FROM RUS' TO RÍMUR

Norse History, Culture, and Literature East and West

edited by

Shaun F. D. Hughes

and

Allyn K. Pearson

ISLANDICA LXV

AN ISSUE OF

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Preface

New Norse Studies: Essays on the Literature and Culture of Medieval Scandinavia, edited by Jeffrey Turco, was published as Islandica volume 58 in 2015. Its twelve essays on a wide variety of topics were well received and encouraged founding an annual journal with the same title. *New Norse Studies: A Journal* was to be "[d]evoted to all facets of the written tradition of medieval Iceland and Scandinavia [and to] seek to bring the insights of multiple disciplines to bear upon Norse texts," as the initial announcement phrased it. Editors and an editorial board were appointed. A call for papers went out for the first two proposed volumes and essays were submitted and reviewed.

Although circumstances did not permit sustaining the enterprise as initially contemplated, a dedicated effort by Professor Shaun F. D. Hughes of Purdue University and his associates enabled the reconstitution of *New Norse Studies* as an occasional journal of up-to-date research appearing in the Islandica series and assured a venue for the papers already accepted. This volume and a subsequent volume are dedicated to bringing these papers before the scholarly community.

Appearing prior to this issue of *New Norse Studies* is the issue of the journal in Islandica 62 entitled *An Icelandic Literary Florilegium: A Festschrift in Honor of Úlfar Bragason*, edited by Marianne Kalinke and Kirsten Wolf. This volume also represents a welcome and profoundly scholarly offering by its contributing authors to the most recent journal literature available in the field.

Patrick J. Stevens
managing editor, *Islandica*, Ithaca, New York

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Finally, Shaun F. D. Hughes would like to thank Allyn K. Pearson for her editorial assistance and support in the preparation of this volume.

Introduction

Shaun F. D. Hughes and Allyn K. Pearson

This volume of *New Norse Studies* contains six contributions that conveniently fall into three sections. The first, "Historical Studies," contains two essays, followed by "Literary Studies," with two additional studies. The volume closes with a section called "New Editions," consisting of editions and translations of two previously unpublished texts.

Looking back over the opening decades of the twenty-first century in order to try and identify what is "new" in Norse Studies, it would be difficult not to single out the work that has been done, particularly in archaeology, but also in other fields as well, to revise our understanding of Scandinavian interactions with the peoples of Eastern Europe. Of all the areas of Old Norse studies, this is the one that in the past has probably been affected most by nationalistic and political pressures to interpret data in a particular way.[1] While the tensions generated by long-standing Normanist–Antinormanist antagonisms have for the most part subsided, they have not entirely disappeared.[2] However, much of

1. For a survey of the major protagonists and their interpretations of Rus' society from the eighteenth century to the end of the twentieth, see Roman Zakharii, "The Historiography of Normanist and Anti-Normanist Theories on the Origin of Rus': A Review of Modern Historiography and Major Sources on Varangian Controversy and other Scandinavian Concepts of the Origins of Rus'" (Master of Philosophy thesis, University of Oslo, 2002) and Hana Štěříková, *Stewards, Soldiers and Court Officials: Three Scandinavian Elements in the Language of Old Russian Law*, Münchner Nordische Studien 51 (Munich: Utz Verlag, 2022), 23–65.

2. See for example two recent articles by Leo Klejn (Лев Самуилович Клейн; Lev Samuilovich Kleyn, 1927–2019), late Professor of the Department of Philosophical Anthropology at the European University at St. Petersburg: "The Russian Controversy over the Varangians," in *From Goths to Varangians: Communication and Cultural Exchange Between the*

this post-Soviet scholarship has remained inaccessible to Western scholars for linguistic reasons. If Russian, Ukrainian, and Polish are not as well known as they should be, the burgeoning scholarship in this area in Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian remains a closed book. Nevertheless, this material is beginning to influence general surveys of Viking history such as the recent volume by Neil Price and that by Cat Jarman.[3]

The first major work in English to reflect the post-Soviet archaeological research into the Scandinavian role in early Russian history was that of Wladislaw Duczko, which appeared in 2004.[4] In this volume he cautiously comes to the conclusion that "remembering the glory of Kiev, we should not forget the Rus', the Norsemen, made this part of Europe their home and lived there for quite a long time."[5] In doing so he verifies the similar claims made in a confrontational and polemical tone fifty years earlier by the Polish-born historian Henryk Paszkiewicz (1897–1979).[6]

The last decade has seen enormous strides in our understanding of the Scandinavians in the East and their relationships with

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Baltic and the Black Sea, ed. Line Bjerg, John H. Lind, and Søren Michael Sindbæck, Black Sea Studies 15 (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2013), 27–38 and "Normanism and Antinormanism in Russia: An Eyewitness Account," in *Vers l'orient et vers l'Occident: Regards croisés sur les dynamiques et les transferts culturels des Vikings à la Rous ancienne*, ed. Pierre Bauduin and Alexander E. Musin (Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2014), 407–15. The most recent introduction to the Varangians is Sverrir Jakobsson, *The Varangians: In God's Holy Fire*, New Approaches to Byzantine History and Culture (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) and Sverrir Jakobsson, Thorir Jonsson Hraundal, and Daria Segal, eds., *The Making of the Eastern Vikings: Rus' and Varangians in the Middle Ages*, Medieval Identities: Socio-Cultural Spaces, 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2024).

3. Neil Price, *Children of Ash and Elm: A History of the Vikings* (New York: Viking Books, 2020); Cat Jarman, *River Kings: A New History of the Vikings from Scandinavia to the Silk Roads* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2022). See also Csete Katona, *Vikings of the Steppe: Scandinavians, Rus', and the Turkic World (c. 750–1050)*, Routledge Archaeologies of the Viking World (London: Routledge, 2022).

4. Wladislaw Duczko, *Viking Rus: Studies on the Presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe*, The Northern World 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2004). See also Walter K. Hanak, *The Nature and the Image of Princely Power in Kievan Rus', 980–1054*, East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450 25 (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

5. Duczko, *Viking Rus*, 258.

6. None of whose work is mentioned by Duczko. Paszkiewicz's *The Origin of Russia* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954) was extremely controversial in its time, although not without its influence. He reiterated his views and responded to his critics in *The Making of the Russian Nation* (Chicago: Regnery, 1963).

Byzantium.[7] Tatjana Jackson has produced a volume in English in which the vision of the East in Icelandic saga writing is re-evaluated from the point of view of Russian scholars.[8] And Hana Štěřiková has explored the linguistic and cultural history of three Old Russian legal terms derived from Old Norse: *ябетникъ* (court official) (< *embætismaðr* [someone holding an office, usually a priest] with -maðr replaced by *никъ*, an nominal forming suffix); *миун* (steward) (< þjónn [East Norse þiæn-] [servant]); *гридь* (soldier) (< grið [home, a place where one serves]).[9] Particularly important is the archaeological research of Marika Mägi, whose work is finally beginning to appear in English. She is particularly concerned with the movement of Scandinavians, beginning in the sixth century,[10] across what is now modern Estonia and Latvia to connect with the river systems leading to the Dniepr and the Black Sea.[11] Furthermore, there have been volumes of studies on the Vikings in the Åland Islands and in Finland,[12] collections of studies

7. See for example, Fedir Androshchuk, *Vikings in the East: Essays on Contacts along the Road to Byzantium (800–1100),* Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 14 (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2013), and Fedir Androshchuk, Jonathan Shepherd, and Monica White, eds., *Byzantium and the Viking World,* Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 16 (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2016). All the Old Norse sources dealing with Byzantium (except the late *riddarasögur*) are conveniently gathered together and evaluated in Roland Scheel, *Skandinavien und Byzanz: Bedingungen und Konsequenzen mittelalterlicher Kulturbezeihungen*, 2 vols., Historische Semantic 23 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015). But even late saga writing may contain information based on genuine traditions. See Shaun F. D. Hughes, "Stories Found on Stone Walls: Contemporary Research on the *Riddarasögur*," *Scandinavian Studies* 93 (2021): 114–40 at 126–27.

8. Tatjana Jackson, *Eastern Europe in Icelandic Saga*, Beyond Medieval Europe (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2019).

9. Štěřiková, *Stewards, Soldiers and Court officials* 96–129, 129–60, 160–97.

10. These eastward movements may have been in response to the economic devastation caused by the catastrophic summer of 536 C.E. and its aftermath precipitated by a formidable volcanic eruption either in Central America or in Iceland, See Joel D. Gunn, *The Years without Summer: Tracing A.D. 536 and its Aftermath*, BAR International series 872 (Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2000 [2016]) and Price, *Children of Ash and Elm*, 74–82, 524–25.

11. See Marika Mägi, *In Austrvegr: The Role of the Eastern Baltic in Viking Age Communication across the Baltic Sea*, The Northern World 84 (Leiden: Brill, 2018) and *The Viking Eastern Baltic*, Past Imperfect (Kalamazoo: ARC Humanities Press, 2019).

12. Joonas Ahola, Frog, and Jenni Lucenius, eds., *The Viking Age in Åland: Insights into Identity and Remnants of Culture*, Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemian Toimituskia Humanoria 372 (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2014), and Joonas Ahola, Frog, and Clive Tolley, eds., *Fibula, Fabula, Fact: The Viking Age in Finland*, Studia Fennica Historia 18 (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2014). And while most studies explore west-east relations an important study of Slavic influence on Scandinavian culture during the Viking Age is: Mats

dealing with the Scandinavians in the Baltic and in the East,[13] and works that integrate the Rus' into Medieval European studies.[14]

Therefore, it is entirely appropriate that this volume of "New Norse Studies" should open with "The Destinies of Varangians in Eleventh- to Twelfth-Century Rus': Yakun "the Blind," S(h)imon, and his Son George," an essay by Anna Litvina and Fjodor Uspenskij examining the legacy of Scandinavian names in Medieval Rus'. Professor Uspenskij is the author of an extensive body of work in Russian, particularly in the area of name studies, although little has appeared in English.[15] He has published several articles with Anna Litvina, and most recently they have co-authored a book on Russian-Varangian cultural relations.[16] This essay delves into the intricate naming practices of the Rus'ian elites as revealed in the *Laurentian*, *Hypatian* and *Novgorod First Chronicles*[17] and

Roslund, *Guests in the House: Cultural Transmission between Slavs and Scandinavians 900 to 1300 AD*, translated by Alan Crozier, The Northern World 33 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), first published in Swedish in 2001.

13. See for example, Bauduin and Musin, eds., *Vers l'orient et vers l'Occident*; Line, Lind, and Sindbæck, eds., *From Goths to Varangians*; Maths Bertell, Frog, and Kendra Willson, eds., *Contacts and Networks in the Baltic Sea Region:* Austmarr *as a Northern* Mare Nostrum, *ca. 500–1500 AD,* Crossing Boundaries (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019); Sabrine Berthelot and Alexandre Musin, eds., *Russie Viking, vers une autre Normandie? Novgorod et la Russie du Nord, des migrations Scandinaves à la fin du Moyen Âge (VIIIe–XVe s.)* (Paris: Éditions Errance, 2011); Johan Callmer, Ingrid Gustin, and Mats Roslund, eds., *Identity Formation and Diversity in the Early Medieval Baltic and Beyond*, The Northern World 75 (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Wojtek Jezierski and Lars Heranson, eds., *Imagined Communities on the Baltic Rim, from the Eleventh to the Fifteenth Centuries*, Crossing Boundaries (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016).

14. For example, Bruno Dumézil, Sylvie Joye, and Charles Mériaux, eds., *Confrontation, échanges et connaissance de l'autre au nord et à l'est de l'Europe de la fin du VIIe au milieu du XIe siècle*, Didact Histoire (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2017); Christian Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe: Kievan Rus' in the Medieval World*, Harvard Historical Studies 177 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); and Yulia Mikhailova, *Property, Power, and Authority in Rus and Latin Europe, ca. 1000–1236*, Beyond Medieval Europe (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2018). See also Christian Raffensperger, The *Kingdom of Rus'*, Past Imperfect (Kalamazoo: ARC Humanities Press, 2017).

15. One of his volumes has appeared in German: Fjodor Uspenskij, *Name und Macht: Die Wahl des Namens als dynastisches Kampfinstrument im mittelalterlichen Skandinavien*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Germanistik und Skandinavistik 52 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003).

