], strengthening their infirm by prayer.[79]

No doubt, imagining that the mortar, uniting the building blocks of the edifice, represented the monks' unifying bonds of love would have held special appeal to Cistercian monks who meditated on the *Carta caritatis*: "that we may all live by one love, one rule." (Figure 22)

78 Kinsella, "Teaching Through Architecture," 154.

79 Sicard of Cremona, *Mitrale* 1.4, in PL 213:20B: "Muri lapidum caementati sunt religiosorum in fide et operatione fortium collegia, vinculo charitatis unita, infirmos suis orationibus munientia." (Trans in Spurrel, *Symbolism of Medieval Churches*, 61, my modifications)

Another important material exegete was Hrabanus Maurus (d. 856), Benedictine abbot, theologian, and poet, and one of the most prominent writers of the Carolingian era. Hrabanus' sermon "Homily on the dedication of a temple" draws, just like Honorius' text, on the liturgy for the dedication of a church: one of the most solemn and important liturgical feasts for a monastic community. We know from the partially extant collection of Kirkstead that as many as three works by Hrabanus Maurus were among the holdings, two of them contained in twelfth-century manuscripts.[80] Hrabanus' writings were generally widespread in twelfth-century England, and, as Honorius, also made their way into the Old Norse Homily Book,[81] and likely into the monasteries in Norway, too. Hrabanus' dedication sermon elaborates on the trope we found in Honorius and Sicard, which was repeated in countless variations throughout the Middle Ages, namely, the believer as a church, or temple, dedicated to God:

> You are well met together today, dear brothers, that we may dedicate a house to God [. . .] But we do this if we ourselves strive to become a temple of God, and do our best to match ourselves to the ritual that we cultivate in our hearts; so that just as with the decorated walls of this very church, with many lighted candles, with voices variously raised through litanies and prayers, through readings and songs we can more earnestly offer praise to God: so we should always decorate the recesses of our hearts with the essential ornaments of good works, always in us the flame of divine and communal charity should grow side by side, always in the interior of our breast the holy sweetness of heavenly sayings and of Gospel praise should resonate in memory. These are the fruits of a good tree, this the treasury of a good heart, these the foundations of a wise master builder, which our reading of the holy Gospel has commended to us today.[82]

Hrabanus engages the monastic subject in flexible, sensory exploration rooted in the church and liturgical performance. The exterior building and liturgy are inter-

80 Johnsen, *Norske cisterciencerklostre*, 61. The British Library holds a twelfth-century manuscript (Arundel MS 217) from Fountains, mother of Lyse and grandmother of Hovedøya, which contains a text by Hrabanus, albeit not the text considered here.

81 Gunnes, in *Gammelnorsk homiliebok*, 15.

82 Hrabanus Maurus, *Homilia* 38, PL 110:73BC: "bene convenistis hodie, fratres charissimi, ut Deo domum dedicaremus [. . .] Sed hoc tunc digne facimus si ipsi Dei templum fieri contendimus, si studemus congruere solemnitati quam colimus; ut sicut ornatis studiosius ejusdem ecclesiae parietibus, pluribus accensis luminaribus, diversis per litanias et preces, per lectiones et cantica, excitatis vocibus, Deo laudem parare satagerimus: ita etiam penetralia cordium nostrorum semper necessariis bonorum operum decoremus ornatibus, semper in nobis flamma divinae pariter et fraternae charitatis augescat, semper in secretario pectoris nostri coelestium memoria praeceptorum et evangelicae laudationis dulcedo sancta resonet. Hi sunt enim fructus bonae arboris, hic boni thesaurus cordis, haec fundamenta sapientis architecti, quae nobis hodierna sancti Evangelii lectio commendat." (Trans. in Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 275)

nalized, turning the monks into the architectural structures, ornaments, candles, incense, readings, and music. Mimetically performing the spiritualized standards of the liturgy, the monks themselves become embodiments of their liturgical sensescape. As Palazzo observes, "whoever builds his or her own innermost temple on the basis of the various sensory elements of the ritual imitates or follows in the footsteps of the 'wise architect' [i.e., God]."[83] Note the horizontal learning applied here: the exterior building and liturgy are not only internalized, but each single monk is urged to make congruences *in himself* and *for himself*.[84]

A writer that would surely have been represented in the *armarium* of any Cistercian monastery, however small and peripheral, was the order's brightest shining light: Bernard, the first abbot of Clairvaux (d. 1153). Among Bernard's hundreds of extant sermons are the liturgical sermons (*Sermones de tempore et de sanctis*), clearly meant for devotional reading and studies, not (just) oral delivery.[85] These include no less than six sermons for the dedication of a church. Bernard's first dedication sermon (Ded 1) contains the same elements as we have seen in Honorius, Sicard, and Hrabanus: the monks are encouraged to interiorize the church building and its liturgical sensory experiences and use these structures for their own learning. But in Bernard's sermon the process of immersion and merging is intensified. The monks are the living stones of the edifice of the church, which in the course of the sermon gradually dissolves and transforms into the edifice of the kingdom of heaven.

Bernard commences with the familiar notion of the monks as consecrated temples of God, but departs from the previous writers by a more marked emphasis on the monks' bodies, which are immediately aligned with the stones of the church building:

> For what sanctity can these stones have that we should celebrate their feast [of dedication]? They do have sanctity, because of your bodies. Can you doubt that your bodies are holy since they are the temple of the Holy Spirit?[86]

83 Palazzo, "Art, Liturgy, and the Five Senses," 28.

84 Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 275–276.

85 Bernard's liturgical sermons, *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis*, are collected in PL 183 (together with *Sermones de diversis*), and in SBOp vols 4 and 5, and translated into English in four volumes in the Cistercian Fathers Series: *Sermons for Advent and the Christmas Season* (CF 51), *Sermons for Lent and the Easter Season* (CF 52), *Sermons for the Summer Season; Liturgical Sermons from Rogationtide and Pentecost* (CF 53), *Sermons for the Autumn Season* (CF 54).

86 Bernard of Clairvaux, Ded 1.1, SBOp 5:370: "Quid enim lapides isti potuerunt sanctitatis habere, ut eorum solemnia celebremus? Habent utique sanctitatem, sed propter corpora vestra. An vero corpora vestra sancta esse quis dubitet, quae templum Spiritus Sancti sunt?" (Trans. by Edmonds, 178 my modifications.) On Ded 1, see also Verbaal, "General Introduction," xxxi–xxxii, xxxiv–xxxv.

Next, the sermon moves from the visibility and tangibility of stones and bodies to an invisible and intangible level, still directly involving the monks, as Bernard announces: "Those things that have visibly taken place within these walls should be fulfilled in us spiritually."[87] Here begins the dedication liturgy itself, taking place at an interiorized, tropological level: first, the sprinkling (*aspersio*) of hyssop, representing confession, penitence, and humility; second, the inscription (*inscriptio*), representing instruction and learning; third, the anointing (*inunctio*), representing grace; and fourth, the illuminating (*illuminatio*), representing the monks' good works and exemplarity. As in the liturgy itself, there is a distinct sensory emphasis, especially on the sense of sight and touch. Finally, we arrive at the fifth liturgical element of the dedication, the blessing (*benedictio*), and now the sermon takes a sharp, eschatological turn, with Bernard leading the (reading, listening) monks into "the house not made with hands, but the eternal one in heaven" (cf. 2 Cor 5:1):

> That house is built of living stones, of angels and humans. The building and the dedication will be completed together. When the wood and the stones are disunited [*disiuncta*] they do not make a house, nor can anyone live in it. It is only their union [*coniunctio*] that makes the house. So the perfect union [*unitas*] of celestial spirits, joined together [*connexa*] without division, makes a habitation whole and suitable to God [. . .] Who would better know all the counsels of kings, and learn everything they say and do, than the wood and stones of their palaces? And so the living and reasoning stones of that heavenly court participate in the divine counsels, learn the mysteries of the Trinity and hear ineffable words [. . .] We read in Isaiah that the binder [*glutino*] is good [Is 41:7]. So the stones are joined to each other [*sibi cohaerent*] through the twofold binder [*glutino*] of full understanding and perfect love. To the degree that they stand close together in charity [*caritati*], so are they fused [*copulantur*] with greater love.[88]

Expressed through the leading image of building and dedicating a church, three levels of meaning meet and merge: the church edifice itself (literal level), the

87 Ded 1.4, SBOp 5:372: "In nobis proinde spiritualiter impleri necesse est, quae in parietibus visibiliter praecesserunt." (Trans. by Edmonds, 180, my modifications.)

88 Ded 1.6–7, SBOp 5:374: "iam in domum transibimus non manufactam, aeternam in caelis. Ipsa est quae construitur vivis ex lapidibus, angelis scilicet et hominibus. Simul enim aedificatio et dedicatio ipsa complebitur. Disiuncta nimirum ligna et lapides, domum non faciunt, nec in eis habitare quis potest; sola vero coniunctio domum facit. Sic caelestium spirituum perfecta unitas, sine ulla sibi divisione connexa, integram et congruam Deo reddit habitationem [. . .] Quis enim sic sciret universa regum consilia, aut quis eorum omnia dicta vel facta sic nosset, quomodo palatii ligna et lapides [. . .] Itaque caelestis illius curiae lapides vivi et rationabiles divinis intersunt consiliis, et Trinitatis mysteria norunt, audiuntque verba ineffabilia [. . .] Legimus in Isaia: Glutino bonum est (Isa. XLI, 7). Duplici igitur sibi cohaerent lapides illo glutino, cognitionis plenae et perfectae dilectionis. Tanto siquidem maiori ad se invicem dilectione copulantur, quanto ipsi caritati, quae Deus est, viciniores assistunt." (Trans. by Edmonds, 182–183, my modifications.)

monk (tropological, or moral, level), and heaven (allegorical and anagogical level). The passage is all about unity, union, joining, and fusion (*coniunctio*, *unitas*, *connexa*, *cohaerent*, *copulantur*): based on the bond – or the "binder" (*glutino*) – that holds the constructions of wood and stones together, namely, love. In the sermon, the monks are invited to blend themselves, first, with their church edifice: to imagine the church as a living architecture and themselves as the living stones of the church. Next, they are to blend that concept with the heavenly palace of the Lord. Not merely embodiments of the physical church here and now, the monks embody heaven itself, the celestial city: New Jerusalem. Bernard builds, through carefully constructed concepts and words, an imaginary, future sensescape rooted in the present. He erects it from the Cistercian church, this orderly, patterned structure, full of light and acoustics: from its wood and its stones and from the monastic bodies that filled it, garbed in white, singing and sensing.

Bernard's dedication sermon taught the monks to use their environment as a flexible learning partner: it taught them how to use the sensory affordances that the Cistercian monastery and church provided them – and it taught them the complementarity of this relationship. Just as the sensescape became part of the monks, they became part of it. Liturgical architecture thus served as an agent of standardization: transforming and conforming the monks.

Conclusion: Conformity, Coercion, and Cohesion

Modern scholars speak of the enormous success of the Cistercian order using terms from industry and finance. Cistercians have been described as "holy entrepreneurs" and a "multinational corporation" displaying a "corporate culture."[89] Should we conceive of Cistercian standardization as a type of medieval "branding," as one scholar suggested?[90] Perhaps so. It may help us see that Cistercian sites were not identical, but similar – in the same way that McDonald's restaurants are not identical but nonetheless similar, making them easy to navigate. Anyone who has ever been to one (say, in Oslo) will know how to find her way in another (say, in Beijing), even if it's halfway around the world and she's never been there before. In the same way, a visiting Cistercian monk would have found himself instantly oriented in his new surroundings by the near-identity of the architecture with his own monastery.[91] The layout of monastic buildings was standardized: the locations of the

89 Bouchard, *Holy Entrepreneurs*; Gervin, *Klostrene ved verdens ende*, 13.
90 Jamroziak, "Centres and Peripheries," 75.
91 Carruthers, *Craft of Thought,* 256.

cloister, dormitory, library, refectory, the orientation of the church, and even the placements of chapels, entries, and bays.

This conformity was not only, perhaps not even *primarily*, about coercion and top-down authority, that is, hard standardization. Cistercian conformity was also about soft standards: the monks' horizontal, flexible engagement with their surroundings through which they taught and learned, studied and read, and measured their spiritual and devotional progression. Mary Carruthers tells the story of a modern-day Cistercian who had to move to a distant monastery and worried that unfamiliar surroundings would disturb his patterns of devotion and meditation. Instead, he was relieved to find that this did not happen as the buildings and plan of the new monastery were very similar, almost identical to his old monastery.[92] Hovedøya and Lyse show precisely such familiar Cistercian patterns through their material remains. Abbots and monks from the Norwegian houses would have found their way around in Cîteaux during their visitations, just as abbots and monks from the motherhouses in England would have done in Norway. Most importantly, the conformity of the sites would have enabled the monks to navigate spiritually, not just spatially.