16. A[nna] F[eliksovna] Litvina and F[jodor] B[orisovich] Uspenskij [Анна Феликсовна Литвина и Фёдор Борисович Успенский], *Похвала щедрости, чаша из черепа, золотая луда . . . Контуры русско-варяжского культурного взаимодействия* (Praise of Generosity, a Bowl from a Skull, Golden Alloy . . . Contours of Russian-Varangian Cultural Interactions). Moscow: Издательский дом Высшей школы экономики (Higher school of Economics Publishing House), 2018.

17. A comprehensive introduction to these texts and their relationships to other

The Paterik of the Kievan Caves Monastery to demonstrate that Scandinavian naming practices continued in certain elite families into the twelfth century.

Dirk H. Steinforth is an archaeologist who has worked principally on the Isle of Man. He has published a volume on the iconography of the Viking Age Thorvald's cross preserved in St Andrew's church in the village of Andreas on the Isle of Man in addition to a volume on Viking graves on the Isle of Man, and another on Viking settlement there.[18] He has also edited a volume of essays with Charles C. Rozier that investigate the cultural contacts and exchanges between Britain and its continental neighbors.[19] His essay, "'From that Union came the Manx people': Ethnogenesis in the Isle of Man in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries" looks at the two stages of Viking settlement in the Isle of Man and tries to sift through the facts and fantasies associated with these events, concentrating in particular on Guðröður Crovan, who settled in Man after being on the losing side at the Battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066.

In "'A Never-Ending Story': History, *Saga,* and Secondary Creation," Shaun F. D. Hughes investigates what was meant by the writing of history in twelfth- and thirteenth-century France and what influence this might have had on the writing of history or *saga* in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Iceland. He then argues that any text so designated as *saga* should be considered as "history" (in the medieval sense), and was therefore "true" as that history too was considered "true."[20] Ármann Jakobsson has

chronicle-writing traditions, especially that of Pre-Conquest England, is Timofey V. Guimon, *Historical Writing of Early Rus (c. 1000–c. 1400) in a Comparative Perspective*, East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450 71 (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

18. Dirk H. Steinforth, *Thorvald's Cross: The Viking-Age Cross-Slab 'Kirk Andreas MM 128' and Its Iconography* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2021), *Die Wikingergräber auf der Isle of Man*, British Archaeological Reports, British Series 611 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2015), and *Die skandinavische Besiedlung auf der Isle of Man: Eine archäologische und historische Untersuchung zur frühen Wikingerzeit in der Irischen See,* Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 92 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

19. Dirk H. Steinforth and Charles C. Rozier, eds., *Britain and its Neighbours: Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Themes in Medieval and Early Modern History (London: Routledge, 2021).

20. Ralph O'Connor, "History or Fiction? Truth-Claims and Defensive Narrators in Icelandic Romance-Sagas," *Medieval Scandinavia* 15 (2005): 101–69 argues that all the evidence points to the *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* as being considered true by contemporary audiences. That this caused problems for some in the eighteenth century is illustrated in Shaun F. D. Hughes, "Halldór Jakobsson on Truth and Fiction in the Sagas (1789)," *Gripla* 27 (2016): 7–50.

noted how the first "complete" edition of the Icelandic family sagas, which was published in an inexpensive edition in thirty-eight volumes, from 1891 to 1902, published only "classical" sagas, those supposedly written before 1400 that were accepted as history in the modern sense.[21] Almost all of the twentieth- and twenty-first century "complete" collections of the family sagas have followed suit. However, the writing of family sagas did not cease around 1400, but continued into the nineteenth century and beyond. Only Guðni Jónsson in his thirteen-volume edition of the family sagas, first published from 1946 to 1949, chose to include a representative sampling of these post-medieval sagas, and therefore it has the only real claim to be considered a "complete" edition of the *Íslendingasögur.*[22] After discussing some of these post-medieval family sagas in more detail, the essay concludes with some speculations on what the circumstances may have been that allowed this kind of saga-writing to flourish.

Matthew Bardowell received his Ph.D. from St Louis University in 2016 with a dissertation entitled "Art and Emotion in Old Norse and Old English Poetry." His published articles have so far concentrated on the work of Tolkien and the Inklings. His essay, "The Aesthetics of Concealment and Revelation in the Skaldic Poetry of Kári Sölmundarson," is a detailed investigation of how Kári Sölmundarson, after his escape from the burning of Njáll and his family at Bergþórshvöll, is able to express the emotions he is experiencing at various points by his ability to manipulate the formal constraints of the *dróttkvætt* stanza. The six poems concerned are all found in *Njáls saga,* and all demonstrate a highly sophisticated aesthetic of concealment and revelation. The essay also looks at how individuals express emotions elsewhere in the saga corpus and positions itself in a growing body of work investigating the expression of emotions in Old Norse literature.

While they were students in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic at the University of Cambridge, Jonathan Y.

21. Valdimar Ásmundarson and Þórleifur Jónsson, eds., *Íslendinga sögur*, 38 vols. (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1891–1902). See Ármann Jakobsson, "Íslendingasögur í mótun: Um fyrsti heildarútgáfa Íslendingasagnanna, samhengi hennar og áhrif," *Andvari* n.s. 59 (2017): 109–25.

22. Guðni Jónsson, ed., *Íslendinga sögur*, 13 vols. (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1953) (first publ. 1946–49). See also Ármann Jakobsson, "Sögurnar hans Guðna: 'Lýðveldisútgáfa' Íslendingasagnanna, hugmyndarfræði hennar og áhrif," *Skírnir* 192 (2018): 105–17.

H. Hui, Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir, Francesco Colombo, Caitlin Ellis, Eric A. Haley-Halinski, and James McIntosh collaborated in preparing an edition and translation of *Jóns saga leiksveins,* a little-known saga usually classified as a *riddarasaga* (chivalric saga), although Rudolf Simek and Hermann Pálsson classify aa a "*fornaldarsaga* nahestehende die junge Märchensaga" (*fornaldarsaga* related to the younger fairy-tale sagas).[23] The saga is conventionally dated to around 1400, even though the earliest surviving manuscript witness is only from the middle of the seventeenth century. This edition of *Jóns saga leiksveins* joins a growing body of late sagas that have been made available in English during the last decade, including *Ála flekks saga, Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra, Jarlmanns saga og Hermanns, Nítíða saga, Sigurðar saga fóts, Sigurgarðs saga frækna, Vilmundar saga viðutan,* and *Þjalar-Jóns saga*.[24] Also included is an extensive introduction showing how the saga shares motifs with texts as diverse as *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, *The Divine Comedy*, *Arthur and Gorlagon*, and Jean de Condé's verse fabliau, "Le Pliçon," as well as sharing elements of stories about werewolves and wicked stepmothers.

The *rímur,* the form of verse narrative that dominated Icelandic literary production for five hundred years, usually took their plots from prose narratives, frequently *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur.* But they were by no means restricted to such material. Arngrímur

23. Rudolf Simek and Hermann Pálsson, *Lexikon der altnordischen Literatur*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2007), 219. This is a fine example of why Old Norse "genre" is also a confused category.

24. Jonathan Y. H. Hui, Caitlin Ellis, James McIntosh, Katherine Olley, William Norman and Kimberly Anderson, eds. and trans., "*Ála flekks saga*: An Introduction, Text and Translation," *Leeds Studies in English* 49 (2018): 1–43; Philip Lavender, ed. and trans., *The Saga of Illugi, Gríður's Foster-Son* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2015); Philip Lavender, Alaric Hall, Garry Harrop, and Védís Ragnheiðardóttir, eds. and trans., "*Jarlmanns saga og Hermanns*: A Translation." *Scandinavian Canadian Studies / Études Scandinaves au Canada* 27 (2020): 50–104 (there is a separate introduction: Philip Lavender, "*Jarlmanns saga og Hermanns*: An Introduction," *Scandinavian Canadian Studies / Études Scandinaves au Canada* 27 [2020]: 16–49); Sheryl McDonald Werronen, "*Nítíða saga*: Text and Translation," appendix in *Popular Romance in Iceland: The Women, Worldviews, and Manuscript Witnesses of* Nítíða saga, Crossing Boundaries (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 221–48; Alaric Hall, Haukur Þorgeirsson, Patrick Beverley, et al., "*Sigurðar saga fóts* (The Saga of Sigurðr Foot): A Translation," *Mirator*, 11 (2010), 56–91; Alaric Hall, Steven D. P. Richardson, and Haukur Þorgeirsson, eds., "*Sigrgarðs saga frækna*: A Normalised Text, Translation, and Introduction," *Scandinavian–Canadian Studies* 21 (2012–2013), 80–155; Jonathan Y. H. Hui, ed. and trans., *The Saga of Vilmundur the Outsider* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2021); Philip Lavender, "*Þjalar-Jóns saga*: A Translation," *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 46 (2017): 73–113.

lærði Jónsson (1568–1648), perhaps the greatest Icelandic intellectual of the early modern period, composed a poem in three fitts called *Arnarrímur* (unpublished). This is a religious poem about the nature of the eagle, drawing upon the lore of the bestiary and medieval exempla about the eagle. It is not clear if the poem is completely Arngrímur's composition or if it is based on some as yet unidentified source. The best-known poem of this kind (perhaps) (because an edition of it was published by the Clarendon Press in 1908) is *Skotlands rímur* in six fitts by Einar Guðmundsson from Staður on Reykjanes (fl. first half of the seventeenth century), an account of the Gowrie Conspiracy[25] based on a Danish chapbook.[26] Finally, the option to choose unconventional subject matter continues down to the present in poems such as Þórarinn Eldjárn's *Disneyrímur,* a poem in six fitts about the baleful influence of the Disney empire on children's cultural development.[27]

It is within this tradition of *rímur* not based on sagas that the final contribution to this volume is situated. In "Depicting Friendship in Early Modern Iceland: *Apellis ríma* by Eiríkur Hallsson," Philip Lavender provides an edition and translation of the 59 stanzas of *Apellis ríma* by séra Eiríkur Hallsson (1614–1698) from Höfði í Höfðahverfi in Eyjafjörður, one of the more distinguished *rímur* poets of the seventeenth century.[28] The poem is based on an emblematic depiction of friendship widespread during the sixteenth century. Eiríkur encountered the description of this figure in the

25. On August 5, 1600, John Ruthven, 3rd Earl of Gowrie and his brother, Alexander, were killed in mysterious circumstances at Gowrie House by the retainers of King James VI of Scotland. The king charged that there had been made an attempt to kidnap him. The result was that the Ruthven estates were declared forfeit to the crown and the family name and associated titles extinguished.

26. *Historiske Relation om it gruelig Forræderi, som tu aff Kong. Maiestats i Skotland, Kong Jacob den VI. hans Undersaatte haffde sig fortagen mod hans Maiestats Person* (Copenhagen: Henrich Waldkirch, 1601) based on *Govvreis conspiracie a discourse of the vnnaturall and vyle conspiracie attempted against the kings majesties person at Sanct-Iohnstoun vpon Twysday the 5. of August. 1600* (Edinburgh: Robert Charteris, 1600). The Danish version is reprinted in Einar Guðmundsson, *Skotlands rímur: Icelandic Ballads on the Gowrie Conspiracy*, Conspiracy, edited by William A. Craigie (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1908), 120–42.

27. Þórarinn Eldjárn, *Disneyrímur* (Reykjavík: Iðunn, 1978). The poem is inspired by Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*, trans. David Kunzle (New York: International General, 1975).

28. See also Philip Lavender, "*Bekraríma* or 'The Rhyme of the Ram' by Eiríkur Hallsson," in *Text to Artefact: Studies in Honour of Anne Mette Hansen*, ed. Katarzyna Anna Kapitan, Beeke Stegmann, and Seán D. Vrieland (Leeds: Kismet Press, 2019), 239–48.

Icelandic translation by Sveinn Símonarson (1599–1644) of the *Specvlvm amicitiæ* by the German mathematician and theologian, Sigismund Suevus (1526–1596) first published in Görlitz in 1578, but here probably translated from the Danish version of 1613.[29] Eiríkur then inserted this allegorical description of friendship into a frame narrative of the Greek painter, Apelles of Kos (fl. 4th cent. B.C.E.), visiting Rome and creating this allegorical depiction of Friendship. The story of Apelles freeing himself from slanderous accusations and devising an allegorical description of the event was a popular Renaissance topos ("The Calumny of Apelles"). Eiríkur himself had had to vindicate himself in a long poem called "Rógsvala" (slander quencher) against malicious accusations that he had been somehow complicit in the death of his first wife in an accident in 1659, and *Apellisríma* may have been also closely connected to these efforts to clear his name.