As scholars we may assume, albeit never know for certain, that the Norwegian monks' perceptions of their natural and built environment were embedded *both* in a northern, local outlook and in a global "Cistercianity." On the one hand, we know that their liturgical usages and structures were meticulously regulated through coercive, centralized, and hard standards of the order. But, on the other hand, their readings, which we may presume to know something about from the scratchy evidence of extant holdings and catalogs at Fountains and Kirkstead, filtered their experiences of landscape and architecture, offering embedded and embodied cognition which turned their local environments into navigable liturgical sensescapes. This navigability created Cistercian cohesion.

The flexibility and creativity of Cistercian soft standards illustrate the flux between standardization and individuality-diversity in a way that reflects the broader Christianization and enculturation processes in Scandinavia. Just as medieval Scandinavia developed its own distinctive "micro-Christendom," to borrow Peter Brown's phrase,[93] sharing in a common Roman Christianity, but with strong regional flavor and local adjustments, just so the Cistercians in Norway flexibly responded to local conditions while sharing in a common Cistercian identity, as "micro-Cistercianities."

92 Carruthers, *Craft of Thought,* 256.

93 Brown, *Rise of Western Christendom*, 355, 364, 378.

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Abbreviations

CCCM = Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis. 378 vols. to date. Turnhout: Brepols, 1966–<2024>.
DN = Diplomatarium Norvegicum. Edited by Chr. C. A. Lange et al., 23 vols. Christiania/Oslo: Seksjon for kildeutgivelse, Riksarkivet, 1847–2011.
PL = Patrologia Latina. Edited by J-P Migne, 221 vols. Paris, 1841–1855.
SBOp = Sancti Bernardi Opera. Edited by Jean Leclercq et al, 8 vols. Rome: Editiones cistercienses, 1957–1977.

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Svein H Gullbekk, Matthew J. Walsh, Marianne Moen

9 Standardization of Ritual Offerings: The Eucharist, Human Sacrifice and Monetization

Abstract: Ritual and standardization are practically synonymous. The differences lie largely in how they are perceived by those enacting either in practice. In this paper, we offer a novel perspective of the standardization of religious ritual by addressing the Eucharist as one example of a sacrificial ritual transformed and strengthened over time as a direct result of systematic (and dogmatic) standardization. The Eucharist is a ritual explicitly reflective of Christ's self-sacrifice. In this regard it is also the ultimate act of sacrifice within the Christian tradition. It is regularly integrated into the daily life of Christians through the symbolic consumption of Christ's flesh and blood through the Eucharistic rite during Mass. Using this example, we examine how sacrificial practices can be subject to processes of substitutions and reorganizations into standardized, culturally embedded formats. The Eucharist memorializes a fundamentally significant human sacrifice by way of standardized ritualized language and accoutrements that in themselves contain multiple references to related values. By formalizing the ritual language of the Christian Church in rituals such as this, uniform and thereby transmittable messages were implemented and eventually cemented. This substantially aided the spread of Christian ritual doctrine during the Middle Ages and standardization was key to this process.

Keywords: Eucharist, ritual, sacrifice, coin, host

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Svein H Gullbekk, Marianne Moen, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo
Matthew J. Walsh, National Museum, Copenhagen

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Introduction

Performative rituals have been an integral aspect of different societies for millennia. These rituals are very often highly standardized which is not surprising given that a common feature of ritual acts is their standardization and potential for accurate repetition. One such standardized performative ritual is the making of offerings such as sacrifices, including those of human victims, amongst many other possibilities. The variety of rituals revolving around sacrificial acts is immense and culturally relative. Such rituals are refined through processes of homogenization and standardization everywhere and archaeological evidence suggests that this has been the case for a very long time. In this paper, we explore one such sacrificial ritual and its route to a standardized and culturally uniform expression. The questions we raise relate to the nature of sacrificial offerings and their mutability, how such practices may come to be sublimated and legitimised in different ways for different reasons, as well as how such offerings may be made through substitutions in place of other offerings or victims. Our selected case study, the Eucharist, is here presented as a particularly successful ritual (in the sense that it has been perpetuated and refined to the nth degree without losing its primary focus or purpose) whose historically established form can be understood as a complex process of increasing standardization.

We present the Eucharist as an example of a sacrificial offering in a systematized ritual tradition highly influenced by cosmological reckoning, intra-religious institutions and politics – particularly in the hierarchical societies of medieval European Christendom. We discuss how the rites and rituals of the Eucharist were created and transformed, and related to ideas of gift-giving (i.e., offerings) and exchange, over time expressed somewhat paradoxically in monetary ideas and values, both ideologically and in practice. We further tie this in with the development of an increasingly unified Church, as solidified through reforms from the eleventh century onwards, and with the process of monetization. Over time the Eucharistic rituals and their ideas were gradually shaped and reshaped into rites that were formally sanctioned by the Fourth Lateran Council in Rome in 1215. Eventually, the sacrament of the Eucharist became a systematically standardized practice, reflecting a ritualized value system of exchange, permanence and collective identities. The deep and pervasive importance of standardized sacramental rituals across cultures cannot be understated; as Catherine Bell observes:

> Rites of exchange and communion help articulate complex systems of relationships among human beings, gods, demons, ancestors, and animals. Such rites call attention to an order in these relationships that all depend upon for their well-being. Offerings to ancestors, gifts from the spirits, or sacrifices in which the object and the god become one all create a pro-

Figure 23: Last Supper, the chancel ceiling from Ål Stave Church, Buskerud county in Norway. Date: c. 1275–1300. C11707. Photo: Eirik Irgens Johnsen, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo. Used with permission.

> found sense of cosmic interrelatedness and of human responsibility for more than one's own immediate needs.[1]

The transformation of the sacrifice of Christ into a ritual of consumption and communion made available to everybody within the medieval Christian community was based on a dogmatic explanation that within the Church itself was classified as a mystery. Crucially however, as a mystery that was repeated *ad infinitum* until Judgement Day, and defined as one of the sacraments of pivotal importance for every single member of the Christian congregation. In this process, standardization occurs in varied stages: from smaller, almost undetectable developments in rituals to substantial leaps in ceremonial display and the formal structuring of the rite. Importantly, as this concept and ritual process evolved, the associated rites were refined, defined and reiterated, and the performative ritual itself – already canonical – became sacrosanct through its standardization (Figure 23).

1 Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 136.

As Whitehouse and Hodder have observed for the development of early religious ritual in general: High-frequency ritual performances allow complex networks of ideas to be transmitted and stored in memory as relatively schematized encyclopedic knowledge, leading to the standardization of teachings in collective memory. Unauthorized deviations from the standard canon thus become easy to identify. At the same time, routinization tends to suppress certain kinds of creative thinking about the meanings of the rituals, reducing the risks of innovation.[2]

Standardization and Perspectives

When we introduce standardization into a discussion of medieval rituals related to monetization and offerings, we introduce a concept that in a scholarly sense belongs to the Early modern and modern period. Timmermans and Epstein note that:

> The literary theorist Raymond Williams (1985) traced the English word "standard," in its modern senses of a source of authority and a level of achievement, to the fifteenth century. By contrast, he noted, "standardization" came into recognizable use only in the late nineteenth century by way of the domains of science.[3]

However, observations of standardization have since been applied to a plethora of processes in ancient and medieval societies. Still, the *concept* of standardization is not one that has been a hallmark of medieval studies. In this paper however, we do apply the concept of standardization in order to detangle the interlinked process of monetization and ritual practices within the Church, with the view that processes of standardization are an integral part of large-scale cultural phenomena, such as Christianity, the Church, and the rituals thereof. Through this, we offer a view of how different standards, measured by monetary concepts as well as notions of the sacred, became both embedded and expressed in processes of standardization.

Standards and standardization are closely related to a broad range of theoretical concepts such as measurement, ritualization, social practice, harmonization of procedures and methods, and, last but not least, classification. One concept typically implies another, which means that we need greater nuance to understand their implications for a world significantly shaped by both, which was very much the case in medieval Christian Europe. Of course, one of the institutions with the greatest ability to adopt standardization processes in the medieval world was the

2 Whitehouse and Hodder, "Modes of Religiosity," 123.
3 Timmermans and Epstein, "A World of Standards," 70–71.

Church. Its ability to shape ritualized concepts into a common taxonomy and terminology, as expressed in its use of symbols, iconography and a vast range of pictorial representations, as well as its ability to shape standardized architectural spaces and create defined congregation communities at every scale, all fed into the Church's ultimate message of salvation through following the path of righteous faith as defined and policed by the Church itself. Its success in this rested upon its ability to impose a standardized ritual practice, thus creating and maintaining a sense of order in a world full of sin, chaos and danger.

In their book *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (2000), Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star insightfully observe that "to classify is human."[4] Hence, we agree that classification is a ubiquitous human activity. As but one example, they point out that the consequences of classificatory architecture influence everything from policy to social organization and from linguistics to cognition and ways or perceiving the world. Drawing on Bowker and Star, we define standardization as a process of constructing uniformities across time and space, through the generation of agreed-upon rules. Similarly, anthropologist Donald Brown builds on a large body of work also to posit that classificatory systems are universal features of human ontology, and diverse taxonomic systems throughout cultures support this observation.[5] Thus, classification and standardization are major facets of taxonomy building. And, standardization is imperative for generating predictability as a precondition for meaningful social and cultural engagement. However, this is in some ways difficult to achieve conceptually as well as culturally because human behavior is complex and often unpredictable; as Turner and Engh point out in this volume:

> Crucially, while complex human interactions presuppose predictability and constraint, they also presuppose flexibility. Cultures exploit the great flexibility of the human imagination to invent institutions for the purpose of generating sufficient regularity and stability in the face of otherwise uncontrollable behavior.[6]

By standardizing aspects of human experience such as places and events, a "comfort zone" is created in which otherwise cautious expectations and reservations may be, at least partially disregarded, allowing for more casual, or at least relaxed, social engagement and interaction to take place. This is not to suggest that standards allow such engagements to be unpremeditated or nonchalant, but rather that standardized or ritualized places and proceedings allow participants

4 Bowker and Star, *Sorting Things Out*, 1.

5 See, Donald Brown, *Human Universals*.

6 See Turner and Engh, "Flexibility, Predictability, Standardization" in this volume.

to gauge their surroundings and the unfolding of events with what Whitehouse calls "implicit procedural memory."[7] In effect, standardization in the form of ritualization allows us to essentially commune more effectively, thus facilitating prosociality and bonds through shared experiences, which also aids in creating collective identities.[8] In this context, standardization lets us let our guard down.

In the Middle Ages, the Eucharist is a prime example of a cultural manifestation of a standardized rite and rituals with a widespread distribution, both in time and space, encapsulating different cultural expressions concerning rituals of (human) sacrifice, as the Eucharist explicitly represents Christ's offering of himself on the cross as the means of humanity achieving salvation. However, it is not about human sacrifice in a general sense, but specifically about how the Eucharistic rituals transformed and standardized concepts of human sacrifice within the Christian faith. In this process of transformation, new paths of (material) ritualization and ritual drama would form the basis for new avenues of ritual expression that could be multiplied and adapted by Christian congregations throughout Christendom, capitalizing on the standardization at which the Church excelled. It is no exaggeration to suggest that Christ's crucifixion on the cross constitutes the single most important event within the New Testament. It is both the culmination and beginning of the redemption of humanity. Within the Christian tradition, Christ's sacrifice would mean an end to all human sacrifice and at the same time becomes the beginning of the transformation of sacrifice on a massive scale and with unprecedented consequences in the history of ritualization. Paradoxically, this final act of human sacrifice would perpetuate symbolic – and even real – acts of human sacrifice to be repeated across the centuries to follow.

Ritual processes can at a glance appear to culminate in the formulation of cultural "traditions" of sorts – common practices, observable norms, etc. – but standardization alone does not a ritual make. Ritualization is a process with which a series of actions are performed according to a prescribed order, composing a rite, often with the purpose of achieving something (from a personal goal to a greater good) within the order of a particular religious belief system. However, Bell describes standardization processes in ritual praxis as coming from the simplest forms of mimesis – the mimicry of natural gestures, movements, utterances and the like – to the institutionalization of complex and formal recipes for action, legitimized and regulated as doctrine.[9] Ultimately there is a dynamic at play between mimesis, standardization and ritualization, but these need not necessarily

7 Whitehouse, "Transmissive Frequency," 172.

8 See, Whitehouse and Lanman, "The Ties that Bind Us," 680.

9 Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 122.

be mutually inclusive or exclusive.[10] The Communion ceremony and the Eucharist host itself clearly embody this fine mesh of standardized mimetic ritualization processes, reflected in both action and material.

In a past project focusing on the subject of human sacrifice, hosted by the Museum of Cultural History in Oslo, we proposed that we could track the trajectory of human sacrifice traditions through time across a diversity of societies.[11] However, what we have found within the project is that this host of phenomena 1) is actually too diverse to track in a coherent way at a global scale; 2) that this diversity is tied to a vast array of historical circumstances and conditions; and 3) that what we see at much smaller temporal and regional scales (e.g., Southern Scandinavia in the Pre-Roman Iron Age, or Aztec Tenochtitlan in the late fifteenth century AD) is that there is a notable coherence within some ritualized violence (i.e., sacrifice) traditions.[12] Thus, on the one hand, the phenomenon itself – "human sacrifice" – has not evolved as any sort of global singularity in any essential way. On the other, in very particular times, places and circumstances it has emerged in a diversity of ways and with myriad expressions, and has served a variety of purposes within the societies in which it appears. Once in situ, the praxis of human sacrifice often has become highly standardized within the relative contexts of any given society. Here, we suggest that the Eucharist is one such expression of human sacrifice whose study can yield insights into a specific tradition of ritualized human violence.

The Development of the Eucharist: A Brief Overview

The Eucharist represents, through the consumption of Christ's body and blood, the death of Christ as an explicit sacrifice. Indeed, the sixteenth century Council of Trent under Pope Pius IV, condemns as anathema any who should not recog-

10 Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 124.

11 Løvschal, Gullbekk, Johansen, O´Neill, Walsh and Willerslev, "Human Sacrifice."

12 When we embarked upon this project *Nature* published a study where trajectories of human sacrifice traditions were pointed out through time and across a diversity of societies, concluding that human sacrifice was a product of social complexity and stratification. However, we felt that this study did not consider deeply enough the diversity of underlying motivations within sacrificial logics, and their culturally relative foundations and implications, see Watts, Sheehan, Atkinson et al. "Ritual Human Sacrifice."

nize the Eucharist "as being a true and singular sacrifice."[13] The sacrificial nature of the ritual is further underscored by the Latin term used to describe the unleavened bread – the "host" – consumed during the Rite of Communion is "*hostia*" meaning "victim, sacrificial animal, or offering". The death of Christ as an act of sacrifice is a cornerstone of the Christian faith and the Church as an institution. In this context, we explore the logics of sacrifice through an anthropological and historical understanding, as they relate to the Eucharist as a mnemonic ritual in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and how it was standardized and transformed into a ritual performance where each and every parishioner individually came to experience Christ's sacrifice.

The Eucharist represents a clearly manifested example of the Church's tactic of implementing (and eventually enforcing) standardized rituals.[14] At the beginning of the eleventh century, the Liturgy of the Eucharist encompassed considerable diversity.[15] Standardization of the liturgy increased considerably in scope and ambition in the eleventh and twelfth centuries under the leadership of the great monastic centers of Cluny and Cîteaux. The friars, as itinerant preachers, needed standardized liturgy and standardized missals to be brought with them on their journeys.[16] In relation, MacCall notes that as part of the unification of doctrine and liturgy:

> The eleventh century witnessed the controversy over eucharistic doctrine revolving around Berengar of Tours. Lanfranc, who opposed Berengar's more symbolic understanding of the eucharistic presence, also replaced the cross with the Host in the ceremony of the *Elevatio,* its lifting up from the place in which it had been "buried" on Good Friday on Easter. This may indicate, as it would in the future, a connection between ritual, drama, and the increasing piety of vision that some would see as a central element of medieval social life.[17]

Indeed, as Megan Macdonald writes:

> in the Christian tradition, focus on the celebration of the Eucharist in which the ceremony of blessing the bread and wine and then the communal sharing of the meal which, depending on the denomination, either represent or transubstantiate into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This one central ritual is surrounded by smaller distinct rituals such as prayers, responses, readings and songs which collectively make up the text of the liturgy.[18]

13 Session 22, Canon 1.
14 Anatolios, "Sacraments in the Fourth Century," 146.
15 Hope, "Liturgical books."
16 Macy, "Theology of the Eucharist," 365.
17 MacCall, *Do This*, 13.
18 Macdonald, *Performance art, Liturgy, and the Performance of Belief,* 105.

From afar, the ritualized Eucharist looks relatively uniform, even across the various and diverse communities of Christian theology, but a closer look reveals myriad local and regional particularities that were and are expressed through rhetoric and ritual. Indeed, in a world of standardized ritual activity, the need for variety should not be underestimated; a rite of enormous significance that is to be presented regularly week after week, year after year, actually benefits from both variety *and* repetition.[19] However, these variations do not significantly detract from the overall standardized ritual template of the Eucharist or its "implicit procedural memory," which by virtue of repetition maintains the significance of Christ's sacrifice in the enactment of this most sacrosanct expression of Christian faith.[20]

A crucial aspect of the death of Christ is that its nature as a sacrifice was definitive: not only did it in theory ensure the salvation of humanity on a general scale, it also ended the need for future human sacrifices. It is relevant however, that human sacrifice had in fact already been banned from large parts of the Graeco-Roman world by the time of the crucifixion. According to Christian belief, the death of Christ was necessary for the salvation of humanity, but it also ended the need for any subsequent sacrifices. As the classical scholar René Girard posits, if one understands human sacrifice as an act of substitution where a surrogate victim or scapegoat is disposed of for the greater good of the many, then Christ is the ultimate scapegoat.[21]

However, though human sacrifice was no longer required, the necessity of keeping the sacrifice of Christ relevant through memory is evidenced by its repeated reenactment. This forms a cornerstone of Christian doctrine and practice.[22] Its central importance is demonstrated by some of the earliest Ante-Nicene (or before the First Council of Nicaea in 325) Christian sources. In his early second century *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (VI–VII), Ignatius of Antioch (d. c. 110) records how understandings of the Eucharist differed:

> consider those who are of a different opinion with respect to the grace of Christ which has come unto us [. . .] They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ.[23]

19 Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts*, 3.

20 Concerning the Eucharist in the contexts of the medieval Church, see Rubin, *Corpus Christi*; Levy, Macy, and Ausdall, eds., *A Companion to the Eucharist*; Grumett, *Material Eucharist*.

21 Girard, *The Scapegoat*.

22 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ*, 569.

23 *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 145.

This may be taken to mean that early Christians believed both that Christ's death was unequivocally a sacrificial act as well as a belief in a literal notion of transubstantiation. Irenaeus (d. 202) also acknowledges that Christ's death was recognized early on as a sacrificial exchange, as Schraff (1885, 884) translates:

> the Lord thus has redeemed us through His own blood, giving His soul for our souls, and His flesh for our flesh [. . .] (V:I), [. . .] When, therefore, the mingled cup and the manufactured bread receives the Word of God, and the Eucharist of the blood and the body of Christ is made [. . .] having received the Word of God, becomes the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ [. . .] (V:2–3).[24]

This use of Christ's flesh and blood as "oblation" is important. It lays the Eucharist out as sacrificial in nature.[25] Irenaeus also makes the point that "God is not appeased by sacrifices" (XVIII: 1–4), which is also echoed early on by Athenagoras the Athenian in his *Plea for the Christians* (XIII). Justin Martyr (110–165), in his *Dialogue* (LXX) clearly understood the bread and wine as flesh and blood in purely symbolic terms when he argues:

> Now it is evident, that in this prophecy [allusion is made] to the bread which our Christ gave us to eat, in remembrance of His being made flesh for the sake of His believers, for whom also He suffered; and to the cup which He gave us to drink, in remembrance of His own blood, with giving of thanks.

A similar symbolic understanding of the Eucharist runs throughout *The Didachte*.

Meanwhile, in his 2nd century *Address to the Greeks*, Tatian of Adiabene (XXV), bemoans:

> What injury do we [Christians] inflict upon you, O Greeks? Why do you hate those who follow the word of God, as if they were the vilest of mankind? It is not we who eat human flesh.[26]

In this same period, in his letter to Autolycus, Theophilus (III:IV) argues that the former was misled in believing (among other things) that the Christians engaged in "what is most impious and barbarous of all, that we eat human flesh".[27] Tatian clearly understood the Eucharist in symbolic terms. These charges are echoed by Athenagoras (XXXI) when he writes "they have further also made-up stories

24 *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 884.
25 Tylor, "Primitive Culture," 375–410.
26 *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 118.
27 *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 179.

against us of impious feasts."[28] But rumours go both ways. The American classicist James Rives observes that:

> in the latter fourth century AD we find human sacrifice attributed to the pagans who rejected Christianity and to the heretics who distorted it. Among the latter it was for some reason the Montanists in particular who were liable to this charge; the story that they used the blood of infants in their eucharist was apparently widespread.[29]

These examples indicate that there were obvious paradoxes among non-Christians (and some Christians alike) in relation to this foundational ritual of early Christianity.[30] Thus, for the early Church, formalizing and standardizing the rituals of Communion may have been one way of sanitizing what to those outside the Church must have seemed a macabre and discursive rite of anthropophagy.

However, sharing in such an otherwise anathema communal repast – the theophagy of Christ's flesh and blood clearly set the early Christians apart and likely served to strengthen their bonds of fealty and community through this shared theophagic sacrament.[31]

The examples given above may be juxtaposed against St. Augustine's early fifth century sermon *On the Holy Day of Easter to the Infantes, on the Sacraments* (Sermon 227) in which he addresses the newly converted:

> I haven't forgotten my promise. I had promised those of you who have just been baptized a sermon to explain the sacrament of the Lord's table, which you can see right now, and which you shared in last night. You ought to know what you have received, what you are about to receive, what you ought to receive every day. That bread which you can see on the altar, sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ. That cup, or rather what the cup contains sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ. It was by means of these things that the Lord Christ wished to present us with his body and blood which he shed for our sake for the forgiveness of sins. If you receive them well, you are yourselves what you receive. You see, the apostle says, We, being many are one loaf, one body (1 Cor 10: 17). That's how he explained the sacrament of the Lord's table; one loaf, one body, is what we all are, many though we be.[32]

Taken in its whole, this sermon to a post-catechumenate assembly relates step-by-step the underlying paradigm, everyday praxis, and the individual expectations and social implications entailed in the Rite of Communion and life as a Christian. In other

28 *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 231.

29 Rives, "Human Sacrifice," 83.

30 See discussion and references in Lanzillotta, "The Early Christians".

31 See, Whitehouse, "Religion, Cohesion"; see also Xygalatas et al "Extreme Rituals Promote Prosociality."

32 *The Works of Saint Augustine*, 254.

words, by the time St. Augustine preached these words (c. 414–415), there appears to have been a far less-ambiguous standard for comprising the communal ritual in a way that was uniformly understood within the Church. In other words, it had been standardized into the ritual generally recognized in the twenty-first century.

As the American art historian Aden Kumler notes:

> The protagonists of the first major chapter in the medieval design of the Eucharist took up the question of the nature of the sacrament and attempted to illuminate the special relationship it necessarily involved between the visible species and their invisible, transformed status as the body and blood of Christ.[33]

By the Early Medieval Period, the substantive nature of the Eucharist remained up for some theological debate, but the surrounding rituals were fairly well-set in place, despite relatively minor idiosyncratic variations between parishes and communities. Indeed, the question of transubstantiation and the presence of Christ in the Eucharist was a matter of debate among thirteenth century theologians as well.[34]

In point of this observation, the first Eucharistic "controversy" was played out between the Carolingian theologists Paschasius Radbertus (c.785–c.860) and Ratramnus (d. 868). Both of these monks belonging to the great royal abbey at Corbie in Picardie, France. The issue at stake in the controversy was related to the sacraments of Christ.[35] Both men were attempting to standardize the liturgical rituals related to the Eucharist, however from different perspectives. Radbertus saw the body of Christ present in the Eucharist as the true flesh and blood of Christ (i.e. transubstantiation). Ratramnus believed these to be figurative symbols through which parishioners commemorated Christ's self-sacrifice.

Disagreements aside, what can be said with some certainty is that within just a few short centuries, the early Christians transformed an execution into a sacrifice, a sacrifice into a sacrament, and a sacrament into the foundation of a religious institution that would eventually become a global phenomenon. Arguably, this was all made possible through conscious moves along the way towards increasingly standardized ritual traditions and doctrines. Officially, the meaning of the Eucharist sacrament was defined through the concept of transubstantiation as a dogma explaining the presence of Christ in the Eucharist at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, introducing the doctrine of transubstantiation.[36] However, even in contemporary and official spheres there remains incongruity on the sub-

33 Kumler, *Translating Truth*, 106.

34 See, Thibodeau, "The Doctrine of Transubstantiation in Duran's 'Rationale'."

35 Saxon, "Carolingian, Ottonian, and Romanesque Art and the Eucharist," 258.

36 Brown, *Judgement to Passion*, 9–59 on the Carolingian attempts at standardization.

ject of transubstantiation and its place in the standardization of the Eucharist, as Pope Benedict XVI was observing, in the case of transubstantiation it appears that there has been a transition from understanding to standardization and, a reversal of the relationship (between faith and philosophy).[37]

Monetizing the Eucharist

When the Eucharist achieved its central transformation – from flesh to bread and blood into wine in the fourth century – there was hardly anything that could compare with coins and currencies in the process of standardization. In the Roman Empire currencies were more sophisticated and more widely distributed than most material manifestations. Measures of value are fundamental but relative features of any society, clearly exemplified through the Roman monetary system, but also in the Byzantine, Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian monetary systems that were deeply influenced by Roman traditions. In the case of the Christian Rite of Communion we can observe values that are surely impossible to calculate with any precision, or, indeed, translate into a monetary terminology. Even so, both the concept of value and material wealth and resources are and were often measured in monetary terms, while – as a mystery – the value of the Eucharist is beyond such measure because conceptually it serves as a reminder of access to eternal salvation. In many societies, in the past as today, money and monetary means of exchange provide a primary instrument through which social mechanisms function – they are the lifeblood of exchange. But all forms of money are based on relative values which can be measured against each other. One key aspect of such measurement is that it rests upon formulations of recognized, standardized values and concepts of trust. All of this is made possible through processes of standardization.