A few final words about the format of this volume are taken from Jeffrey Turco's introduction to *New Norse Studies* (2015):

> In view of the 'double life' of *New Norse Studies* both in print and now online, individual bibliographies have been appended to each essay with an eye to their independent electronic circulation. Full citations are provided in the footnotes as well as in the appended bibliographies in order to let the digital medievalist avoid what might ironically be considered as excessive 'scrolling'. . . . As is customary Icelandic proper names are listed alphabetically by given name rather than by patronym. . . . In lieu of an index the reader can search the electronic edition of this volume on the webpage of the *Islandica* series [through https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/55752] for any name or term.[30]

To these comments it should be added that the spelling in all essays has been standardized to American English except in quotations, and again except in quotations, "Old Norse" words and names are given in Modern Icelandic spelling.

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29. Sigismund Suevus, *Specvlvm amicitiæ: Þad er Vina speigell*, trans. Sveinn Símonarson (Hólar: n.p., 1618).

30. Jeffrey Turco, Introduction to *New Norse Studies: Essays on the Literature and Culture of Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. Jeffrey Turco, Islandica 58 (Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2015), 1–5 at 4–5.

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Historical Studies

The Destinies of Varangians in Eleventh-to Twelfth-Century Rus'

Yakun "the Blind," S(h)imon, and his Son George[*]

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Any scholar, or indeed any interested reader, concerned with the cultural history of Rus' in the tenth to the thirteenth centuries has inevitably to face a kind of paradox: while the role of Scandinavians in the political and ecclesiastical life of pre-Mongol Rus' was far from insignificant, the evidence from native Rus'ian sources concerning this group of immigrants is scarce and quite fragmented.

Examples of this fragmentation abound. For instance, the *Primary Chronicle* (Повесть временных лет) bluntly claims that all Novgorodians are of Varangian origin: "The present inhabitants of Novgorod are descended from the Varangian race,"[1] However, neither the continuation of the *Primary Chronicle*'s narrative nor

[*]The results of the project "Semiotics of literary and vernacular text: the Slavic world between East and West," carried out within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) in 2022, are presented in this work.

1. *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, translated by and ed. Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor, Medieval Academy of America Publication 60 (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1953) 60; "ти суть людьє Нооугородьци w̃ рода Варѧжьска." Лаврентьевская летопись (Laurentian Chronicle), Полное собрание русских летописей (Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles) [= PSRL (ПСРЛ)], 43 vols. (Saint Petersburg: Типография Эдуарда Праца, 1841–2004); vol. 1, 4th ed., PSRL (ПСРЛ)] 1: rpt. of the 2nd ed. (1927–28), edited by Yefim Fyodorovich Karskii [Евфимий Фёдорович Карский] with a new preface by Boris Mikhailovich Kloss [Борис Михайлович Клосс] and a new lexical analysis by Oleg Viktorovich Tvorogov [Олег Викторович Творогов] (Moscow: Языки русской культуры [Languages of Russian Culture], 1997), col. 20; *Povĕst' vremennykh lĕt: An Interlinear Collation and Paradosis,* ed Donald Ostrowski, 3 vols., Harvard Library of Early Ukrainian Literature: Texts, Ukrainian Research Institute Publications 10 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 1:106 (20.9–10).

the narrative of the *Novgorod First Chronicle* (Новгородская первая летопись) gives any direct indication of the Scandinavian origins of any contemporary Novgorodian family.[2] The chronicles are even more explicit about the Varangian origins of Rurik, the founder of the dynasty that was to rule Rus' for the next 600 years. Yet the chronicle never reveals the identity of the parents (not to mention the more remote Scandinavian ancestors) of Rurik, Sineus, and Truvor—a fact that strikes us as almost absurd, given that Scandinavian accounts of the events of that period are extremely interested in genealogy.

As for the eleventh century, it is known, for instance, that Yaroslav *mudryj* (the Wise; Ярослав Мудрый) (d. 1054), one of the great-great-grandsons of Rurik, was married to a Swedish princess named Ingigerður/Irene Ólafsdóttir, and that one of their daughters was married to Haraldur *harðráði* (d. 1066), King of Norway.[3] However, none of these pieces of evidence comes from a Rus'ian source: Rus'ian chronicles have nothing whatsoever to say about ties between Yaroslav's family and Scandinavia. Nor were chroniclers interested in the Scandinavian spouses of Yaroslav's great-great-granddaughters, who lived in the twelfth century.

Numerous Scandinavian names, direct and obvious Scandinavian loanwords, isolated mentions of a Varangian *hirð* (retinue) taking part in the military activities of Rus'ian princes, certain narrative motifs and stories shared between the two cultures: the presence of all these elements in native Rus'ian texts provides a quite convincing justification for interpreting Rus'ian texts alongside foreign sources. Yet, taken in isolation, Rus'ian texts present almost no coherent picture of Rus'ian–Scandinavian interactions in the tenth to the twelfth centuries. The efforts of many researchers have successfully augmented this picture, but it will always contain a good deal of conjecture.[4]

2. On some indirect and/or non-chronicle evidence allowing the genealogies of some of these families to be reconstructed, see below.

3. See the annotated genealogy of Jaroslavl and his descendants in Christian Raffensperger, *Ties of Kinship: Genealogy and Dynastic Marriage in Kyivan Rus'*, Harvard Series in Ukrainian Studies (Cambridge: Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, 2016), 201–15.

4. Research on this topic has been ongoing since the eighteenth century. Concerning Rus'ian nobility other than the Rurikids, one may cite, for instance, a reconstruction

This situation seems much less surprising when one remembers that the period between the ninth and twelfth centuries—the period of the Rus'ian–Scandinavian contacts in question—was initially preceded and then overlapped by an era of large-scale shifts and transformations in both Rus'ian and Scandinavian history. The spread of Christianity, adopted first by some rulers and their associates and then by whole nations; the establishment of monarchic dynasties; the drawing up of lists of saints venerated locally: all these innovations were accompanied by the emergence of a new type of literacy that was both part of these processes and a consequence of them. It is hardly surprising, then, that within it, the larger part somewhat absorbed the lesser, dramatic change occluded other, less dramatic events: interaction with neighbors, once momentous, now drew the attention of the bookmen only insofar as it conformed to these new perspectives.

Things are made yet more difficult by the fact that Rus'ian chronicles such as the *Primary Chronicle* or the *Novgorod First Chronicle*, as sources of our knowledge of the Scandinavian presence in Rus', first took their written form not when contacts with the Varangians

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of the Varangian origins of the Rogovich-Gyuryatinichs, a family of Novgorodian boyars, in the work of Arkady Anatolyevich Molchanov (Аркадий Анатольевич Молчанов), "Ярл Рёгнвальд Ульвссон и его потомки на Руси (о происхождении ладожско-новгородского посадничьего рода Роговичей-Гюрятиничей)" (Jarl Rǫgnvaldr Úlfsson and his Descendants in Russia: on the Origin of the Ladoga-Novgorod Mayoral Family of Rogovichi-Gyuryatinichi), in Памятники старины: Концепции, Открытия, Версии: Памяти Василия Дмитриевича Белецкого, *1919–1997* (Ancient Monuments: Concepts, Discoveries, Versions: In memory of Vasily Dmitrievich Beletsky, 1919–1997), edited by Vasily Dmitrievich Beletsky, A. A. Alexandrov, Anatoly Nikolaevich Kirpichnikov, 2 vols. (Saint Petersburg; Институт истории материальной культуры Российской академии наук (Institute of the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Science), 1997), 2:80–84 and Alexei Alexeyevich Gippius (Алексей Алексеевич Гиппиус), "Скандинавский след в истории новгородского боярства (в развитие гипотезы А. А. Молчанова о происхождении посадничьего рода Гюрятиничей-Роговичей)" (Scandinavian Traces in the History of the Novgorod boyar Families: Some Further Considerations in Developing A. A. Molchanov's Hypothesis about the Origin of the Gyuryatinichi-Rogovichi Family), in *The Slavicization of the Russian North: Mechanisms and Chronology*, edited by Juhani Nuorluoto, Slavica Helsingiensia 27 (Helsinki: Department of Slavonic and Baltic Languages and Literatures, University of Helsinki, 2005), 93–108; revised English version: "A Scandinavian Trace in the History of the Novgorod Boyardom," *Vers l'Orient et vers l'Occident: Regards croisés sur les dynamiques et les transferts culturels des Vikings à la Rous ancienne*, edited by Pierre Bauduin and Alexander E. Musin, Publications du CRAHM (Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2014), 383-96. Notably, no Rus'ian source (whether a chronicle or not) actually mentions the coming of any ancestor of either the Rogovichs or the Gyuryatinichs from Scandinavia.

were at their most intense, but rather when they were fading rapidly. The copies in which these texts survive are even later, dating from a period when such contacts had largely became a relic of bygone days, and the various signs testifying to these contacts, once easily comprehensible without special explanation, had become either enigmatic or insignificant.

In short, texts paradoxically become both a mirror in which the shape of the affinities in question can be discerned and a barrier that must be crossed.

Against this background, any coherent sequence of elements on Rus'ian–Scandinavian relations in extant Old Rus'ian written sources acquires particular importance. Extraordinarily, across the entirety of the narrative space of the tenth to the twelfth centuries, Rurikids aside, there is just a single family whose Varangian origins are identified explicitly, whose close affinities with Scandinavia are noted, and for whom biographical details of three men representing three generations are given.

These three men are Yakun the Varangian, his nephew Shimon, and one of Shimon's sons, named George. All three are mentioned in the Kievan Crypt Monastery *Paterik* (Patericon). The *Paterik* also records the names of Shimon's brother and their father, Yakun's brother:

> In the Varangian land there was a Prince Afrikán, the brother of Hakon the Blind who lost his gold surcoat[5] in battle while fighting for Jaroslav against the fierce M'stislav. This Afrikan had two sons, Friand and Simon. After the death of their father, Hakon expelled them from their provinces. Šimon came to our pious prince Jaroslav, who received him, treated him with honor, and gave him to his son Vsevolod to be his elder, and he received considerable authority from Vsevolod. The reason for his deep love for this holy place was this:
> . . . .
> Simon was indeed the first person to be buried in the church, and henceforth his son Georgij had a great love for the holy place. Georgij was sent to the land of Suzdal' by Volodimer Monomax, who entrusted into his hands his own son Georgij. Many years later Georgij Volodimerovič resided in Kiev, and

5. In the original, a nonsensical choice of "руда" (ore) instead of "луда" (an item of clothing).

> regarding his chiliarch Georgij as a father, he assigned to him the district of Suzdal'[6]

The account in the *Paterik* is principally concerned with Shimon and, to a lesser extent, his son George. The *Paterik*'s information on Yakun is clearly derived from the account of the Battle of Listven (1024) in the *Primary Chronicle*:

> Then Yaroslav returned and came again to Novgorod, whence he sent overseas after Varangians. Thus Hakon [i.e., Yakun] came over with his Varangian followers. Now this Hakon was blind [Rus'ian: слѣпъ] and he had a robe all woven with gold. He allied himself with Yaroslav, and with his support Yaroslav marched against M'stislav who, hearing the news of their coming, proceeded to meet them at Listven.
>
> . . .
>
> Now when Yaroslav saw that he was overpowered, he fled from the field with Hakon, the Varangian prince, who lost his gold-woven robe in his flight. Yaroslav arrived safely at Novgorod, but Hakon departed beyond the sea.[7]

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6. *The Paterik of the Kievan Caves Monastery*, translated by Muriel Heppell, Harvard Library of Early Ukrainian Literature: English Translations 1 (Cambridge, MA: Ukrainian Research Institute of Harvard University, 1989), 1, 5. "Бысть въ земли Варяжской князь Аѳриканъ, брат Якуна слепаго, иже отбеже отъ златы руды <sic!>, біася плъком по Ярославѣ с лютымь Мстиславомь. И сему Аѳрикану бяху два сына: Фриадъ и Шимонъ. По смерти же отцю ею изъгна Якунъ обою брату отъ области ею. Приде же Шимонъ къ благовѣрному князю нашему Ярославу […] И сий убо Симонъ [= Шимон] пръвый положенъ бысть въ тои церкви. Оттоле сынъ его Георгій велику любовь имѣаше ко святому тому мѣсту. И бысть посланъ отъ Володимера Мономаха въ Суждальскую землю, сій Георгій дасть же ему на руцѣ и сына своего Георгія. По лѣтех же мнозѣх сѣдѣ Гѣоргій Владимеровичъ въ Киевѣ, тысяцькому жъ своему Георгіеви, яко отцу, предасть землю Суждальскую." Патерик Киевскаго Печерскаго монастыря (Paterik of the Kiev Caves Monastery), edited by Dmitry Ivanovich Abramovich [Дмитрий Иванович Абрамович], Памятники славяно-русской письменности (Monuments of Slavic-Russian Writing) 2 (Saint Petersburg: Императорская археографическая комиссия [Imperial Archeographical Commission], 1911), 3, 5.