Within the Christian tradition there is hardly anything with greater symbolic value than the Eucharistic rituals and offerings. If the Eucharist host is to be the flesh of Christ, and it can so simply be represented appropriately even by mere chunks of bread, why turn it so explicitly into an object resembling a coin? As we will now present, the resemblance between Eucharist wafers and medieval coinage is both strong and intriguing, reflecting a way of thinking about measures in terms that were universally accepted in medieval Christian Europe.

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century, we can observe a second wave of monetization within Western Christianity that commenced within the circles of Carolingian rulership. This was begun in the name

37 Ratzinger, *Collected Works*.

of the Frankish king Pepin the Short (747–768) and was finally realized by Charlemagne (774–814) and Louis the Pious (814–840).[38] In parallel, expansion in minting and monetary use became a feature of Anglo-Saxon society from the eighth century onwards, peaking in the late tenth and eleventh centuries fuelled by silver from the Harz-mountains in German territory. Of course, Ottonian and Salian Germany took advantage of their great silver resources and embarked on the wave of monetization from the 960s onwards. German and Anglo-Saxon currencies travelled across the North Sea towards Scandinavia in enormous numbers; in greater quantities even than Islamic dirhams had done. This would pave way for minting on industrial levels among the Danes and Norwegians in the tenth and eleventh centuries, less so among the Swedes.[39]

Coinage arrived rather late into the Scandinavian world. It was first introduced into Viking society in Ribe in the eighth century. It became state-based through the tenth and eleventh centuries in Denmark, in Norway in the eleventh century and in Sweden in the twelfth. During this span, the adoption, creation and management of standards were important for the administration of people, communities and larger administrative bodies because establishing a trust in the value of the currency was crucial to the success and expansion of exchange. Thus, every coin issued carried explicit considerations as to its size, weight, legends, and fabric, etc. Indeed, the iconographic messages presented on the coins themselves, communicated a nuanced message of political and religious authority and legitimization, which could be widely and rapidly circulated and thus disseminated, in a society where human sacrifice still was part of ritual traditions.[40] The effective standardization, and recognition of it, was imperative. Thus, for preliterate Viking society, as elsewhere, coinage quickly became a vehicle for understanding and measuring value, but also a powerful and effective device for communicating political authority as legitimation of power – in standardized formats.

When bread wafers were introduced as part of Eucharist rituals is difficult to establish with any precision. There is evidence for reduction of the size of the bread in Antioch in the third century and in Rome in the sixth century, but there seems to be a general understanding that bread wafers in the form of coins were introduced first in the eleventh century:

> The change of custom is contemporaneous with the transition from leavened to unleavened bread, and is probably related to it. The delicate pieces of thin wafer almost invited this

38 See, Little, *Religious Poverty*; Spufford, *Money and its Use*.

39 Moesgaard, *King Harold's Cross Coinage*; and "Sølvpenninge"; Skaare, *Coins and Coinage in Viking-Age Norway*; Gullbekk, *Pengevesenets fremvekst og fall i Norge i middelalderen*.

40 Garipzanov, "Religious Symbols on early Christian Scandinavian Coins."

> method of distribution, since, unlike the pieces of unleavened bread formerly used, they easily adhered to the moist tongue. At the synod of Rouen a further rule was established that at high Mass the priest was to give the Eucharist into the hands of the deacon and subdeacon as *ministri altaris.* During the tenth and eleventh centuries this right was narrowed down to priests and deacons.[41]

These coin-like bread wafers are sometimes referred to as "wheatened-money" or "minted wafers", a term first observed in the writings of Bernard of Constance in 1089 and Ernulf, Bishop of Rochester in the early twelfth century.[42] One interesting and related facet of ongoing academic discussions of the Eucharist bread has been a fixation on whether the bread should be leavened or not.[43] Of course, the bread wafers organic nature has hardly left us any material residue to investigate, but there are wafer-irons with which one produced such wafers dating from the twelfth and thirteenth century in existence, such as in France and Norway.[44] Jungmann (1951, 32) notes that at the stage of the early Church, congregants brought loaves from their own domestic supply for use in the Eucharist (Figure 24, below), with the only distinction being that only the finest loaves of bread were used.[45] He also provides that in two mosaics from Ravenna dating from the third century show a scene in which the Eucharistic host is twisted into a circular crown, or small wreath (Figure 25)[46] – the pinnacle of the baker's art. Jungmann further positis that:

> Perhaps the form most frequently used was a round loaf divided into four parts by a cross-notch (*panis quadratus*, *panis decussatus*); its form easily lent itself to a Christian explanation, and so was even considered indispensable, although the shape had been developed merely for a very practical reason – easier breaking – and for precisely this reason had been in common use even in pre-Christian culture.[47]

Hand-in-hand with increased monetization the congregation's offerings to the Church started to be contributed in coins, with a significant rise in the tenth and eleventh century.[48] This was also a point in the history of the medieval Mass

41 Jungmann, "The Mass of the Roman Rite," 382.
42 Craig, "Fractio Panis," 196.
43 See, Paxton, "'Let us keep the feast.'"
44 Tveito, "The Sacred Bread," 60–63; Grumett *Material Eucharist*, 55–56.
45 Jungmann, "The Mass of the Roman Rite," 32.
46 See also Paxton, "'Let us keep the feast,'"160.
47 Jungmann, "The Mass of the Roman Rite," 33.
48 A rich body of archaeological evidence for coin-offerings in medieval churches provides insights into this phenomenon. Material approaches are found in Gullbekk, Kilger, Roland and Kristensen, *Coins in Churches*.

Figure 24: "Abraham and the Feeding of Three Strangers and the Sacrifice of Isaac." North Wall, Church of San Vitale, Ravenna. Date: 521–547. Photo: Matthew J. Walsh.

Figure 25: "Abel and Melchizedek Sacrificing." South Wall, Church of San Vitale, Ravenna. Date: 521–547. Photo: Matthew J. Walsh.

when the wafer-host began to be made *in modum denarii* ("in the manner of a coin"), observable in large from the eleventh century (see Figure 26).[49] Shortly thereafter, offerings of coins replaced both bread and wine, and candles came to be offered only on certain occasions. On the "minting" of the Eucharist, Gerald Ellard notes that the process began "about 1075, was generally accepted fifty years later,

49 Ellard, "Bread in the Form of a Penny," 340.

was the basis of speculative interpretation about 1150, and so taken for granted as to cease being noticed at all by 1200".[50]

Honorius Augustodunensis (d. c.1140) repeatedly describes the Eucharist-as-coin, e.g.:

> Which bread, moreover, is formed in the manner of a coin [*denarii*] because Christ, the living bread, was sold for the price of coins and he himself is the true coin, which according to the Decalogue of the law shall be given as a reward to those laboring in the vineyard.[51]

As did William Durandus in the late-thirteenth century, noting that:

> the bread is thus formed in the manner of a denarius [or penny], first because the bread of life was betrayed for the sake of denarii, also because [the bread of life] ought to be given as a reward to those labouring in the vineyard [a reference to Matt. 20:1–15] [. . .] Also the name and image of our emperor is often written on this bread, since through him [Christ] we are reformed in the image of God and our names are written in the book of life. Some also represent a lamb there, first because he who is sacrificed is a true lamb, but also for the sake of the text, which reads [Exodus 29]: This is what you shall do upon the altar: you shall offer lambs continually and wine for the libation unto the lamb.[52]

Kumler further summarizes this well when she writes that:

> Refashioned in the image of a coin, the Eucharist became a privileged measure of sacrality, an instantiation of pure value, of pure substance at the center of Christian life. In its decoupling of appearance and reality, in its insistence on its own incommensurability the sacrament was also made vulnerable. Was it food? Was it a kind of coin?[53]

Uniquely, it was both. While there is some notable ambivalence as to the order of the symbolic relationship, both the host and the coin came to be standardized in tandem, and the Eucharist's "becoming" a form of currency seems to have been an acceptable transformation in the eyes of the medieval Church and its coin-using congregations.

Finally, Jungmann finds direct links to the transformation of the Eucharistic host into coin-like wafers and the ceremony itself into one of explicit sacred exchange and the slide towards monetary offerings, noting that:

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50 Ellard, "Bread in the Form of a Penny," see also Kumler, "The Multiplication of the Species," 188.

51 Honorius Augustododunensis, *Eucharistion* (PL 172:1256CD), cited by Kumler, "The Multiplication of the Species," 188.

52 Kumler, "The Multiplication of the Species," 187.

53 Kumler, "The Multiplication of the Species," 191.

Figure 26: Mould for baking sacred hosts, Eggedal church, Buskerud county in Norway. Date: fourteenth century. C33273. Photo: Ellen C. Holte and Kirsten Jensen Helgeland, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo. Used with permission.

> Closely connected with such extinguishing of the Sacrament throughout all phases of every-day life was the change which took place about this time [mid-ninth century] in the type of bread used, the change to unleavened bread. Alcuin and his pupil Rabanus Maurus are the first indisputable witnesses to this new practice, which spread only very slowly. The increased reverence for the Sacrament probably helped to introduce the use of the pure white wafers which could be so much more easily broken without worry about crumbs. The change in the type of bread brought in its train a whole series of further changes in the Mass-liturgy. The offertory procession is relegated to specified feast-days and by slow degrees becomes an offering of money.[54]

54 Jungmann, "The Mass of the Roman Rite," 84.

The Church as a provider of truth and authority that was in need of a value symbol materialized, fulfilling the dogma of the Economy of Salvation – what were the options? Money was in place. Monetization was on the path of success within Christianity. By transforming the Eucharistic rituals, the Church adopted and adapted money and currencies into the heart of its sacraments. In short, the Church was utilizing one process of standardization to create another.

In this way the Church used the process of monetization as a premise for establishing the Eucharist, as part of the Rite of Communion, as a ritual institution, and at the same time this enhanced the process of monetization within Christendom.

Standardization, Ritual and the Vicissitudes of Sacrificial Logics

Throughout its range of forms, the rituals surrounding the Eucharist are at varying scales a process of memetic standardization – a recipe: i.e. follow the steps and everything should come out alright. In evolutionary terms, standardization is thus a quest for mnemonic parsimony, even when things get complicated, repetition, symbolism and other mnemonic devices provide a conceptual trajectory towards completion of a desired outcome, whatever that may be. In anthropology, non-scientific categorization frameworks are often referred to as "folk taxonomies"– culturally-specific ways of conceiving of and organizing the world (usually used when describing vernacular systems for naming and categorizing biological species among non-literate societies).[55] Ultimately, such classificatory systems rely on some form or another of standardization in order to be shared. Thus, categorization and standardization go hand in hand.

But, how might standardization, as in the establishment of *value* standards, allow for some things to become stand-ins for others? How did the Eucharistic host come to *be* the body of Christ, at least to some? We propose that this became possible in part through the standardization of abstract value; so long as the standard is recognized, a substitute offering will suffice, so long as its abstract value is also recognized, in its symbolism as well as through its material expression.

This same logic can be seen in sacrificial traditions in which a victim's life is substituted for that of another,[56] such as when a criminal is ritually killed in

55 Berlin, "Folk Systematics in Relation to Biological Classification and Nomenclature," 260–262.
56 See, Westermarck, *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, 454–458.

place of a king – as can be found in the scapegoat sacrifices (*pharmakos*) of the ancient Greeks and elsewhere.[57]

The value-systems underpinning sacrificial offerings require a clarification as to the perceived notion of value. A human life for instance does not in and of itself contain a fixed value. Rather, this is culturally relative to the highest degree, and depends on a host of intersecting variables in any given setting and society. Personhood is relative. This holds true not only across time and space, but also within particular cultural settings: *persons* are at all times in a constant state of becoming, both in a wider historical sense, and in more localized internal cultural settings.[58] Therefore, in order to discuss the classificatory value systems behind expressions of human sacrifice, it is necessary to qualify the perceived value, socially relative or not, of a human life within the society in question. Equally, we can distinguish a different underlying cultural appreciation of the value-content of a human life. We posit that it is not necessarily the value of the victim or offering, per se, but the value in the contexts of the act of their ritual forfeiture. This is due in part to the spectacle of the act of ritual offering, whatever and however it may be, as a socially-symbolic and politically-charged event. In many ways the spectacle – the act made sacred – outweighs the offering itself. In the Christian tradition, human lives are given *a priori* meaning and assigned personhood. Thus, the logics of sacrifice, though transformed and substituted into a symbolic act, still represent a standardization of a ritual whose basis lies in the offering of a human life for a perceived purpose or greater good.

Sacrifice as Standardized Exchange

At the heart of sacrifice lies a fundamental expectation of achieving something – universal happiness, keep good spirit – for the sake of good, or more specifically, for good weather, rich harvest, victory in battle, pleasing particular deities.[59] One gives something of exceptional value in order to achieve something – a classical exchange (transaction). Indeed, the works of early anthropologists and sociologists such as the Scotsman William Robertson-Smith and French scholars Henri Hubert, Marcel Mauss, and Émile Durkheim consider sacrifice to be an important

57 Bremmer, "Myth and Ritual in Greek Human Sacrifice," 57.
58 Jones, "Lives in Fragments."
59 See, Howell, "Introduction."

subcategory of exchange, as recently revisited by the Danish scholar of religious studies, Anders Klostergaard Pedersen.[60]

Sacrifice viewed as a form of exchange reflects the establishment of standardization well.[61] Sacrificial traditions tend to share a classificatory system of value, often measured against a human life as the top-tier sacrificial offering, but often this is hypothetical. Certainly, by the Early Middle Ages, and quite likely much earlier, money had taken on an accepted role as potential sacrificial tender, and the recognition of various currencies as standard units of value made it an exceptionally versatile stand-in.[62] Money made it possible for the Church to, whether purposely or not, put a price on salvation. Coinage quickly became the perfect means through which to meet that debt. This stands at the core of Christian doctrine expressed through the concept of the "Economy of Salvation" which provides the foundation for one of the most important subjects in theological discourse: the activity of the creator God in the world to redeem a fallen and sinful humanity.[63] The medieval period, especially the period from the later eleventh to the early thirteenth centuries, witnessed a particularly important and sustained instantiation of this discourse.

The development of standards – whether of practices, technologies, units of measure – constitutes a fundamental part of social construction, and has done so throughout human history. This mechanism is so deep-rooted in our behaviors that its origin is impossible to trace either in time or space. In point of fact, technological standardization (and thus the cognitive capacity for it and behaviours which perpetuate it) can be materially traced to the manufacture of Acheulean stone tools among *Homo erectus* at least as far back as c. 1.7 million years ago. We have been standardizing things for a very long time.

At its most basic, standardization encompasses the process of making things, i.e. objects, activities, or ideas uniform and with set units of measure – whatever those may be. This in turn makes those things easier to conceptualize, understand, categorize, communicate and replicate. Over time, this also fosters reliability in the sense of expectable outcomes when dealing with a given standardized phenomenon. This is such a fundamental principle that we rarely give it much thought.[64] By definition it

60 Pedersen, "From Sacrificed Humans to Self-Sacrificing Humans," 372.

61 See, Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice. Its Nature and Functions.*

62 Gullbekk and Wangsgaard, "The Economy of Sacrifice," 84–86.

63 For a convenient modern theological statement on the economy of salvation see "Cathechism of the Catholic Church," The Holy See <https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM>.

64 See the chapter by Bowker in this volume.

is a process by which phenomena are necessarily essentialized and compartmentalized in culturally relative terms.[65]

The Eucharist was made into a standardized (archetypical) ritual, though this occurred gradually over centuries.[66] At the heart of this issue was the sacrifice of Christ repeated on a regular basis within a congregation of religious followers during the Rite the Communion. This ceremony remains the most celebrated set of rituals that occur during Mass in parish churches throughout Christendom. The capacity to recreate the "ultimate" human sacrifice and allow all Christians to partake in it as both mimetic ritual and prosocial sacrament has remained the foundation of the Church across two millennia.[67] In this way, Christianity has translated and transformed a single human sacrifice – Christ's self-sacrifice on the cross – on a level that is unsurpassed in history, and, which, after two thousand years, continues unabated.

Like other religious movements before and since, Christianity has truly mastered the art of standardizing rituals, performances and symbols across cultural borders both locally and globally. This includes the celebration of human sacrifice as well as its transformation not only into sacrament but also sympathetic anthropo- and theophagy. Perhaps more so than any other religion to date, Christianity has managed to provide simplistic universal standards related directly to rituals of human sacrifice. At least by the Early Middle Ages, this fetishization of Christ's ultimate act of self-sacrifice had also been sublimated by the Church into a means of controlling individual followers' access to salvation. However, as Miri Rubin has stated, designing the medieval Eucharist was a long and heterogeneous process, and in that way the standardization of the Eucharist rituals was never one achievement, but a series of transformations and adaptions carried out over centuries, at varying speeds, and sometimes in large steps, sometimes in small.[68]

Standardizing Sacrifice

Standardization creates replicability. This in turn allows less explicitly valuable things to potentially take on implicit value based on recognition of a standard measure or trust in a backing institution. Not all classifications take formal shape

65 See Haidle, *How to Think Tools?*; Turner and Engh,"Flexibility, Predictability, Standardization" in this volume.

66 Kelly, "Eucharistic Sacrifice in the Council of Trent," 268; Grumett *Material Eucharist*, 19.

67 Grumett *Material Eucharist*; Kumler, *Translating Truth*, 103–159.

68 See, Rubin, *Corpus Christi*.

or are standardized, even in commercial and bureaucratic products. In many cases, the opposite is played out: one-of-a-kind things transcend standardization and are considered of exceptional value even if there is nothing with which to compare or contrast them – or perhaps *because* there is nothing with which to compare them. Even though empirical measures of size and material are the most obvious examples of standards being invented and adapted widely, non-empirical (i.e., ideational) standardization is also easily identified in the form of day-to-day routines and rituals. Driving home this point, Knut Blind has argued that standards and standardization are vastly important subjects which remain largely under-researched from empirical perspectives.[69]

Arguably, standardization is a prerequisite for many of the institutions and interactions in our modern world. As the adage goes, diamonds have no value but that which we place upon them. But we *can* compare the value of one diamond against another based on a set of criteria. Such criteria, when broadly recognized, become standard. In a sense, standardization creates the illusion of equal values between phenomena, and thus at least the potential for equitable exchange. Therefore, standardization is necessary in non-egalitarian economies where individual requirements or proclivities drive exchange rather than the needs or wants of the community. For example, the capacity to standardize has provided a handy solution for weighing division of labor and increasing demands for more efficient methods of production, logistics and consumption. As cultural constructs of value, classification and the establishment of standards in forms and ideals are everywhere. As Bowker and Star point out, in a typical modern Western household:

> Our lives are henged round with systems of classification, limned by standard formats, prescriptions, and objects. Enter a modern home and you are surrounded by standards and categories spanning the color of paint on the walls and in the fabric of the furniture, the types of wires strung to appliances, the codes in the building permits allowing the kitchen sink to be properly plumbed and the walls to be adequately fireproofed. Ignore these forms at your peril-as a building owner, be sued by irate tenants; as an inspector, risk malpractice suits denying your proper application of the ideal to the case at hand; as a parent, risk toxic paint threatening your children. To classify is human.[70]

If we accept the premise that to classify is human, we can query whether or not the same can be said of the desire to standardize. The necessity towards broad-scale sanctioned standardization – at least in terms of weights and measures of value in the context of exchange networks – likely developed early in complex societies. Sanctioned standards are not necessary in egalitarian forms of ex-

69 Blind, *The Economics of Standards*.

70 Bowker and Star, *Sorting Things Out*, 1.

change – merely that both parties agree upon the transaction – so it is not probable that standardization as we conceptualize it in the modern sense, was much of a concern for much of human prehistory. This is not to say that shared ideas, techniques and technologies were not standardized in the past. Indeed, one need look no further than the morphology of Acheulean hand axes as mentioned above. But, outside of technological arenas, standards of value would have been largely implicit prior to the development of large settled populations and the ever-expanding ranges of exchange which began to emerge during the Neolithic.

As described above, the creation and standardization of the Eucharist took place over several centuries, spanning from the third or fourth century well into the twelfth century, if not later. Indeed, the first written account of the Christian *eucharistia* (Greek: "thanksgiving") is that in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (around AD 55) in which Paul the Apostle relates "eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord" in the celebration of a "Supper of the Lord" referring to the Last Supper between Jesus and his apostles, which at the time had taken place some 25 years earlier.[71] However, from these early manifestations and into a standardized and widespread ritual, the influence of centrally determining Church doctrine was of essential importance. By the time of the Fourth Lateran Council in April 1215 the transubstantiation of the Eucharist was described in precise scholastic language and determined in form and function, a masterpiece of standardized ritual reaffirmation of faith.

Concluding Remarks

By making the Eucharist into a standardized, highly performative ritual retelling of the ultimate sacrifice of Christ, the Church created a powerful sacrament. The standardized nature of the ritual allowed for repetition, allowing for a uniform understanding and experience of a ritual which legitimized the Christian origin story, reasserted the need for salvation, and crucially reaffirmed that the only way to salvation was through believing in the sacrifice of Christ. The standardization of the ritual furthermore linked to monetization, was used to legitimize Christian faith through utilization of a standardized measure that rested on faith and custom. By employing the symbolic language of coinage and money, the Church created a strong language of trust and faith.

Standardizing rituals is, as we have argued here, a powerful way of creating uniform messages which can be spread and communicated widely with incredi-

71 Grumett *Material Eucharist*.

ble coherence over time. The nature of highly standardized rituals means that they can be repeated easily, and this repetition is key to producing a persuasive and pervasive ritual language. In this way, the Eucharist represents a success story of strategic standardization: by transforming a supreme sacrifice into a repeatable and legible ritual performance, the message of salvation as available through the Church (and its eventual explicit relationship to the monied economy of the medieval world) could be reinforced and asserted to degrees rarely realized in human history.

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Jon Gunnar Jørgensen

10 Skaldic Poetry – Encrypted Communication

Abstract: Human communication requires standardization. A language is a system of standardized structures and elements. To make it work, both parties must know these standards. Poetry is an example of highly specialized standardized communication, characterized by a system of syllables, phonological patterns and linguistic expressions (poetic images). Besides the aesthetic function, poetic figures can have a practical purpose as well, for example mnemonic. In skaldic poetry, metric and poetic standards were developed to an extreme degree. Instead of facilitating communication, the metric requirements created a challenge for the speaker (skald) as well as the recipient. In the case of skaldic poetry, standardization does not make the communication easier but far more difficult. It is probably also a part of the purpose. It should be an intellectual challenge and exercise, like a riddle, and test the degree of courtly education of the participants. The message of the stanza can be rather simple – the form is what counts, similar to athletics: In a competition of high jump, it is not the point to move from A to B in the most convenient way, but to master an obstacle. It is difficult, and that is the point. Skaldic poetry is a challenge to the listener as well as to the poet. The interpretation is a test of skills and courtly education.

Keywords: Skaldic poetry, Old Norse literature, Eddic poetry, metrics, verbal communication

Introduction

Language is a tool that serves to exchange messages between two parties. This occurs through standardized codes both parties are familiar with. Fundamentally, linguistic codes contribute to making communication simple and efficient. In addition to the pure message, style can convey connotations such as prestige or aesthetics. In the Old Norse court poetry (*dróttkvætt*) the standardized *form* has become incredibly advanced and often more important than the message. The art of skaldic poetry comes with great challenges for both the sender – the poet – and the recipient. Composing a skaldic poem can be compared to participating in an athletic rou-

Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, University of Oslo

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tine, where the physical performance is more important than the actual work being carried out. To a high jumper the essential part is not moving from point A to B, but clearing the obstacle, which requires a substantial level of technique and strength. To the skald, the contents are in many cases of lesser importance. The challenge lies in meeting extreme requirements of metric order, and in utilizing the obscure poetic language in such a way that it combines the aesthetically melodic with the cryptic. The aim was not to relay a message in a direct and precise way, but to master the art. The recipient faces an equal struggle in interpreting the poem. Fragmented syntax and obscure poetic language create intellectual challenges manageable by only a few. If the recipient is not intimately familiar with the standardized rules of skaldic poetry, he will not succeed in its interpretation. And if the recipient is unable to understand the content, he is not fit for polite society.

The relationship between form and content varies in different poems. I will here present some examples to illustrate this variation. The *dróttkvætt* form is always important, and provides the skald as well as the interpreter prestige. The content, however, can for various reasons be more or less important, though the metric standards with a few irregularities are encountered in all the examples. The advanced metric standards make the poem memorable and give the poet high prestige, like an athlete after an impressive performance.

I will start with a comparison of the traditional Eddic poem *Hamdismál* with the skaldic poem *Ragnarsdrápa*; these two poems partly refer to the same legend in different meters. I will then discuss the innovations that the *dróttkvætt*-meter (court meter) brings to the art, especially the relationship between form and content. Then I will more briefly present selected stanzas from different contexts to show different aspects of this relation. All these are composed in the advanced *dróttkvætt*-meter.

Standardization and Communication

Standardization is a precondition for human communication. The sender's signals must be interpreted by the recipient, and a necessity for the conveyance of a message is that both parties are familiar with its fundamental code. The same basic rule applies to such forms of language – if the forms of expression are to be interpreted correctly, the recipient must understand the standardized code of the sender.

By linguistic communication, humans can exchange detailed and advanced information. Language provides unlimited opportunities to share useful experiences. Strong degrees of standardization make precise and efficient communication possible, and further, interhuman cooperation and coordination.

Language has also provided humans with a tool for storytelling, an artistic re-creation of events, or chains of events that someone has experienced, and also for inventing stories about events which have not taken place, or which in the human mind have developed into a more fantastical narrative. In different human cultures standards for storytelling have also emerged, such as folktales that are made up of familiar elements within a firm structure. Similar standards are known from oral traditions across many parts of the world.[1] The structures can have a mnemonic function, and they contribute to simplifying the communication, as the recipient has certain expectations of how the story will proceed.