7. *Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, translated by Cross, 135; ". . . и възвративъсѧ Ѣрославъ приде Новуногороду . и посла за море по Варѧгы . и прїде Ѣкунъ с Варѧгы . и бѣ Ѣкунъ слѣпъ . [и] луда бѣ оу него золотомь истъкана . и приде къ Ѣрославу . [и] иде Ѣрославъ съ Ѣкуномь на Мьстислава . Мьстиславъ же слъıшавъ . взиде противу има к Лиственъ [. . .] видѣв же Ѣрославъ ѣко побѣжаємъ єсть . побѣже съ Ѣкуномъ кнѧземь Варѧжьскъı мѧ . и Ѣкунъ ту ѿбѣже лудъı златоѣ . Ѣрославъ же приде Новугороду . а Ѣкунъ иде за море ." Лаврентьевская летопись (*Laurentian Chronicle*), col. 148; *Povĕst' vremennykh lĕt,* edited by Ostrowski, 2: 1173–74 (148.5–10), 1178–79 (148.24–28).

The fact that the compiler of the *Paterik* relied on the chronicle is beyond doubt, but this does not make the figure of the "blind" Varangian commander any less enigmatic. Indeed, this figure has attracted the attention of scholars since at least the mid-nineteenth century, and has become even more popular over the last two decades.

As things stand, most researchers accept the amendment first suggested by Nikolai Petrovich Lambin who proposed reading сь лѣпъ (handsome) rather than слѣпъ (blind).[8] Thus, as Savva Mikhailovich Mikheyev neatly put it, Yakun was a beauty rather than a blind man.[9] The name *Yakun* or *Akun* can be reliably derived from a popular Scandinavian personal name *Hákon*.[10] Indeed, the Cross translation renders it *Hakon*, highlighting this fact.

Another curious detail is the name of the object lost by Yakun as he flees the Battle of Listven. Some copies of the *Paterik* read руда ("ore," or, in early modern usage, "blood"), while others read луда. This latter category includes all known versions of the chronicle (which certainly precedes the *Paterik*—or, at least, this entry does). As early as the nineteenth century, the word луда was recognized as the Old Norse *loði* "cloak."[11] This word, while rare in Old Rus'ian

8. Nikolai Petrovich Lambin (Николай Петрович Ламбин), "О слепоте Якуна и его златотканой луде: Историко-филологическое разыскание" (The "Blindness" of Yakun [= Hákon] and His "Golden Cloak": From a Historico-philological Point of View), Журнал Министерства Народного Просвещения (*Journal of the Ministry of Education*) 98, 2 (1858): 33–76 at 66–76. Abramovich had suggested allowing this emendation, Патерик Киевскаго Печерскаго монастыря 1, but Cross chose to preserve the reading "blind," assuming that the *Paterik* reading was original; *Russian Primary Chronicle*, 256, note 153.

9. "Якун изначально был не слепцом, а красавцем" (Yakun was not originally blind, but handsome), Savva Mikhailovich Mikheyev (Савва Михайлович Михеев), "Варяжские князья Якун, Африкан и Шимон: Литературные сюжеты, трансформация имен и исторический контекст" (Varangian Princes Yakun [= Hákon], Afrikan [= Álfrekur], and Shimon [= Sigmundur]: Literary Motifs, Corruption of Names, and Historical Context), Древняя Русь: Вопросы медиевистики (*Medieval Russia: Questions of Medieval Studies*) 2(32) (2008): 27–32 at 27.

10. Ernst Edward Kunik (= Арист Аристович Кууник [Arist Aristovich Kunik]), *Die Berufung der schwedischen Rodsen durch die Finnen und Slawen: Eine Vorarbeit zur Entstehungsgeschichte des russischen Staates*, 2 vols. (Saint Petersburg: Kaiserliche Academie der Wissenschaften, 1844–45), 1:139–40, 2:171–72.

11. Lambin, "О слепоте Якуна и его златотканой луде," 53–66; Max Julius Friedrich Vasmer (Максимилиан Романович Фасмер [Maximilian Romanovich Fasmer]), Этимологический словарь русского языка: Пер. с немецкого и дополнения О. Н. Трубачева (Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language: Translated from

texts, is not a hapax legomenon. Notably, the item of clothing designated by this word characterizes a foreigner, and the word itself only appears in accounts of eleventh-century events.[12] Most likely, the scribes who compiled the later versions of the *Paterik* would barely even have understood its meaning, and therefore replaced it with the more familiar руда. This move might not have made the text clearer, but it did at least eliminate the unintelligible term. Finally, even later versions of the *Paterik* demonstrate that this construction underwent further development: the verb was omitted to make it more coherent, but the role of this руда in the Varangian's biography became even more enigmatic. Most interesting of all, while the early chronicler contented himself with mentioning that Yakun was a Varangian prince, a later author, in order to render his heroes more distinguished, found it necessary to derive their genealogy from the Caesars of Rome.[13]

The transformations of Yakun's characteristic attribute over time

German with additions by O.N. Trubachyov), 3rd ed., 4 vols. (Saint Petersburg: Teppa–Азбука (Terra-ABC), 1996), 2:529; Richard Cleasby and Guðbrandur Vigfússon, *An Icelandic–English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., edited by William Craigie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 396.

12. Лаврентьевская летопись (*Laurentian Chronicle*), col. 190.

13. Cf. the sixteenth-century *Life of St. Euphrosyne of Suzdal'*: "for his [Prince Mennas of Suzdal', d. 1250] descent was from the Varangians, from Prince Shimon, son of Africanus who was the brother of Yakun the Blind, who [was] of gold руда, and their descent was from Claudius Caesar of Rome: this is the lineage of the Suzdal' princes." (род же его влечяшеся от варягъ, от Шимона князя Африкановичя, Африкан же бѣ братъ Якуна слѣпаго, иже от златыа руды; род же их от Клавдия кесаря Римскаго; от того убо корене род Суждальскихъ князеи). Quoted in Boris Mikhailovich Kloss (Борис Михайлович Клос), Избранные труды, vol. 2, Очерки по истории русской агиографии *XIV–XVI* веков*:* Агиография Москвы, Твери, Ярославля, Суздаля*:* Сказания о чудотворных иконах (*Selected Writings*, vol. 2, *Essays on the History of Russian Hagiography of the XIV–XVI Centuries: Hagiography of Moscow, Tver, Yaroslavl', Suzdal': Legends Involving Wonderworking Icons*) (Moscow: Языки русской культуры [Languages of Russian Culture], 2001), 381. It seems that the author of the *Life* understood руда as "blood." This meaning is not attested in eleventh- to fourteenth-century texts but is known in the seventeenth century. See Izmail Ivanovich Sreznevsky (Измаил Иванович Срезневский), Материалы для словаря древнерусского языка по письменным памятникам (Materials for the Dictionary of the Old Russian Language Compiled from Written Sources), 3 vols. (Saint Petersburg: [Императорская Академия наук (Imperial Academy of Science)], 1893–1912), 3:187; SDRYa (СДРЯ) = Словарь древнерусского языка *(XI–XIV* вв.*)* (Dictionary of the Old Russian Language [XI–XIV Centuries]), edited by Reuben Ivanovich Avanesov (Рубен Иванович Аванесов) et al., 12 vols. to date (Moscow: Институт русского языка Российской академии наук [Russian Language Institute, Russian Academy of Science], 1988–2019), 10:471. Thus, he would logically interpret "of gold blood" as "of noble descent," and thus assume that Yakun was somehow related to Roman emperors.

provide yet more food for thought as evidence that the description of this Scandinavian in the *Primary Chronicle* has hidden depths. As noted above, Yakun is the only Varangian outside the Rurikid family whom the chronicler calls a prince (князь).[14] Moreover, despite his tendency to pass over the looks and costume of his characters in silence, the chronicler chooses to specify that Yakun was handsome and that he wore a gold cloak (twice). He might fail to inform us of what the other protagonists (say, the Rus'ian princes Yaroslav mudryj and M'stislav of Tmutorakan' [Мстислав Владимирович Тмутараканский, d. 1035]) were wearing at the time, or of what they wore typically—but in Yakun's case, a specific item of clothing was, for some reason, of particular importance.

No less enigmatic is the whole verbal construction in which the cloak appears: w̄бѣже лудъı златоѣ (literally, "fled from [his] gold cloak"). Although the verb отбѣжати / отбѣгнути, "to flee away from," in combination with a noun in the genitive case, is attested in chronicles in the meaning of "to leave [something] on a battlefield when fleeing,"[15] elsewhere it is used to convey the loss of a symbolically important object like a banner,[16] or of something directly related to fleeing, such as a boat.[17] It remains unclear why

14. It is difficult to find a precise translation for designation "князь," a word with the same etymological origin as Modern English "king," especially with respect to the early period. "Prince," as used here, is a generally accepted translation, but Christian Raffensperger, "The Historiography of the Translation of Kniaz'," in *The Kingdom of Rus'*, Past Imperfect (Kalamazoo: ARC Humanities Press, 2017), 25–29, suggests that in many cases "king" would be more accurate.

15. Alexei Alexeyevich Gippius, "Бегство от плаща: Заметки о 'золотой луде' Якуна 'Слепого'" (Fleeing from the Cloak: Notes on the "Golden Cloak" of Yakun [= Hákon] "The Blind"), in *Terra balkanica*, *Terra slavica:* К юбилею Татьяны Владимировны Цивьян (*For the [70th] Birthday of Tatyana Vladimirovna Tsivyan*), edited by Tatyana Mikhailovna Nikolaevna, Балканские чтения (Balkan Readings) 9 (Moscow: Институт славяноведения Российской академии наук [ИСл РАН; Institute of Slavic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences], 2007), 52–58 at 56. Sreznevsky identifies the meaning of the verb отбѣгнути in the relevant contexts as "to be deprived of, to lose" (2:744), while SDRYa (СДРЯ) 6:215 gives "to lose."

16. Лаврентьевская летопись (*Laurentian Chronicle*), col. 282; Ипатьевская летопись (*Hypatian Chronicle*), 5th ed., PSRL (ПСРЛ) 2, rpt. of the 2nd ed. (1908), edited by Alexei Alexandrovich Shakhmatov (Алексей Александрович Шахматов) with a new preface by Boris Mikhailovich Kloss (Борис Михайлович Клосс) and new indices (Moscow: Языки русской культуры [Languages of Russian Culture], 1998), 725–26.

17. Новгородская первая летопись (Novgorod First Chronicle), 3rd ed., PSRL (ПСРЛ) 3, rpt. of the out-of-series vol. ed. Arsenii Nikolaevich Nasonov (Арсений Николаевич Насонов) (1950) with a new preface by Boris Mikhailovich Kloss (Борис Михайлович Клосс) and new appendices (Moscow: Языки русской культуры [Languages of Russian Culture], 2000), 27 (Синодальный список [Synodal Scroll]); 213 (Комиссионный список

such importance should be attributed to the Varangian's *cloak* at the end of the Battle of Listven.

In our opinion, this combination of specific details in the portrayal of Yakun suggests that the earliest chronicler and his audience knew more about Yakun than a modern reader is able to discern at first sight. These details might therefore present a historian with the opportunity to identify which of the known contemporary Scandinavian leaders the Yakun of the chronicle was, while a philologist could make use of them to trace the provenance of Varangian miniplots in Rus'ian chronicles and non-chronicle narratives.

As for the identity of Yakun (Hákon), the combined efforts of many scholars have resulted in a sufficiently plausible theory that the man who fought at Listven was none other than Hákon Eiríksson Hlaðajarl (d. 1029).[18] This hypothesis has much to recommend it.