Within linguistic, artistic communication, advanced standards have developed both when it comes to form and the conveyance of content. In poetry, different metric standards have provided the linguistic message with aesthetic impression and not least mnemonic aid. Rhyme and rhythm contribute to fixing the linguistic expression. In addition, different rhetorical techniques, poetic forms of expressions, have developed, which can expand the potential for interpretation, to creating images, which the recipient can elaborate on in his own mind. Examples of this can be metaphors, allusions, or use of *pars pro toto*. Yet again, the precondition for the interpretation of the poetic language is that the recipient is familiar with the standardized techniques employed by the sender.

From Storytelling to Poetry

We find developing alliteration in the earliest written sources from the Germanic area, in the oldest runic inscriptions, such as on the golden horn of Gallehus (DR12), which dates from before 450 AD.[2] The inscription on the Strøm whetstone (NIæR 52) from Trøndelag (c. 600–800 AD)[3] has clear alliteration of 'h' and the same number of syllables in both verses:

Verse A: **wate hali hino horna** (May the horn wet this stone)
Verse B: **haha skaþi haþu ligi** (May it harm the hey/gras, but lie (peacefully) in a fight).[4]

1 Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*; Greimas, *Strukturel semantik*.
2 "Danske runeindskrifter," Nationalmuseeet, Danske runeindskrifter,
3 *Norges Indskrifter med de ældre Runer* II, 677–710.
4 Aag, "Strøm runebryne," 144, 148. Recently an alternative interpretation was suggested by Bjorvand, "Dramaet på Straumsbrynet". A: '(they) drowned the immoral man. B: horse-abuser, lie (buried) in shame!'. The interpretation will not be discussed further here, since the actual point is to document the alliteration.

The poetic genre in Norse tradition, which has been referred to as Eddic poetry after the collection called *The Poetic Edda* in the manuscript GKS 2365 4to (*Codex Regius*), has a simple stanza structure following two main stylized types: *Fornyrðislag* and *ljóðaháttr*. *Fornyrðislag* has pairs of verses (*short-lines*) with two accentuated syllables in each line connected by alliteration. The metric form will be explained in the following.

Stylistic devices, such as *heiti* (synonyms) and *kennings* (poetical periphrasis) exist, but are generally easily interpreted. The content of Eddic poetry can be of a didactic or narrative character. The basic metric form has a mnemonic function and provides the message with an aesthetic form that enhances its artistic value. To the listener the Eddic poetry is entertaining and engaging, due to both form and content, and it is not hard to interpret. The meter serves an aesthetic and mnemonic purpose.

Since the 19th century, it has been generally accepted that the preserved Eddic poetry cannot be older than the Viking Age, as Sophus Bugge wrote: "Det staar alsaa fast, at hele den til os bevarede nordiske mythisk-heroiske Digtning ikke er ældre end Vikingetiden."[5] (It is thus clear that the whole of Nordic mythical-heroic poetry preserved for us is not older than the Viking Age). Due to the lingual syncope in the period AD 500–700, an attempt to transform Eddic verses back into the older linguistic stage, Proto-Norse, would significantly disrupt the structure of the verses. However, we should note Bugge's wording "den til oss bevarede" (preserved for us). Though the poems in the form we have them are of younger date, we can consider the art to be much older, as the runic inscriptions indicate.

The so-called heroic poems of the *Codex Regius* are chronologically arranged in a poetic cycle where the hero Sigurd the Dragon Slayer is the center. The poems have a condensed, dramatic content and convey an ancient legendary tradition. The collection begins by outlining the history of Sigurd's ancestors and continues with Sigurd's life and tragic death. Then it continues with the story of his widow, Gudrun. *Hamdismál* tells us about Gudrun's two sons, Hamdir and Sorli, who are slain during an attempt to revenge the killing of their sister, Svanhild. Alongside them, Gudrun's descendants die out, and the poem completes the cycle. The poem echoes an historical event, a war between Goths and Huns in the AD 370s, as described by the contemporary Roman historian Ammanius Marcellinus and later by the Gothic historian Jordanes in the AD 500s. Ammanius writes that the Huns in the 370s removed the East Gothic king Ermanaric from power. Jordanes provides more detail. He informs us that Ermanaric had slain the young Sunilda because her husband had betrayed him. To revenge their sister, Sarus and Ammius attacked Ermanaric and maimed him.

5 Bugge, *Studier over de nordiske Gude- og Heltesagns Oprindelse*, 7.

Hamdismál closely resembles Jordanes' story. The brothers Hamdir and Sorli attack King Jormunrekkr and maim him as revenge for killing their sister, Svanhildr. The resemblances of the names in the Latin story and the Norse poem are striking. The Old-Norse form of the king's name, *Jǫrmunrekkr*, is orthophonically developed through so-called breaking (e>jǫ), and thus not an exception. One cannot dismiss the possibility that the poet of *Hamdismál* was familiar with Jordanes, but the motifs and details of the Sigurd cycle are otherwise so common across the Germanic territory, that there is no doubt that it was based on a strong oral legendary tradition.

In Old Norse the legend of Hamdir and Sorli has taken the shape of a poem with the *fornyrdislag* style. The poem ends as follows:

30.	30.
Vel hǫfum vit vegit,	We have fought well,
stǫndum á val Gotna,	we stand on Goths' corpses,
ofan eggmóðum,	weary from the sword-edge,
sem ernir á kvisti;	like eagles on a branch;
góðs hǫfum tírar fengit,	we have won great glory
þótt skylim nú eða í gær deyja,	if we die now or yesterday,
kveld lifir maðr ekki	after the norns have given their verdict,
eftir kvið norna.	no man outlasts the evening.
31.	31.
Þar fell Sǫrli	Then Sorli fell
at salar gafli,	at the end of the hall,
enn Hamðir hné	and Hamdir sank
at húsbaki.[6]	behind the house.[7]

The stanzas consist of pairs of verses connected through alliteration, and each verse requires two stressed syllables. One consonant rhymes with that same consonant, while a vowel rhymes with another vowel. The alliteration must be on a stressed syllable. In the first pair of verses 'vegit' (and 'vel') rhymes with 'val'. The second pair of verses features rhyming vowels in 'eggmóðum' (and 'ofan') and 'ernir'. In the third pair of verses 'góðs' rhymes with 'gær', and in the fourth 'kveld' rhymes with 'kvið'. As we can see, sometimes the requirements are more than fulfilled in that more than one of the stressed syllables in the verse carries rhyme, but that is redundant. We can find irregularities in the number of stressed syllables. The requirement says two, but in stanza 30, both in verse 5 and 6 we can count at least three (*góðs*, *hǫfum*, *tírar*; *nú*, *gær*, *deyja*). Metric irregularities

6 *Eddukvæði*, Íslenzk fornrit.

7 *The Poetic Edda*.

thus do not seem problematic. The stanza is not challenging to interpret. The listener does not need to possess any particular background knowledge to follow the story. Word order and syntax closely resemble the prose, but rhyme and rhythm provide the stanza with an aesthetically pleasing form and makes it easy to learn and recall. We can see a clear line drawn between a dramatic story in common speech and a more fixed poetic form. The metric requirements are not followed strictly, but serve their aesthetic and mnemonic purpose.

From Eddic Stanza to Skaldic Poem

There is an evident line of development from the *fornyrðislag* stanza to the more advanced skaldic stanza called *dróttkvætt*. The *dróttkvætt* stanza similarly consists of pairs of verses connected by alliteration, but in addition there is a systematic use of assonance. While *fornyrðislag* should have two peaks of stressed syllables in each verse, *dróttkvætt* requires three, and in addition features strict rules pertaining to the remaining syllables. As in *fornyrðislag* the alliteration should always be affixed to a stressed syllable. The rules of alliteration are the same – consonants rhyme with the same consonant, and vowels can rhyme with any vowel. While *fornyrðislag* only requires one syllable in every odd verse to alliterate with one syllable in the accompanying even verse,

Þar fell **S**ǫrli	Then Sorli fell
at **s**alar gafli	at the end of the hall

dróttkvætt demands that two of the syllables in the odd verses alliterate with the first in the even verse,

segls naglfara **s**iglur	the masts of the sail of the nail-studded one,
saums andvanar standa.	lacking nails, stand.

In addition to alliteration, *dróttkvætt* also requires assonance (*hending*), either full or half rhymes. Full rhyme (*aðalhending*) is a stressed syllable (vowel + consonant) which has the same vowel and consonant (or consonant cluster) as the last stressed syllable of the verse (**and**vanar : st**and**a). In half rhymes (*skothending*) the consonant (or consonant cluster) should be similar, while the vowel may vary (s**egl**s : s**igl**ur). The fully developed *dróttkvætt* stanza requires half rhymes in the odd verses and full rhymes in the even verses. The *dróttkvætt* stanza thus has six positions of rhyme in each pair of verses. Seven phonological correpondences are

to be distributed between these six positions – three of alliteration and four of assonance. In addition, there are complicated rules about the total number of syllables per verse and syllable length, but that will not be further explored here.

The *dróttkvætt* stanza has evolved since the beginning of the 9th century[8] and a development can be traced from the earliest poems that permitted a less strict metric implementation toward a more restrictive one. The stanzas of the skald Bragi Boddason are considered the oldest surviving material. Most of his stanzas are, although with a degree of uncertainty, linked with the poem *Ragnarsdrápa*. In addition, a couple of single stanzas (lausavísur) and some more indeterminable verses are attributed to him. *Ragnarsdrápa* is an ekphrastic poem, that is, a poem describing images. One of the images described is the battle scene from the legend of Hamdir and Sorli, where King Jormunrekkr is maimed. The description spans four stanzas (3–6): 3. Jormunrekkr experiences a bloody battle in his hall during Hamdir and Sorli's attack; 4. People witness severed limbs on the floor, and Jormunrekkr is thrown head first into a pool of blood; 5. Hamdir and Sorli stand at the bedside of Jormunrekkr and are hit with rocks; 6. Jormunrekkr has those who wished him dead stoned.

3
Knátti eðr við illan
Jǫrmunrekkr at vakna
með dreyrfáar dróttir
draum í sverða flaumi.
Rósta varð í ranni
Randvés hǫfuðniðja,
þás hrafnbláir hefndu
harma Erps of barmar.

Jǫrmunrekkr then awakened with an evil dream among the blood-stained troops in *the eddy of swords* (battle). There was tumult in the hall of *the chief kinsmen of Randvér* (the dynasty of the Goths), when *the raven-black brothers of Erpr* (Hamdir and Sorli) avenged their injuries.

4
Flaut of set við sveita
sóknar alfs á golfi
hræva dǫgg, þars hǫggnar
hendr sem fœtr of kenndu.
Fell í blóði blandin*n*
brunn ǫlskakki — runna
þats á Leifa landa
laufi fátt — at haufði.

8 Lie, "Skaldestilstudier," 113.

Dew of corpses (blood) flowed over the bench together with the blood of *the elf of attack* (warrior: Jormunrekkr) on the floor, where people recognized hewn arms and legs. *The ale-dispenser* (ruler: Jormunrekkr) fell headfirst into a well-mixed with blood; that is painted on *the leaf of the trees of the lands of Leifi* (shield).

5
Þar, svát gerðu gyrðan
golfhǫlkvis sá fylkis,
segls naglfara siglur
saums andvanar standa.
Urðu snemst ok Sǫrli
samráða þeir Hamðir
hǫrðum herðimýlum
Hergauts vinu barðir.

There, so that they encircled the vat of the *floor-steed* (bed) of the ruler, *the masts of the sail of the nail-studded one, lacking nails* (warriors), stand. Sorli and Hamdir very soon were pelted by common resolve with *hard shoulder-lumps of the mistress of Hergautr* (stones).

6
Mjǫk lét stála støkkvir
styðja Gjúka niðja
flaums, þás fjǫrvi næma
Foglhildar mun vildu.
Ok bláserkjar birkis
ballfǫgr gǫtu allir
ennihǫgg ok eggjar
Jónakrs sonum launa.

The impeller of the eddy of steel (warrior: Jormunrekkr) caused the *descendants of Gjúki* (Hamdir and Sorli) to be greatly pressed, when they intended to deprive *the delight of Bird-hildr* (Svanhildrs lover: Jormunrekkr) of life. And all repay *the sons of Jónakr* (Hamdir and Sorli) for the powerfully splendid forehead blows of the birch-branch of the dark shirt (sword) and the path of the sword-blade (wound).[9]

Poetic Periphrasis

Two types of poetic periphrasis characteristic of skaldic poetry are *kenningar* (kennings) and *heiti*. A *kenning* is a periphrasis with a set, standardized structure. It consists of a core (base-word) and a determinant, and the determinant is always in the genitive form. A simple *kenning* would be “sverða flaumi” (swords’

9 Edition and translation: *Skaldic Poetry*, III.1, 31–36.

flood) (*Ragnarsdrápa*, st. 3) for "battle". The core is "flaumi" (dative, flood) which is in the case required by the syntax, in this case dative. The attribute is "sverða" (swords) which is in the plural genitive. In stanza 3 (verse 6) Jormunrekkr is referred to as one of "Randvés hǫfuðniðja" (Randvé's chief kinsmen), and the brothers "hrafnbláir barmar Erps" (Erp's raven-black brothers). The genitives 'Randvé's' and 'Erp's' are here determinants to the base-words 'hǫfuðniðja' and 'hrafnbláir barmar' repectively. These are simple kennings but they require the listener to be familiar with the persons of Randvé (Jormunrekkr's son) and Erp (the Brothers' half brother). Somewhat more challenging is perhaps the double kenning "dǫgg hræva sóknar alfs" (the dew of the attacking elf's corpses) for "blood" (stanza 4). Replacing the headword with another kenning is called *tvikennt*. Even more intricate is the kenning "siglur segls naglfara, andvanar saums" (stanza 5) (the masts of the sails of the nail-studded one, lacking nails), which quite simply can be interpreted as "warriors". To interpret the kenning "Harðir herðimýlar vinu Hergauts" (hard shoulder-lumps of the mistress of Hergautr), the listener needs to know that Hergautr is Odin, and that his mistress is Jǫrd (Earth). Then one may understand that the hard shoulder-lumps of Earth must be rocks.

Besides the *kennings* the poets use so-called *heiti* – poetic synonyms – such as "fylkir" (5) for "chieftain, king". In the *kenning* 'munr Foglhildar' (Bird-hildr's delight, in st. 6), the attribute is a *heiti*, referring to Svanhildr. This one is not too hard to interpret, since a 'svanr' (swan) is a bird. *Heiti* belong to the poetic lexicon and are rarely used in prose. Many *heiti* are exclusively transmitted through poetry if we exclude the dictionaries of Snorri's Edda.[10] The poetic language elevates the stanzas aesthetically, but it also to a great extent makes the interpretation more complicated.

Hamdismál and Ragnarsdrápa

Hamdismál and *Ragnarsdrápa* retell the same legend, but in different ways. The preserved version of *Hamdismál* is presumed to be younger than *Ragnarsdrápa*, but scholars have envisioned an older version in a similar style.[11] Anyway, both poems are based on old European legendary material.

While the Eddic poem tells the story of the brothers' revenge campaign, based on the older legendary material, the skaldic poem is a verbal description of

10 *Snorri's Edda*, or the *Prose Edda*, is an Icelandic textbook of skaldic art from the 1200s, most likely authored by Snorri Sturluson. Amongst other subjects, it contains a list of synonyms useful to those who compose or interpret skaldic poetry.

11 Lie, "Skaldestilstudier," 127–128.

a painted image displaying the scene of the story's climax. Both the image and the skaldic poem require the recipient to already be familiar with the story. As such, the story itself is not the central part of the skaldic poem, but rather the way it is told. The form has become more important than the content.

However, despite the importance of the form, the rhyming of *Ragnarsdrápa* is not as consistently executed as in later poems. In many places, the rhyme is missing. With paint-like detail, the poem displays the dramatic battle scene and is in no way pointless. The listener is in a challenging, but artful way reminded of the well-known story, and the poem is in many ways similar to the depicted representation.

Professor Hallvard Lie discussed the origin of *dróttkvætt* in a short dissertation published in *Maal og Minne*, 1952, "Skaldestilstudier".[12] He regarded the style as intentionally *unnatural*, in line with the style found in visual art and woodcarving from the Viking Age, where the lines are weaved together into an intricate pattern. The *unnatural* style is seen in opposition to a *natural* style to be found in the traditional Eddic poetry.[13]

Ragnarsdrápa has quite irregular rhyming patterns. The alliterations mainly follow the later rules, but there are many irregularities in the use of assonance. The less strict rhyming pattern has provided the poet with somewhat greater flexibility, and the word order of the *Ragnardrápa* is not as unnatural as those often found in slightly younger poems. But the poetic periphrasis – the *kennings* – are challenging.

The comparison of the poetical depictions of the legend of Hamdir and Sorli in *Hamdismál* and *Ragnarsdrápa* displays an interesting development of the poetic medium. The metric standard has become more complex with *dróttkvætt*, and the artistic expression has become more important than the narrative content. Another generic difference between Eddic poetry and skaldic poetry should be considered in this context. The Eddic poems are anonymous, while the skaldic poems are *in principle* connected to a named poet.[14] This probably has to do with the perception of the authority of the author within the Norse literary tradition. The author acts as the guarantor for the credibility of the story. If the story is based on tradition, what is told among the people, the authority of the author is based on that tradition, and not on the person of a named author.[15] Through

12 The dissertation was republished in Lie, *Om sagakunst og skaldskap.* References in this article are to this version.

13 Lie, "Skaldestilstudier," 109–200, esp. 161–168.

14 Skaldic poems occasionally lack attribution to a skald. This can be the result of the name being lost in transmission. Also skaldic poems may clearly have been incorrectly attributed to someone, or attributed to fictive persons, such as legendary heroes.

15 Se Jørgensen, "Saga og forfatterskap."

skaldic poetry, the form becomes the most central element of the work, and it is attributed to a named Skald. (This does not signify that the form is inconsequential in Eddic poetry or in saga literature, but here it was attributed to the creative power of tradition).

Advanced form – Banal Content

Most skaldic poetry is transmitted through saga literature, and for the court poems, especially through the Kings' sagas. Here the poems have served as sources for and documentation of historical events, not least when it comes to wars and battles. The poet praises the chieftain and connects him with an event, but otherwise provide little in the sense of contextual information. In poems purely made in honor of the chieftain, the content is often quite stereotypical. The value of it is to be found in the form and in the intellectual challenge the poem presents.

The skald Glumr Geirason followed King Harald Greycloak (Gráfeldr) and praised him in the poem *Gráfelldardrápa*. One of its stanzas illustrates the significance of form as opposed to content. Here there is nothing to comment upon when it comes to the metric form, but the content is rather thin:

> 2
> Dolgeisu rak dísar
> — drótt kom mǫrg á flótta —
> gumna vinr at gamni
> gjóðum írskar þjóði*r*.
> Foldar rauð, ok felldi,
> Freyr í manna dreyra
> sverð, — vas sigr of orðinn —
> seggi, mækis eggjar.
>
> The friend of men (*ruler: Haraldr*) pursued Irish troops to the enjoyment of *ospreys of the goddess of the battle-fire* (ravens/eagles); many a war-band took to flight. *The Freyr of the land of the blade of the sword* (warrior) reddened the sword in the blood of men and killed warriors; victory came about.[16]

The stanza survives in several kings' saga manuscripts and tells the story of the king's raids in Ireland (according to the title of the poem, the king was Harald Greycloak (c. 935–970)). This is actually the only historical information one can obtain from the stanza. It could be paraphrased as "The ruler defeated the

16 Edition and translation: *Skaldic Poetry*, II. 1, part 1, 251.

Irish" – the rest is stereotypical rhetoric. Otherwise, there is no shortage of poetical wordings and complete rhymes. The alliterations perfectly follow the rules, as does the assonance. All the odd verses contain half rhymes (*skothending*) and the even verses full rhymes (*aðalhending*). In the half rhyme 'foldar : felldi', the seemingly lengthy /lld/ rhymes with the standard length /ld/, since the contrast between long and short /l/ is neutralized when placed in front of another consonant, also making this rhyme acceptable. The princely kenning 'vinr gumna' (friend of men) is easily understood, while 'gjóðar dísar dolgeisu' (ospreys of the goddess of the battle-fire), pointing to the ravens following the battle in hope of making a meal of the fallen, is more challenging.

The extensive morphological marking of verbs, nouns and determiners in the Norse language makes it possible to interpret the sentences in the poems despite the division of the syntagms and the vast difference in the word order from normal prose. In addition to this, the recipient is helped because every half stanza as a rule needs to have a complete syntactic content. The first half stanza in the stanza from *Gráfeldardrápa* reads as follows, if we number the words according to normal prose:

> Dolgeisu$_{10}$ rak$_{3}$ dísar$_{9}$
> – drótt$_{12}$ kom$_{13}$ mǫrg$_{11}$ á$_{14}$ flótta$_{15}$ —
> gumna$_{2}$ vinr$_{1}$ at$_{6}$ gamin$_{7}$
> gjóðum$_{8}$ írskar$_{4}$ þjóðir$_{5}$.
>
> Vinr gumna rak írskar þjóðir at gamni gjóðum dísar dolgeisu; mǫrg drótt kom á flótta. (Translation, see p. 239)

The last sentence (2nd verse) is an interpolation in the stanza containing a complete idea, a so-called *stál*. The advanced, thoroughly standardized form makes the poem a piece of art suitable to honoring the king, despite there not being much substance when it comes to content.

Mastery Equals Prestige

The skaldic art is demanding, both of the composer and the listener, and mastering it signifies great prestige. It is telling that the art is connected with the absolutely highest social stratum of society, principally the royal courts. The sagas count skalds like Sighvatr and Eyvindr Skaldaspillir among the kings' most trusted men and advisors.

A good skaldic poem in honour of a person should be rewarded with a gift in return. The saga literature provides many examples of rewards received by the

skalds, and the value of these gifts gives us an idea of how highly prized these poems were. We do need to retain some reservations about the historical accuracy of these stories, as most of the sagas were recorded in the 1200s, despite the events they describe taking place several hundred years earlier. It is also likely that the author of the saga might exaggerate rather than downplay events, and that the examples used might belong to the exceptions rather than rule. However, the examples leave no doubt about the high regard in which the skaldic art was held.

The most common gifts received by the skalds in the sagas are heavy golden rings, costly cloaks, or swords decorated with gold. In the *Saga of Gunnlaugr Ormstunga* it looks like the author is slightly teasing the kings of Ireland and Sweden respectively, as they apparently were not as learned in the skaldic art and the accompanying customs, as one would expect of a king. After Gunnlaugr performed a *kvæði* for the Irish king Sigtryggr Silkiskegg, the king was forced to ask his treasurer for advice on the appropriate pay to offer. He himself suggests two ships, but the treasurer considers this to be too much:

> Konungr þakkaði honum kvæðit ok kallaði til sín féhirði sinn ok mælti svá: "Hverju skal launa kvæðit?"
> Hann svarar: "Hverju vilið þér, herra?" segir hann.
> "Hversu er launat," segir hann, "ef ek gef honum knǫrru tvá?"
> Féhirðir svarar: "Of mikit er þat, herra," segir hann. "Aðrir konungar gefa at bragarlaunum gripi góða, sverð góð eða gullhringa góða."
> Konungr gaf honum klæði sín af nýju skarlati, kyrtil hlaðbúinn ok skikkju með ágætum skinnum ok gullhring, er stóð mǫrk (ch. 8).

> The king thanked Gunnlaug for the poem, and summoned his treasurer. "How should I reward him the poem?" he asked.
> "How would you like to, my lord?" the treasurer said.
> "What kind of reward would it be if I gave him a pair of *knorrs* (ships)?" the king asked.
> "That is too much, my lord," he replied. "Other kings give fine treasures – good swords or splendid gold bracelets – as reward for poems."
> The king gave Gunnlaug his own new suit of scarlet clothes and embroidered tunic, a cloak lined with exquisite furs and a gold bracelet, which weighed a mark.[17]

Later the two heroes – and rivals – Gunnlaugr and Hrafn meet at the court of the Swedish king, and each bestow upon him a poem. After the king has first listened to Gunnlaugr's poem, he needs to ask Hrafn whether it was well composed or not, and *vice versa*. Hrafn affords Gunnlaugr's poem fair recognition, but Gunnlaugr criticises his rival for having composed a *flokkr* for the king, and not a *drápa*. The *drápa* is somewhat grander, as it has a refrain (*stef*) in addition to the stanzas.

17 *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders,* vol. 1, 318.

This criticism is the origin of a life-long enmity between the two, culminating in both their deaths.

A great skald known from the sagas of Icelanders is Egill Skallagrímsson. According to the saga, he composed his first poem at the age of three, and as a reward, his grandfather gave him three snail shells and one duck's egg. As an adult, he had much better pay in the service of kings. Egill was employed for a long time by King Athelstan (ruled 924–939) in England. Following Athelstan's decision to gift Egill two coffins of silver as atonement for his brother falling in battle on the king's behalf, Egill performs a *drápa* for the king. In return, he acquired two further costly gifts: two great golden rings and a fine cloak worn by the king.[18] The most valuable skald's pay was, however, awarded to Egill by his nemesis Eric Bloodaxe. Eric had managed to secure Egill and intended to execute him. Egill is given the night to compose a poem, *Hǫfuðlausn* (Head saver), in Eric's honor. As a reward, Eric allows Egill to stay alive.[19]

The skald Sneglu-Halli (Sarcastic-Halli), who at the time was in the court of King Harold Hardruler, also exchanged his life for a skaldic stanza. After one day insulting the king, he was to be punished. The king asked the servant Tuta to pick up a tray of roasted pork and walk across the floor to Halli. If Halli wanted to stay alive, he was challenged to compose a poem by the time the man reached him. This is of course a practically impossible feat, but according to the story, Halli accepted the challenge promptly and directly composed a stanza complete in form about the roasted pig:

> Ok er Túta kemr fyrir Halla þá réttir hann Halli hendr í móti grísinum og kvað vísu:
>
> Grís þá greppr at ræsi
> gruntrauðustum dauðan;
> Njǫrðr sér bǫrg á borði
> bauglands fyr sér standa.
> Runa síður lítk rauðar;
> ræðk skjótgǫrvu kvæði;
> rana hefr seggr af svíni
> – send heill, konungr! – brenndan.[20]
>
> Konungr mælltti þaa. nu skal gefa þier vpp reidi mina Halli þui ath visan er vel kueden suo skiott sem til var tekit.[21]

18 . . . gullhringa tvo, og stóð hvor mǫrk, og þar fylgdi skikkja dýr, er konungr sjalfr hafði áðr borit, *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, ch. 55.