"Good looks" regularly appear in Scandinavian sources as a kind of familial marker of the earls of Lade.[19] An individual whose grandfather was an autocratic ruler of Norway and who claimed the same rights himself (with more or less success) might well lay claim to a princely title. From the Rus'ian perspective, it is even more significant that the house of Lade was linked to the Rurikids by affinity[20]: Sveinn Hákonson (†1016), uncle of Hákon Eiríksson,

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[Commission Scroll]); *The Chronicle of Novgorod 1016–1471*, translated by Robert Mitchell and Neville Forbes, new introduction by Walter K. Hanak, The Russian Series 18 (Hattiesburg, MS: Academic International, 1970), 19 [A.D. 1146].

18. Brate, Erik, *Svenska runristare*, Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademiens Handlingar 33:5–6 (Stockholm: Akademiens förlag, 1925), 16; Omeljan [Yosipovich] Pritsak (Омелян Йосипович Пріцак), *The Origin of Rus'*, vol. 1: *Old Scandinavian Sources Other Than Sagas* (Cambridge, MA: Ukrainian Research Institute of Harvard University, 1981), 412, 416; trans. as Походження Рус*і*, vol. 1: Стародавн*і* скандинавськ*і* джерела *(*кр*і*м *і*сландских саг*)*, translated by Alexander Butsenko and Yuriy Oliynyk, Київська бібліотека давнього українського письменства 2 (Kiev: Інститут сходознавства імені А.Ю.Кримського Національної академії наук України*, 1997)*, 440–54; Adolf Stender-Petersen, "Jaroslav und die Väringer," in *Varangica*, edited by Heinrich Bach et al., 2 vols. (Aarhus: [Universitets slaviske Institut], 1953), 1:115–38 at 137–38.

19. Mikheyev, "Варяжские князья Якун" 28.

20. Strictly speaking, it cannot be ruled out that Ingigerður, wife of Yaroslav mudryj, and therefore also their children, were linked to Yakun (Hákon?) not only by affinity, but by consanguinity as well. However, if this is the case, the relation can only be matrilineal, and is rather vague and uncertain. According to sagas, Hákon's mother was Gyða, daughter of Sveinn Haraldsson *tjúguskegg* (forkbeard) (d. 1014), king of Denmark and England, one of the most powerful rulers of the era. Sveinn, in his turn, married the widow of Eiríkur inn sigursæli (the victorious) (d. c. 995), who was father of Ólafur Skötkonung and grandfather of Ingigerður. If Gyða's mother and the widow of Eiríkur inn sigursæli were the same woman, then Gyða and Ólafur Skötkonung would

was a brother-in-law of Yaroslav mudryj, and both were married to daughters of Ólafur Skötkonungur (d. 1022): Yaroslav, as noted above, to Ingigerður/Irene, and Sveinn to Hólmfríður.[21] Thus, a picture emerges that is not uncommon given the dynastic policy of the Rurikids: a prince allying with one of his in-laws against a close blood relative (in this case, his brother). In this context, emphasizing the noble birth of this in-law would be perfectly natural. Indeed, the fact that Hákon's father and uncle had both traveled to Rus' and taken part in military campaigns there would make prospective aid from their junior even more valuable, whichever side his relatives had taken previously.

In other words, if the theory identifying the Yakun of the chronicle with Hákon Eiríksson is correct, the two significant details in the chronicle text, namely the Varangian's princely title and his good looks, are far from being throwaway comments. We have sought to demonstrate that the same applies to the third significant detail of the Yakun story: the gold cloak that gave so much trouble to later medieval authors who would rely on this text in one way or another. The chronicler's unusual interest in the clothing of his hero may have been motivated by his knowledge of Hákon's family history.

To get an insight into the meaning of the cloak for the house

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be half-siblings, which would make Ingigerður and Hákon first cousins. Yet this genealogical conjecture is problematic, given the fact that the widow of Eiríkur inn sigursæli was not the only wife of Sveinn tjúguskegg, and the identity of his children's mother is far from clear: the saga evidence is sometimes utterly at odds with the evidence of Latin continental sources (on the wives of Sveinn tjúguskegg, see: Fjodor B. Uspenskij, "Dynastic Names in Medieval Scandinavia and Russia (Rus'): Family Traditions and International Connections," *Studia anthroponymica Scandinavica: Tidsskrift för nordisk personnamnsforskning* 21 (2003): 17–24, with a review of literature on the subject. But even if we prefer another theory concerning the spouses of Eiríkur and Sveinn, Ingigerður and Hákon would still be cousins of a kind, being the children of stepsiblings – an affinity that would carry considerable weight in a world of patrimony.

21. Most intriguingly of all, Hákon's maternal aunt *Ástríður* (Estrid) (d. c. 1073), daughter of Sveinn tjúguskegg, King of Denmark, is said to have been married to a son of the "King of Rus": "Chnut sororem suam Estred filio regis de Ruzzia dedit in matrimonium" (Knútur gave his sister, Ástríður, in marriage to the son of the king of the Rus'; Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, edited by Bernhard Schmeidler, 3rd ed., Scriptores rerum germanicarum in usum scholarum ex Monumentis Germaniae Historicis separatim editi 59 (Hannover: Bibliopolius Hahnianus, 1917), Lib. 2, Schol. 39 (40):114. This piece of evidence is not found in any other sources, and there is no consensus as to who this Rus'ian spouse of Ástríður was. Among other theories, it has been suggested that the account refers to either one of the brothers of Yaroslav mudryj or one of his sons.

of the earls of Lade, recall the most renowned of them, Hákon Sigurðarson jarl hinn ríki (the powerful) (†995), the last heathen ruler of Norway. He struggled for power with Ólafur Tryggvason (†1000) when the latter returned from Rus'; he was then forced to escape, was hunted down and finally met his end in a pit under a pigsty where he was hiding.

Several saga sources report on these events. These sources are more or less in agreement, but differ in emphasis and in their degree of interest in specific episodes of the Earl's escape and eventual murder. It is worth citing the earliest example a of narrative about Hákon's flight, found in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* by Oddur Snorrason,[22] where quite specific actions of the Earl's involving his cloak are not only described but also interpreted from the perspective of his persecutors. To begin with, the narrator tells us that Hákon hinn ríki, accompanied by his slave Karkur, "fled on horseback and came to a large river, which he crossed. He had a silk cloak (*silki mottul*) on, which he took off his shoulders and cast into the river. Then they fled to Gaulardalur and searched for a hideaway."[23]

Later, the reader is brought back to the Gaulará River together with the Earl's persecutors, King Ólafur Tryggvason and his men:

> Olaf Tryggvason now pressed the pursuit of the jarl and arrived with a large company of men at the aforementioned river and saw the cloak washed up on a spit of land. (*Oc nu sia þeir mottulinn rekinn ieyri eina*). It was retrieved, and they recognized that it belonged to the jarl. Many said that the jarl had probably succumbed there, so that there was no need to search for him.
>
> Then an old man said: 'No, you don't know the jarl's guile if you think he perished in this river. It is a trick of his to have thrown

22. This saga by Oddur Snorrason (twelfth century), a monk at Þingeyraklaustur, is the earliest extant biography of Ólafur Tryggvason. It was written in Latin in the later twelfth century and, shortly after, translated into Old Norse. Three recensions of this translation survive, while the Latin original is only preserved in small fragments.

23. Oddur Snorrason, *The saga of Olaf Tryggvason by Oddr Snorrason*, translated by Theodore M. Andersson, Islandica 52 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 69. "[R]eið iflottanum oc com at o einni mikilli oc for hann yfir hana Hann hafþi silki mottul yfir ser. oc tecr hann tear af herþum ser oc castar iana. oc siþan flyðu þeir iGaular dal oc leiuðu fylscna." Oddur Snorrason, *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar af Odd Snorrason munk*, edited by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gad, 1932), 78.

> off the cloak (*at casta af ser motlinum*), so you would think that he died here.'
>
> They believed the old man and continued their search, which finally brought them to Gaulardal and the farm of Rimull. [24]

So there is apparently a tradition attributing to Hákon hinn ríki a cunning "cloak trick": the owner of a valuable and, even more important, easily identifiable item of clothing leaves it behind in order to confound his persecutors. Culturally universal tricks of that sort can be found in a wide range of narratives, from folklore to classical literature. In medieval historiography, especially sagas, they often become attached to specific historical figures, becoming a stable and memorable characteristic of an individual, appearing in either extended accounts (as in Oddur) or brief descriptions.[25]

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24. Oddur Snorrason, *The saga of Olaf Tryggvason*, 70. "En Olafr T. s. fer nu eptir oc leitar j. kǫmr hann nu með micla sveit manna til þeira ar er fyrr var fra sagt. Oc nu sia þeir mottulinn rekinn ieyri eina. Oc siþan var hann up tekinn oc kendr at j. hafði att tocu þa margir sua til orðz at j. myndi þar latiz hava oc ecki myndi þurva at leita hans. Þa mælti einn gamall maðr. Nei ecki kunni þer brogþ j. ef þer ætlit hann tynz hava iþessi a. en þetta er slǫgþar prettr hans at casta af ser motlinum. at þer ætlaðit at hann myndi her latitz hava. Nu truðu þeir þessu oc helldu fram leitinni oc como um siþir til Gaular dals oc a bǫin Rimul." Oddur Snorrason, *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar*, 79–80. Cf. also the version of the same account in Stockholm 18, 4to, another recension of Oddur's saga: "And when they arrived at the river where the cloak had been washed up, they took it and many recognized whom it belonged to, and most surmised that the earl must have drowned when they saw the dead horse and the discarded cloak and thought there was no need to search for him. Then an old man said: 'You know neither the jarl's guile nor his wisdom if you believe he has perished here in this river, and do not understand that this is done to deceive you'" (Ok er þeir O. komo at anni er móttulinn rak tok þeir hann. ok kendv margir hverr att hafðe ok ætlvðv flester at iarlinn mvnde drvknað hafa er þeir sa hestinn dvþan ok mǫttvlinn rekinn ok þotti eigi þvrfa at leita hans. Þa melti einn gamall maðr. Eige kvnne þer brvgþ Hakonar jarls ne vit ef þer trvit hann hér fariz hafa iþessi á en skilið eige at þetta er gertt til tála við yðr). Oddur Snorrason, *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar*, 79–80.

25. See, for example, Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla: Nóregs konunga sogur*, edited by Finnur Jónsson, 4 vols., *Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 23 (Copenhagen:* S. L. Møller, 1893–1901), 1:350 and *Ágrip af Nóregs konunga sögum: Diplomatarisk udgave*, edited by Verner Dahlerup, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 2 (Copenhagen: S. L. Møller, 1880), 25. The cloak discarded during Hákon's flight is mentioned in multiple written accounts of his last days. Among the earliest sources, those that fail to mention it are *Fagurskinna*, a saga compilation written about 1220 (*Fagrskinna: Nóregs konunga tal*, edited by Finnur Jónsson, *Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 30 [Copenhagen:* S. L. Møller, 1902–3], 106); and *Jomsvikinga saga* (*Jómsvíkinga saga, efter arnamagnæanske handskriften N:o 291. 4:to, i diplomatariskt aftryck utgifven*, edited by Carl af Petersens, *Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 7* [Copenhagen: S. L. Møller, 1882], 101). Nor is the cloak story present in Latin histories (the anonymous *Historia Norwegiæ* and *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium* by Theodoric the Monk).

Indeed, both real life and literary tradition across the world could yield many cases where, for the sake of survival, a fleeing person sheds a showy item of clothing that distinguishes him or her from other people. Yet the saga tradition tends to attribute this trick specifically to Hákon hinn ríki. In a patrimonial worldview, nothing is more natural than projecting the looks, the personality and the actions of an ancestor upon his descendants—especially if this ancestor is as illustrious as the last heathen ruler of the whole of Norway. Our Hákon Eiríksson, whom we believe to have been the Yakun of the chronicle, was a grandson of Hákon hinn ríki, and named after him. In a way, the choice of this name conveyed the expectation that Hákon Eiríksson would be a reincarnation of his powerful grandfather. Imitating his grandfather in nobility (the Yakun of the chronicle is given the title *Prince*), in good looks and in use of cunning tactics when defeated would make Hákon Eiríksson his grandfather's true namesake and a faithful likeness of him.