19 *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar,* ch. 61.

20 Edition and translation: *Skaldic poetry* II. 2 part 1.

21 Text from *Flateyarbok*, III, 420.

> As Tuta came up to Halli, Halli stood up, reached his hand out for the dish and recited a verse:
>
> The poet got a dead pig from the most deceit-shy monarch; the *Njǫrðr of the shield-boss land* (warrior) sees a boar standing before him on the table. I see the red sides of the pig; I produce a quickly composed poem; a man has singed the snout off the swine; thanks for the helping, king![22]
>
> Then the king said, "Now I shall give up my anger, Halli, because the verse is as well composed as it was quickly undertaken".[23]

The stanza is challenging, but not too difficult to interpret. The syntax and word order are not too far from natural prose, and the poetic language is not far-fetched. The *heiti "*þǫrgr" and "runi" both meaning "hog" and the word "greppr" for "poet" have probably been understandable to a skilled audience, and the same goes for the kenning *Njǫrðr bauglands* (the Njord (god, ruler) of the ring-land (land of shields)), which means "warrior". But this does not make the effort of the skald less impressive. The stanza gives a humoristic description of the situation. The poetic construction and all the rhymes are in perfect order, and there is nothing to complain about the assonance and the alliteration. If we consider the narrative frame, that Halli was unprepared, the skald's achievement is literally unbelievable, in line with the most unrealistic physical efforts of saga heroes. The anecdote clearly displays the element of competition in this intellectual sport, and several similar incidents could have been mentioned.

Women and Skaldic Knowledge

Skaldic poetry is generally practiced by men. In Finnur Jónssons' great corpus edition (Skj),[24] 260 named skalds are represented. Of these, six are women; none of them have left behind a substantial quantity of work. We have two *lausavísur* by Steinunn (Skj. pp. 127–7), half a stanza by Gunnhildr (Skj. p. 54) and Steingerðr (Skj. p. 85), two verses by Þórhildr skáldkona (Skj. p. 95) and a stanza by Þuriðr Óláfsdóttir (Skj. p. 197). Of the preserved stanzas by female skalds, Jórunn skáldmær has produced the most: three half and two whole stanzas of a poem about Halfdan the Black and Harald Fairhair, called *Sendibítr* (Biting message. Skj. 53–54). She is the only female skald mentioned in Snorri's Edda, and in two of the

22 *Skaldic poetry* II. 2 part 1, 347.
23 *The Complete sagas of Icelanders*, vol 1, 347.
24 *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning.*

survived manuscripts she is called 'Jörund', which is a masculine name.[25] In the corpus there are then, in addition to the 28 verses of Jórunn, no more than 34 verses produced by women. As skaldic poetry was generally a male domain, one might imagine that women did not get practice interpreting skaldic stanzas. In a paper from 1983, Else Mundal discusses the representation of female skalds. She argues that a larger share of the poetry composed by female skalds might have been lost in tradition than poetry composed by men. Even so there can be no doubt that skaldic poetry was a masculine domain, and that female skalds were exceptions.[26] With this in mind, a famous scene from Gisli Sursson's saga is particularly interesting.

Gisli had killed Thorgrim, his sister's husband, as revenge for the murder of Gisli's sworn brother Vésteinn. However, Gisli had not claimed the killing, and nobody knew the identity of the killer. We have previously come to know that the sister, Thordis, was both beautiful and intelligent (bæði væn ok vitr, chapter 2). Shortly after the killing there was a festival with ball games. Thordis sat together with a group of women on a slope. Gisli looked at Thorgrim's burial mound and recited a poem, in which he revealed that he was Thorgrim's killer.

> Gísli [. . .] horfir á hauginn Þorgríms; snær var á jǫrðu en konur sátu upp í brekkuna, Þórdís systir hans og margar aðrar. Gísli kvað þá vísu er æva skyldi:
>
> Teina sák í túni
> tál-gríms vinar fálu,
> Gauts þess's geig of veittak
> gunnbliks þáamiklu;
> nú heir gnýstœrir geira
> grímu Þrótt of sóttan
> þann lét sundr of lendan
> landkostuð ábranda.
>
> Þórdís nam þegar vísuna, gengr heim og hefir ráðit vísuna. Þeir skilja nú leikinn; ferr Þorsteinn heim.[27]
>
> Gisli looked towards Thorgrim's burial mound; there was snow on the ground and the women sat on the slope. His sister Thordis was there and many others. Gisli spoke a verse which should not have been spoken:

25 Judith Jesch in *Skaldic Poetry* II 1.1, 142.
26 Mundal, "Kvinner og dikting," 11–25.
27 *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, ch. 18.

> I saw the shoots reach/ up through melting frost/ on the grim Thor's mound;/ I slew that sword of Gaut./ Thrott's helmet has slain/ that tree of gold, and given/ one, greedy for new land,/ a plot of his own forever.
>
> Thordis remembered the verse, went home and interpreted what it meant. The game then came to a close and Thorstein went home.[28]

The scribe of the shorter version of the saga introduces the stanza in an unusual way, with a comment. Within the saga genre, the thoughts of the storyteller normally should not feature, but here the scribe states that Gisli should not have recited the poem. In the end, it leads to him being found out, outlawed, and ultimately killed. But why does Gisli do this? Most likely, he believes that women are unable to interpret skaldic verses, and perhaps it gives him some satisfaction to put his terrible secret into words without risking his life. This stanza thus has a significant content. Nevertheless, his gifted sister Thordis memorizes the stanza and interprets it. None of the other women understands. Is he underestimating his sister? Or does he trust that she would not betray him, despite having been married to the victim, and now being married to the victim's brother? If so, he is mistaken. After some time has passed, she relays the secret to her husband, Bork, the brother of the murdered Thorgrim. Gisli thought his sister owed him her loyalty. When he learns that she has betrayed him, he accuses her by contrasting her to the heroine of the Eddic poems, Gudrun Gjukadottir, who killed her husband and their two young sons as revenge for killing her brothers.

Generally, the Icelandic sagas do not underestimate the intellectual capacity of women. When it is not expected that women are capable of interpreting skaldic verses, it is not due to their lack of abilities, but because they are unfamiliar with the standardized rules of the skaldic language. Skaldic poetry does not belong to their sphere of competence. They are on the *outside*.

Geisli – A Christian Poem from 1153

The last stanza I will bring into discussion is from the extensive Christian poem 'Geisli', composed by Einarr Skúlason. The poem was performed by the skald at a ceremony in Nidaros connected to the establishment of the archdiocese of Nidaros in 1153, and is a 68-stanza tribute to St Olaf. This is the first stanza, an introduction of the praise of St. Olaf:

28 Translated by Martin S. Regal. *The complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. 2, 21.

Eins má óð ok bœnir
— alls ráðanda ins snjalla
vels fróðr, sás getr góða —
guðs þrenning mér kenna.
Gǫfugt ljós boðar geisli
gunnǫflugr miskunnar
— ágætan býðk ítrum
Óláfi brag — sólar.

The Trinity of one God can teach me poetry and prayers; he is indeed wise who gets the goodwill of the eloquent ruler of all (God). The battle-strong beam of the sun of mercy (Christ/St. Óláfr) proclaims a splendid light — I offer the excellent poem to glorious Óláfr.[29]

The poem is packed with Christian rhetoric, but it also has a significant content. Olaf's early life as a warrior is contrasted with his holiness, and he has made atonement for his sins with God. We hear about Olaf's death in the battle at Stiklestad, and then about a number of miracles connected to him.

The *dróttkvætt* meter is in perfect shape. The referred stanza has one *heiti* and a double kenning, but none of them are difficult to interpret. The kenning 'inn snjalli alls ráðandi' (*the eloquent ruler of all)* is a well-known paraphrase of God*, and the kenning* 'gunnǫflugr geisli sólar miskunnar' *(The battle-strong beam of the sun of mercy) refers to St. Olaf along with divine allusions.* Although the content is not easily accessible, the intention here has hardly been to challenge the listeners. The poet wanted to convey the message of St. Olaf. The metrical form gives the poem a high aesthetic value and great prestige.

Conclusions

Narrative or gnomic poems in the Eddic meter *fornyrdislag* probably developed in Norse after the syncope (AD 700), but now lost older similar poems containing the same legendary material could very well have exixted. Rhyme and rhythm have clear aesthetic and mnemonic functions, but the content is what matters the most.

In the *dróttkvætt* stanza, the metric form becomes far more complicated. The standard of metric form is complete already at the earliest stage, in *Ragnarsdrápa*, but what later would become rules, are still only tendencies. Especially in the assonance, there are many deviations. *Ragnarsdrápa* is an ekphrastic poem containing detailed descriptions of scenes from well-known myths depicted on a

29 Edition and translation by Martin Chase in *Skaldic Poetry* VII, 1, 7.

shield, and the listener is supposed to be familiar with the story. The artistic form, with its complicated metric and its poetic paraphrases, has thus become more important than the content. skaldic poetry is, in contrast with Eddic poetry, attributed to named skalds, and is not anonymous as most other Norse literature. The skald demands "auctoritas" – author's authority – not on the basis of the poem's content, but of its form. This elevation of the form further develops at the cost of the content. Court poems from the Viking Age by and by meet the metric drequirements very rigidly, while the content can be quite banal.

Eddic poetry has a simple metric structure, and the epic or didactic content is easily available to an audience with limited prior knowledge. The metric structure of the skaldic *dróttkvætt* is extremely advanced and challenges both the skald and his audience. To interpret a *dróttkvætt* stanza takes both skill and training in addition to advanced knowledge.

The challenging form makes the communication between the skald and the listener harder, not easier, but on the other hand, it offers high prestige to those who master the art. The advanced form is common to all poems in the *dróttkvætt* style, but the degree of difficulty varies. The examples presented in this paper show how the form can relate differently to the content.

Ragnarsdrápa is the oldest preserved example of the style. It has a significant content, but the story is supposedly well known to the audience. The poem thus does not convey any new information, but the content has a new artistic form. Unlike the Eddic poem *Hamdismál*, the form is more important than the content.

In the oldest *dróttkvætt*-poems, the skalds tolerated some metric irregularity, but the requirements soon became stricter. In *Gráfelldardrápa* the form is perfectly fulfilled. The stanza is about the king's battle in Ireland, an event that has probably been well known among the listeners. Furthermore, the content is mostly rhetoric and provides little information. The stanza is hard to interpret, and appears as a demonstration of the poet's ability, like an athletic exercise.

Skaldic poetry as an intellectual achievement is the explicit theme in the tale of Sneglu-Halli. To compose a perfect *dróttkvætt* stanza on the spot is practically impossible. Sneglu-Halli's mastery of this challenge can be compared to an extreme athletic achievement, and it has a similar entertainment value.

Skaldic poetry is elitist and belongs to the domain of men. That forms the background of the stanza from the *Saga of Gisli Sursson*, where the murderer Gisli reveals his secret in front of a group of women. He did not expect women to have the ability to interpret a *dróttkvætt* stanza. However, his skilled sister Thordis is among the listeners, and after having given it a thought, she understands the message. As a woman with skaldic skills, Thordis appears as an exception.

Despite the general importance of form, we find many skaldic poems from the later Viking Age and the Middle Ages with a significant content, like Einarr

Skúlason's religious poem *Geisli*. Here the message is important. The artistic form makes the poem impressive and prestigious in the honor of St. Olaf and his holy Church in Nidaros.

Verbal communication normally aims to relay a message from a sender to a receiver through using a standardized system of words. For the communication to be successful, both parties must be familiar with the standard used. Poetry is verbal communication, and the sender uses certain standardized tools for a variety of purposes. Metric components such as rhyme and rhythm can serve mnemonic or aesthetic purposes, while poetic periphrasis such as metaphors or allegories can contribute to expanding the potential interpretation. The poetic form *dróttkvætt* follows a standard with extreme metric requirements. In addition, they make use of types of poetic periphrasis, *kennings* and *heiti*, which can be very intricate and demands vast knowledge from the listener. The court poem develops into a style where the form is essential and the content less significant. Great demands are made of the poet in composing a verse, at the same time, as it also demands a large amount from the one who is to interpret it, while the message can be quite banal.

One of the main purposes of the *dróttkvætt* style was to challenge the listener. Mastering this challenge gave high prestige, and not mastering it might have brought dishonor. Skaldic poetry provides examples of how extreme demands of standardization can make communication more difficult, instead of easier – that also being the intention. It *should* be an intellectual challenge, like a riddle or a rebus, or an athletic exercise. He, who is unable to solve it, finds himself on the outside of polite society.

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