A mind operating within the framework of the saga tradition could easily choose these details for the story of Hákon/Yakun. After all, they were the markers of his familial and dynastic identity and would serve to identify him more precisely than any mere personal traits. The fact that the Rus'ian chronicler relating the Battle of Listven chose to give these particular details indicates his knowledge of what may be called the Scandinavian perspective.

In fact, it is hardly surprising that a chronicler working in the first half of the eleventh century was steeped in the Varangian context. St. Vladimir, Grand Prince of Kiev (Владимир Святославич, князь киевскией) (d. 1015), father of the two princely brothers Yaroslav and M'stislav, had lived for some time in Scandinavia as a young man. The man behind Hákon hinn ríki's death, King Ólafur Tryggvason, had spent much of his youth in Rus' before beginning his struggle against Hákon. Yaroslav himself, who reigned in Novgorod, would not infrequently use the services of his Varangian *hirð* at various stages of his political career.

Finally, there was the complicated tangle of affinities that bound them all. Yaroslav mudryj; the persecutor of the young Hákon Eiríksson, King Ólafur II (St. Ólafur); Hákon's uncle, Earl Sveinn Hákonarson—all were married to daughters of Ólafur Skötkonung. According to the sagas, Ólafur II first competed with Yaroslav to win the hand of Ingigerður/Irene, but then married her sister, Ástríður,

became Yaroslav's brother-in-law and was most likely on friendly terms with him: once the Battle of Listven was water under the bridge, Ólafur found shelter at Yaroslav's court and left his son, the future king of Norway Magnús góði (†1047), to be fostered there.

If the actions of Hákon/Yakun are interpreted from this familial perspective, then, having been expelled from Norway by one of his uncle's brothers-in-law, he simply went to another, namely, Yaroslav mudryj.

Indeed, given that all of these rulers and their milieus had such close ties, they must have known a great deal about one another. In this era, that meant being well informed about recent family history, which could serve as an important means of legitimizing one's claims to power. This being the case, the fate of Hákon hinn ríki and the circumstances of his death would be of no little importance.

However, as we have noted above, by the end of the eleventh century, when the *Primary Chronicle* was compiled, this knowledge had mostly lost its immediate relevance. Our task is therefore to pinpoint residual fragments of this knowledge in the chronicle narrative. Why was the Yakun who fought at Listven so fortunate as to receive more attention than others? Why were some of the unique details of his family portrait not only recorded in the chronicle but also transferred (although in an altered or even distorted form) into later sources? Arguably, this became possible due to a happy coincidence of two factors, one more significant than the other.

The further twists and turns of the fraught career of Yakun (i.e., Hákon Eiríksson) may have nothing to do with Rus', but a member of the next generation of his family was to come to Rus' and stay there for the rest of his life. According to the Kievan Crypt Patericon, around the mid-eleventh century, a nephew of Hákon's arrived in Rus'. This happened during the lifetime of Yaroslav mudryj, who made Hákon's nephew the tutor of one of his younger sons, Vsevolod (Всеволод) (†1093). Even more significantly, having lived much of his life in Rus' as a privileged member of the Prince's *hirð*, the Varangian financed the creation of one of the main churches of the Kievan Crypt Monastery,[26] where he would be buried.

26. In *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, translated by Cross, 262, note 184, the monastery is also known as the "Pecherskaya Lavra" (Печерская лавра) or the Monastery of the Crypts or Catacombs.

Presumably, it was in Rus' that his son, another descendant of the Earls of Lade and a grand-nephew of Yakun's, was born. The boy was given the name George, which links him to Rus' and the Rus'ian dynasty rather than to his motherland; it is no coincidence that the Christian name of his father's patron and in-law, Yaroslav mudryj, was also George. The child could not be given his non-Christian name Yaroslav, because princely names were a sort of inalienable dynastic property. However, Christian names of Rus'ian princes were not subject to these dynastic limitations.[27] Whether it was Yaroslav's decision to give his baptismal name as a gift to the son of a Varangian aristocrat in his service, or whether the latter himself wished to put more emphasis on his former ties to the great prince, now dead, one cannot be sure, although the second version seems more likely for chronological reasons.[28]

27. On the naming practices of the Rus'ian princely families, see Fjodor Uspenskij, "The Advent of Christianity and Dynastic Name-giving in Scandinavia and Rus'," in *Early Christianity on the Way from the Varangians to the Greeks*, edited by Ildar Garipzanov and Oleksiy Tolochko, Ruthenica: Supplementum 4 (Kiev: Institute of Ukrainian History, 2011), 108–19 at 113–15.

28. It cannot be ruled out that there was another later connection between the Rurikids (i.e. the descendants of Yury Dolgorukiy and the family of George, son of Shimon, although this conjecture is very unlikely to ever be substantiated. Yury's son Vsevolod *bolshoye gnezdo* (big nest) (Всеволод Юрьевич Большое Гнездо) had an obscure relative whom the chronicle calls сестричич ("son of a sister"), which would make him the son of an unidentified daughter of Yury. According to the *Hypatian Chronicle*, (Ипатьевская летопись, col. 658), this nephew of the Prince's was named *James* (*Yakov*). However, the nature of the account leaves little doubt that the paternal lineage of this Yakov lay outside the Rurikids. At the same time, Yakov seems to have played an important part in the life of this branch of the princely family, since he was the person who headed his cousin's matrimonial embassy. The identity of the husband of Yury's daughter, the woman who gave birth to Yakov, remains a mystery. What is known for certain is that the same names were repeatedly inherited not only by the Rurikids but also in other aristocratic families of their milieu. In Rus' the name *Yakun* (=*Hákon*) eventually began to be conflated with the Christian name *Yakov* (=*James*); the difference between the two was becoming increasingly blurred due to homophonic diminutives like *Yaksha*. The name *Yakun* seems to have increasingly been understood as a variant of *Yakov*. So a boy could be baptised James, that is, *Yakov*, after an ancestor called *Yakun*. Could this nephew of Vsevolod *bolshoye gnezdo* be a distant descendant of the Earls of Lade, the name *Hákon* being hereditary in their house? Yury Dolgorukiy seems quite likely to have given one of his daughters in marriage to a son (or a grandson) of his tutor George, whose birth was about as noble as his own. In any case, Yury is known to have arranged the marriage of one of his sons to a girl from a Novgorodian boyar family, the Mikhalkovichs, who might have also been of Scandinavian origin (for more on this, see: Gippius, "Скандинавский след в истории новгородского боярства," 102; "A Scandinavian Trace," 388). Yet it is worth noting that, despite the *Paterik*'s indication that Prince Yury valued George, there is no definite evidence of any marriages between their relatives.

In any case, this George would become the tutor of his namesake, Yury (=George)[29] Vladimirovich *Dolgorukiy* (long arm) (Юрий Владимирович Долгорукий) (d. 1157), grandson of Vsevolod and great-grandson of Yaroslav–George mudryj. Yury Dolgorukiy was sent to reign in the land of Suzdal' when he was still very young, and George accompanied him. Later, according to the *Paterik* account, the Prince made his tutor *tysyatsky* (тысяцкий) there.[30] Like his father, George proved a generous donor, and likely played an active part in the life of the Crypt Monastery. In any case, both the chronicle and the *Paterik* indicate that he was the person who ordered metalwork decorations for the sepulchre of Saint Theodosius,[31] and the *Paterik* reports the miracle of his gift sent from Suzdal' and also notes his particular devotion to the monastery, which he passed on to his descendants.

Such close ties between three generations of this family and the Rurikids would certainly increase the chances of descendants of the Earls of Lade being included in local historiography. Yet Rus'ian chroniclers are known to have overlooked even more significant contacts between Rus'ian princes and the Varangian world. A more important factor contributing to the preservation of the memory of this family might have been the involvement of Yakun's nephew in the life of the Kievan Crypt Monastery at precisely the time when monks from this key centre of Old Rus'ian written culture were engaged in the creation of the Rus'ian chronicles. In other words, Yakun's nephew and grand-nephew might have personally known and been in contact with some of the people who helped to compile the chronicle, which would explain how the *Primary Chronicle*'s entry for 1024 on the Battle of Listven came to include such a level of significant detail.

A striking parallel is provided by the story of the illustrious Yan Vyshatich (Ян Вышатич) (†1106), who lived an unusually long life,

29. *Yury* used to be a phonetic variant of *George* (now the two names are distinct in secular usage).

30. A military leader with commercial and judicial responsibilities

31. Ипатьевская летопись (*Hypatian Chronicle*), col. 293; Патерик, 61–64; *The Paterik*, 95–97. Saint Theodosius of the Crypt (Феодосий Печерский) was an eleventh century monk who introduced the Cenobitic Monastic rule of Theodore the Studite (d. 826) to Kiev and was one of the founders of the Monastery of the Crypts.

met the chronicler personally and was able to inform him of many details not only from his own biography, but also from that of his father who, like Yakun, was active in the first half of the eleventh century:

> In the same year, Yan, that righteous ancient, died at a fair old age after a life of ninety years. Living as he did in the law of God, he was by no means inferior to the early saints. I heard from him many stories which I have set down in this chronicle as I heard them from his lips. His tomb is found in the chapel of the Crypt Monastery, where his body lies since its interment on June 24.[32]

Yan was buried in the Crypt Monastery, like Yakun's nephew George. Presumably, for the chronicler, being able to see the tomb of this or that historical figure with his own eyes and within his own monastery was an important stimulus motivating him to include

32. *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, translated by Cross, 203; "В се же лѣ͡т престависѧ Ѧнь старець добрьıи . живъ лѣ͡ . ч̑. въ старостѣ маститѣ . живъ по закону Бж̑ию . не хужии первыхъ праведникъ . оу него же азъ слышахъ многа словеса . æже вписахъ в лѣтописиць . бѣ бо мужь бл̑гъ и кротокъ . и смѣренъ . w̄гребаæсѧ w̄ всѧкоæ вещи . егоже и гробъ есть в Печерьскомь монастырѣ оу притворѣ . идѣже лежіть тѣло его положено . м҃ца . июнѧ . въ . к̑ д̑." Лаврентьевская летопись (*Laurentian Chronicle*), col. 281. See also, Ипатьевская летопись (*Hypatian Chronicle*), col. 257; *Povĕst' vremennykh lĕt,* edited by Ostrowski, 3:2133–35 (281.7–16). Cf. also the famous account of the Constantinopolitan campaign in 1043 of Yaroslav's eldest son Vladimir, Prince of Novgorod (Владимир Ярославич, князь новгородский) (d. 1052), opening with the words: "Yaroslav sent his son Vladimir to attack Greece, and entrusted him with a large force. He assigned the command to Vyshata, father of Yan" (*The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, translated by Cross, 138). "Посла Ѧрославъ Володимера . сн̑а своюєго. на Грькъı . и да єму воæ многы . а воєводьство поручи Въıшатѣ . w̄ц̑ ю Ѧневу." Лаврентьевская летопись (*Laurentian Chronicle*), col. 154. See also, Ипатьевская летопись (*Hypatian Chronicle*), col. 142; *Povĕst' vremennykh lĕt,* edited by Ostrowski, 2: 1217–18 (154.3–5). Here we find the story of Vyshata's captivity and release, in which, intriguingly, the chronicler records his direct speech. It is quite unusual for an eleventh-century chronicle to include such a detailed account of a non-princely person. Moreover, another chronicle account, extant in both the *Primary Chronicle* and the *Novgorod First Chronicle*, gives the name of Vyshata's father (Yan's grandfather): "Rostislav, son of Vladimir and grandson of Yaroslav, fled to Tmutorakan', and with him fled Porey and Vyshata, son of Ostromir, the general of Novgorod" (*The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, translated by Cross, 144; "Бѣжа Ростислава къ Тмутороканю . сн̑ъ Володимирь . внукъ Ѧрославль . и с нимъ бѣжа Порѣи . и Вышата сн̑ъ Ѡстромирь . воєводы Новгородьского." Ипатьевская летопись (*Hypatian Chronicle*), col. 152. See also, Лаврентьевская летопись (*Laurentian Chronicle*), col. 163 and note "г"; Новгородская первая летопись (*Novgorod First Chronicle*), 184 (Комиссионный список [Commission Scroll]); *Povĕst' vremennykh lĕt,* edited by Ostrowski, 3: 1296–97 (163.24–25c).

more detail in accounts of events connected to that person's life. It cannot be ruled out, for instance, that this ability is the reason for the survival of additional information on the lives of princesses—information that would otherwise have been unlikely to be recorded in the chronicle.[33]

Yan's role as informant might have been more substantial, but Yakun's nephew also seems to have provided not only the princes

33. One notable case is that of Eupraxia, the daughter of Vsevolod (Евпраксия Всеволодовна) (d. 1109). Eupraxia is known from Latin sources to have been married first to Henry I the Long, margrave of the Saxon Northern March (d. 1087), and then to his namesake Emperor Henry IV (d. 1106). After her scandalous divorce from her second husband, Eupraxia returned to Rus'. Unsurprisingly, her (mis)adventures abroad are totally absent from the chronicle. Nor is the very fact of her birth mentioned. However, her later life, death and burial are given somewhat more attention than is typical for female members of the Rurikids: "On December 6 of this year, Eupraxia, the daughter of Vsevolod, took the veil." *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, translated by Cross, 203; "в се же лѣ҃. пострїжесѧ Єоупракси Всеволожа дщї мⷱца . дека⁶ . въ .ѕ҃." Лаврентьевская летопись (*Laurentian Chronicle*), col. 281; see also Ипатьевская летопись (*Hypatian Chronicle*), col. 257–58; *Povĕst' vremennykh lĕt,* edited by Ostrowski, 3: 2135 (281.16–17a). "Eupraxia, the daughter of Vsevolod, died on July 10 and was laid in the Crypt Monastery by the southern portal. A chapel was built over her in which her body lies" *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, translated by Cross, 204; "Престависѧ Евпракси . дщи Всеволожа·. мⷱца . иоуліаѣ . въ . ї·. дн҃ь·и положена быⷱ в Печерьскоⷨ манастырѣ . оу дверии æже ко вгу·. | и здѣлаша над нею божонку·. идеже лежи҃ тѣло єæ." Лаврентьевская летопись (*Laurentian Chronicle*), col. 283, See also Ипатьевская летопись (*Hypatian Chronicle*), col. 260; *Povĕst' vremennykh lĕt,* edited by Ostrowski, 3:2151–52 (283.23–27). Even more typical is another chronicle's detailed account of her relative of about the same age, who would die much later and also be buried in the Crypt Monastery, Anastasia (Анастасия Ярополковна) (d. 1159) the daughter of Yaropolk Izyaslavich: 'In the same year, the pious princess, wife of Gleb Vseslavich and daughter of Yaropolk Izyaslavich, died. She had been widowed for 40 years, and had lived for 84 years in total; and she was buried near her husband at the Crypt Monastery, at the head of the tomb of St. Theodosius." ("Том же лѣ҃ преставиⷱ . блж҃ наæ кнѧгини Глѣбоваæ . Всеславича . дочи Æрополча Изѧславича . сѣдѣвши по кн҃зи своемъ . вдовою лѣ҃ . м҃ . а всихъ лѣ҃ и ѿ ржᶜтва . п҃ . и . д҃ . лѣ҃. и положена быⷱ в Печерьскомъ манастыри . съ кн҃земъ въ гробѣ оу ст҃го Федосьæ оу головахъ."). Ипатьевская летопись (*Hypatian Chronicle*), col. 492. Remarkably, not only do the chronicles record the death of her husband, whom she outlived by many years (Лаврентьевская летопись [*Laurentian Chronicle*], col. 292; Ипатьевская летопись [*Hypatian Chronicle*], col. 285), but the *Primary Chronicle* also specifically points out that the refectory of the monastery was built at his own expense (*The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, translated by Cross, 204; Лаврентьевская летопись [*Laurentian Chronicle*], col. 283; see also Ипатьевская летопись [*Hypatian Chronicle*], col. 259); *Povĕst' vremennykh lĕt,* edited by Ostrowski, 3:2147–48 (283.9–10). For more recent takes on those two women and their place in the chronicles see: Christian Raffensperger, "The Missing Russian Women: The Case of Evpraksia Vsevolodovna" in *Writing Medieval Women's Lives*, edited by Charlotte Newman Goldy and Amy Livingstone, New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 69–84; *Ties of Kinship*, 67–774, 242–743; and Ines Garcia de la Puente, "Gleb of Minsk's Widow: Neglected Evidence on the Rule of a Woman in Rus'ian History?" *Russian History* 39.3 (2012): 347–78.

he served but also the monastic community with a variety of details about those of his older relatives who had been in Rus'ian service before. Indeed, this Varangian would still have felt his own family history to be meaningful even in the late eleventh century, and he must have known many details about both his uncle (however they might have felt about each other) and the most renowned of his ancestors, his great-grandfather Hákon inn ríki, after whom his uncle had been named. What was recorded in the chronicle was this very connection between Yakun/Hákon and Hákon inn ríki: a connection that was also directly linked to Rus' and the dynastic history of the Rurikids.

Significantly, however, not all donors buried in the monastery were fortunate enough to have their genealogies recorded outside chronicles. For instance, the aforementioned Yan and his wife appear in the *Paterik*,[34] and the same story of the prophecy of Saint Theodosius (who predicts where Yan's wife will be buried) is present in the chronicle.[35] Yet neither Yan's father Vyshata nor his grandfather Ostromir are ever mentioned in the *Paterik* or this chronicle entry.

So why was Yakun more fortunate in this respect? How did it happen that the very unusual attributes of this Varangian who had spent time in Rus' around the 1020s were not only preserved in the chronicle, but in fact also migrated to the *Paterik* and then to later hagiography?

In our opinion, Yakun's biographic details were preserved as the result of a very special twist of fate affecting both the lives and posthumous memories of his younger relatives, whose deeds the *Paterik* narrates in great detail. One of the keys to solving the puzzle of Yakun's literary longevity is the onomastic story involving his nephew. This story is of real significance within the context of the *Paterik* and certainly deserves special consideration.

Recall that, according to the *Paterik*, the original name of the nephew of Yakun who came to Rus' was *Shimon*. But this same text contains an account of how Shimon was re-named by none

34. Патерик 61, 243; *The Paterik*, 93–94.

35. The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text, translated by Cross, 172; Лаврентьевская летопись (*Laurentian Chronicle*), cols. 211–12; see also Ипатьевская летопись (Hypatian Chronicle), cols. 203–4; *Povĕst' vremennykh lĕt*, edited by Ostrowski, 3:1696–1701 (212.13–213.2).

other than Antonius of the Crypts.[36] Antonius's involvement, if the text is read thoughtlessly, may obscure the bizarre nature of the episode: a saint choosing a name for someone is such a typical motif in hagiography that a present-day reader might overlook the fact that something really unusual is happening. Shimon has none of the usual reasons for changing his name, such as taking monastic vows or being baptized or re-baptized into another denomination.[37] The *Paterik* story suggests something quite different and rather peculiar:

> The elder [Antonius] praised God for this and said to the Varangian, "My son, from now on you will not be called Šimon [i.e. Sigmundur], but Simon [i.e. Σίμων/Συμεών] will be your name." Then Antonij summoned the blessed Feodosij and said, "Simon, this man will build such a church," and he gave him the belt and crown. From then on Simon had great love for holy Feodosij, and gave him many possessions towards the building of the monastery.[38]

Why is the narrator so interested in the names of the Varangian, and what did he intend to relate or explain to the reader? This story can be seen from at least two perspectives: the perspective of the historical facts behind it, and the perspective of the particular literary tradition through which these facts were interpreted. Yet the most intriguing point, to our mind, lies at the intersection of these two perspectives.

As for the characteristics of this hagiographic narrative, two biblical allusions, which function in tandem, are discernible. Both

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36. Antony of the Crypts (Антоний Печерский) (d. 1073) was co–founder with Theodosius of the Crypt Monastery.

37. Actually, one cannot know for sure how permanent the re-naming of Shimon was in the eyes of his contemporaries or descendants. The only chronicle record of his son George in the *Hypatian Chronicle* in fact uses the patronym *Shimonovich,* rather than *Simonovich*, added in Khlebnikov Ms. and Pogodin Ms. (Ипатьевская летопись [*Hypatian Chronicle*], 293, footnote 21). *The Paterik*, however, always refers to George as the son of *Simon* after his father's renaming.

38. *The Paterik* 3–4; "Старець же похвали Бога о семь, рекь Варягови: 'чадо, отселе не наречется имя твое Шимонъ, но Симонъ будетъ имя твое'. Призвавъ же Антоній блаженнаго Ѳеодосіа, рече: 'Симоне, сий хощет въздвигнути таковую церковь', и дасть ему поясъ и венець. И оттоле великую любовь имяше ко святому Ѳеодосію, подавь ему имѣнія многа на възгражденіе монастырю." Патерик 4.

are related to the re-naming of Shimon as *Simon*. The first of these, the reference to the famous the renaming of Simon as *Peter* in the New Testament (Matthew 16:16–18), has been touched upon in the literature.[39] In the *Paterik*, this clever allusion involving reversed renaming (since the hero receives, rather than abandons, the name *Simon*) is made particularly obvious: Peter, in the Gospel, is to be the rock upon which the Church will be built, while S(h)imon, in the *Paterik*, receives from Antonius a blessing authorizing him to build a very real church, the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady.

There is, however, yet another parallel, this time from the Old Testament. This parallel is based upon an easily perceptible similarity between the old name and the new one, absent in the Gospel story of Simon-Peter. Obviously, the names *Shimon* and *Simon* are extremely similar, both phonetically and graphically, and very much resemble variants of the same name. It is therefore not immediately obvious why one should be substituted for the other and what the change might mean. This story seems to parallel the story of the renaming of *Abram* as *Abraham* ("Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee"; Genesis 17:5), where a seemingly slight change in a name marks divine intervention.

The question of the historical reality behind this account—for instance, the original Scandinavian names of S(h)imon, his father, whom the *Paterik* calls Africanus, and his brother, referred to as *Friad*—has long attracted the attention of scholars. Needless to say, neither *Africanus* nor *Simon* is attested in eleventh-century Scandinavian onomastics; yet this kind of misrepresentation of foreign personal names is quite common in the Medieval Rus'ian tradition. Unfamiliar and exotic names could be rendered by either the compiler or any of the later scribes as other, perhaps uncommon but comparatively familiar, names. The resulting name could stray quite far from the original.[40]

39. Pritsak, *The Origin of Rus'*, 419, footnote 53.

40. Our Varangian could conceivably have originally borne the Christian name *Simon*, pronounced in the Scandinavian fashion, with a palato-alveolar S. This neat explanation is somewhat thwarted by the fact that Christian first names were quite rare in eleventh-century Scandinavia. *Simon* is only attested in Norway from the mid-twelfth century and even later in the rest of the peninsula. However, he certainly could have borne one of the more common pre-Christian Scandinavian names beginning with *sigur-* (such as *Sigmundur*), which would then have been rendered by the Rus'ian scribe as *Shimon*. The

As noted above, it is far more important to establish why the author of the *Paterik* felt the need to include such an unusual re-naming story in his narrative at all. The solution to this puzzle is closely related to the question of why the author was so interested in S(h)imon in the first place, and why he cared so much about Varangian genealogy and the Varangian relics in the Crypt Monastery. Why did he bother to extract from the chronicle the specific characteristics of Shimon's uncle who had fought at Listven?

To our mind, researchers who have worked on the *Paterik* have tended to underestimate the fact that the author was the namesake of his hero, Simon the Varangian. Nearly all agree that the whole Varangian section of the *Paterik* is one of those entries that were included in the *Paterik* on the initiative of Saint Simon, Bishop of Vladimir and Suzdal' (Святитель Симон, епископ Владимирский и Суздальский) who lived in the late 1100s–early 1200s (†1226). Little information on his life survives, but one significant fact is known: he had been a monk of the Kievan Crypt Monastery, where he presumably took his monastic name *Simon*.[41] His famous eulogy to his monastery, preserved in his epistle to Polycarp, leaves no doubt of that.[42] There is also evidence that Bishop Simon sought to emulate the Crypt Monastery's Church of the Assumption, built with funds donated by S(h)imon the Varangian, in the church architecture of Vladimir and Suzdal'.[43]

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reconstruction of the actual name of the man known in Rus' as *S(h)imon* is a question which deserves to be the focus of a much more extended discussion. However, whatever the solution might be, it is of little relevance in the present context, so we deliberately avoid discussing this issue in detail.

41. Shortly before his death in 1226, Bishop Simon took the great schema (Схима), the highest level of spiritual excellence in Easter Orthodoxy, which would have entitled him to wear a distinctive outer garment, the *analavos* (аналав). He did not change his monastic name (Лаврентьевская летопись [*Laurentian Chronicle*], col. 448). The practice of not changing one's name in this case, however, was quite common in Rus' at that time. For more on this subject, see: Boris Andreevich Uspenskij and Fjodor B[orisovich] Uspenskij (Борис Андреевич Успенский и Фёдор Борисович Успенский), Иноческие имена на Руси *(Monastic Names in Russia),* Институт славяноведения Российской академии наук (Institute of Slavic Studies Russian Academy of Sciences) (Moscow: Нестор-История [Nestor-History], 2017).

42. Патерик, 76; *The Paterik*, 119.

43. Bishop Simon spent several years in this town. He initially arrived there with Yury Vsevolodich (Юрий Всеволодович) (d. 1238), a grandson of Yury Dolgorukiy.

Whether the future bishop chose his own name, or whether it was exclusively the decision of the abbot of the Crypt Monastery, Simon could not have been ignorant of the motivation for and the inherent logic of such naming: taking a monastic name meant acquiring a new celestial patron. In other words, there is good reason to believe that Bishop Simon chose to say so much about Simon the Varangian, whose tomb was within the monastery, simply because his monastic name was chosen after the S(h)imon in question. Very likely, our Varangian, the great-grandson of Hákon inn ríki and the nephew of Yakun/Hákon Eiríksson, was among those worshipped locally at the Crypt Monastery. After all, of all the stories told in the *Paterik*, it is Shimon's story with which the history of the monastery begins, and his familial relic (a gold belt), brought with him from Scandinavia, which is first used to measure the foundations of the Church of the Assumption[44] and then becomes a miracle-working object that heals people, presumably manifesting the holiness of its donor.[45] Thus, the curious phenomenon of "Kievan Crypt patriotism" might well have been the impetus for giving the name *Simon*, once chosen by Antonius for the Varangian, to one of the novices of the famous monastery.

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44. Cf. "Then he returned home, came to the blessed Antonij, and told him of the marvelous incident, saying, 'My father Afrikan made a cross and on it depicted the divine-human image of Christ in colours, in a new way, such as the Latins honour. It was large, ten cubits in height. To do Him honour, my father laid about His waist a belt weighing fifty *grivna* [c. 7.5 kilograms / c. 16½ lbs.] of gold, and a gold crown on His head. When my uncle Hakon expelled me from my province, I took the belt from Jesus and the crown from His head, and I heard a voice from the image addressed to me, "Never place this crown on your own head, but take it to the place prepared for it, where a church dedicated to my Mother is to be built by the venerable Feodosij. Give it into his hands, so that it may hang above my altar." I fell down in terror, my limbs grew numb, and I lay like someone dead; then I got up and quickly went on board the boat.'" (*The Paterik*, 2–3); "Пакы възъвратися к великому Антонію, сказа ему вещъ дивну, тако глаголя: 'отець мой Аѳриканъ съдѣла крестъ и на немь изообрази богомужное подобіе Христово написаніемь вапным, новъ дѣломъ, якоже Латина чтут, великъ дѣломь яко 10 лакот, и сему честь творя, отець мои възъложи поясъ о чреслѣх его, имущь вѣса 50 гривенъ злата, и венець злат на главу его. Егдаже изгна мя Якунъ, стрый мой, отъ области моеа, азъ же взях поясъ съ Іисуса и венець съ главы Его, и слышах гласъ отъ образа, обратився ко мнѣ и рече ми: "никакоже, человѣче, сего възложи па главу свою, неси же иа уготованное мѣсто, идѣже зиждется церьковь Матере Моея отъ преподобнаго Ѳеодосіа, и тому в руцѣ вдаждь, да обѣситъ над жрътовникомъ Моимъ." Азъ же отъ страха падохся, оцепнѣвь, лежах, аки мертвъ, и, въставъ скоро, внидохъ в корабль.'" (Патерик, 3–4).

45. Патерик, 9; *The Paterik*, 9.

It is not clear whether S(h)imon was the only patron saint of Simon the monk, or whether this is another case of the syncretic worshipping of namesake saints both old and new, both Simon the Zealot and Simon the Varangian. It cannot be ruled out that some other monks of the Crypt monastery had names chosen for them using a similar method, but that the descendant of the Earls of Lade proved especially fortunate: it was his namesake who compiled the *Paterik* and therefore had the chance (and indeed was obliged) not only to consult the chronicle, but also to record and extend the monastery's legend of his namesake and patron, as well as preserve the names of his son who had moved to Rus' and his relatives who stayed in Scandinavia.

In the course of his work, Bishop Simon of Vladimir and Suzdal' may have made use of more than just what he saw or heard personally when in Kiev, either as monk or later as a guest of the Crypt Monastery. He may also have had direct access to the familial records of the nearby descendants of George Shimonovich, *tysyatsky* of Suzdal'. It is quite likely that members of this family were among those on whose support Simon relied as he sought to symbolically emulate the piety of the Kievan Crypt in Suzdal'. Indeed, he specifically points out in his text that St. Theodosius of the Crypt intercedes before God for all the kin of S(h)imon as much as for the monks of his own monastery, and that this family, in turn, has inherited a particular devotion to the Crypt Monastery. He also specifically refers to the existence of a document that grants any descendant of this family the right to be buried within the monastery, or at least, in case of extreme poverty, on land directly owned by it.[46]

A very curious series of coincidences was therefore needed to leave records of at least three generations of a Scandinavian family in Old Rus'ian manuscripts—and records containing unambiguous indications of their Varangian origin. It proved fortunate indeed for Yakun/Hákon that his nephew not only settled in Rus' after being expelled from Scandinavia, but also played a significant role in the life of an organization as large and powerful as the Kievan Crypt Monastery. Even more felicitous for both Yakun and his nephew was the fact that the monk of that monastery who, over a century later, would compile the *Paterik*, happened to bear the monastic

46. Патерик, 63–64; *The Paterik*, 99.

name *Simon*. Finally, in yet another happy coincidence, this Simon would later take up the bishopric of Vladimir and Suzdal', precisely where the descendants of S(h)imon and George still lived. The legend of the Norse earl, Hákon inn ríki, became, so to speak, the submerged part of this narrative iceberg. Rus'ian *literati* passed over his name in relative silence, yet it was the allusions linked to it that made the character of his grandson so simultaneously striking and enigmatic. Even the names of the immediate descendants of George Shimonovich are lost, although the *Paterik* clearly indicates that the family still existed in the thirteenth century and maintained its relationship with the Crypt Monastery. This ongoing investigation into Varangian genealogy seems to support the suggestion that some of the chronicle's more complex and enigmatic stories may echo oral histories of aristocratic families whose descendants, in one way or another, had personal ties to writers involved in creating the history of Rus'.

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"From That Union Came the Manx People"

Ethnogenesis in the Isle of Man in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries

Dirk H. Steinforth

1. Introduction

When two disparate cultural groups clash and then occupy the same territory, this can happen in a wide variety of ways: at one end of the spectrum can be sudden invasion and military conquest followed by almost total annihilation or suppression of the defeated group as well as violent occupation and settlement of the conquered territories; at the other end, peaceful concourse, interaction, and coexistence, with acculturation on various levels, such as in social, cultural, economic, political, and perhaps religious respects. The process of hybridization includes the gradual merging of the original groups and the emergence of a new, unified mixed community, which retains cultural characteristics of both groups and begins to develop features particular to its own.

In the early Viking Age, in the very late eighth and early/mid-ninth centuries, the Isle of Man, a small island in the middle of the Irish Sea, was inhabited by what (due to the lack of pertinent distinguishing evidence) must generically be called a "Celtic" population of Christian faith, probably ruled by or at least affiliated with the Welsh kingdom of Gwynedd and enjoying close ties to neighbors in Ireland, Wales, and Scotland. In the later ninth century, about 870 C.E., however, predominantly (?) pagan (Hiberno-)Scandinavians, coming from the Norse realm in Dublin, arrived on the Island, conquered it, and settled, never to leave again.[1] The question of how the

1. It is necessary to use the generalizing and generic labels "the natives" or "the native

two groups now sharing the Island got along is very difficult to answer. There are no historical records about this period in the Isle of Man, but archaeological and epigraphic evidence shows that they must have found a *modus vivendi* in which neither was destroyed nor entirely absorbed by the other. For some time, specific cultural elements of the respective groups remained in use side by side, but then these differences gradually diminished, indicating some form of both social hybridization and Christianization of the pagan Vikings along with the incipient formation of a new common island community.

About two hundred years later, in 1079 C.E., a second "Viking" conquest—unknown to archaeology and unrelated to the first, but this time attested to in documentary sources—took place that potentially disrupted any processes or structures built over the intervening years and started new ones. By providing what can be termed a "founding father" (or at least an "apical figure" and a "foundation legend"), the accounts of this event can offer another aspect of the ongoing ethnogenesis of the Manx, which is in fact of great relevance to the modern Manx' conception of their Celtic and Norse heritage.

Evaluating ancient ethnic identity and feelings of commonality is difficult under the best of conditions. Many questions about details, such as the numbers of individuals involved in these processes on each side, the problems they faced, and the means they used to overcome them, or about lingering resentments despite increasing amity and hybridization, probably will never be answered. This paper investigates the very beginnings of the ethnogenesis in Viking-Age Isle of Man, presenting and discussing the evidence—archaeological, epigraphic, and historical—that allows some conclusions as to the social, political, and religious developments taking place between the residents and the new settlers after the "two conquests," and examines how a new island community was formed twice. Defining elements and the results of both processes, as it will be shown, have great relevance for the modern conception of the Celtic and Viking heritage of the Manx.

Manx" and "the Vikings," respectively, instead of more distinctive terms that would be too narrow semantically, and thus misleading. Also, in this article the terms "Viking," "Norse," and "Scandinavian" are used synonymously.

2. Materials and Methods

To begin, the matter of terminology must be addressed. "Ethnogenesis" is broadly defined as the formation and development of an "ethnic group," which in turn is a group of people who identify with one another (and thereby actively differentiate their group from others), based on a wide choice of factors and reasons, such as blood relationships and marriage, common ancestry or provenance, shared traditions, language/dialect, cultural heritage (e.g., social/moral standards, customs, laws, fashion, art), mythology, religion and beliefs, ritual and burial customs, political aims, and military practices.[2] This formation of an "ethnos" may happen when two formerly distinct groups are merging into a new one or when a part separates from a larger body and forms a new group of its own.

There is no generally accepted (much less interdisciplinarily and internationally valid) consensus regarding the term "ethnos" (or "gens"), and the question of what can be included in its definition and what must not is a highly disputed point among specialists that cannot be discussed or decided here.[3] In fact, as it is extremely difficult to evaluate the personal motivations and feelings of allegiance of ancient individuals or groups (especially when the initial parties potentially have been quite heterogeneous to begin with), I want to take the term in a broad sense as basically meaning that we are dealing with the ancient conception of community and commonality, the feeling of belonging to the same group, for whatever reason, be it real or conceived. Evidence for for the sharing of such a feeling of community, as well as for the formation of a new group, may

2. See, e.g., Gerhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes,* 2nd ed. (Cologne: Böhlau, 1977); see also, e.g., Walter Pohl and Mathias Mehofer, *Archaeology of Identity—Archäologie der Identität*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Klasse Denkschriften 406, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 17 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010); Siân Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 1997).

3. See the criticism of Reinhard Wenskus's model by Herwig Wolfram and Walter Pohl, summarized in Helmut Castritius, "Stammesbildung, Ethnogenese," in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, *begründet von Johannes Hoops*, 2nd ed., edited by Heinrich Beck et al., 35 vols. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968–2007), 29 (2005):508–15. See also Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity;* Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 73–79; and the papers in Andrew Gillett, ed., *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages,* Studies in the Early Middle Ages 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002).

be found in archaeology, history and literature, inscriptions, or art history—always, however, facing serious problems and calling for special caution.

Documentary records often were written some considerable time after the (alleged) formative events they recount and therefore are liable to tell more about their authors'/contemporaries' concept of those developments, their beliefs about the past, and their political biases than about actual historical conditions, facts, or details—in addition to being patchy, misinformed, and/or inaccurate. Powerful (and frequently also very colorful) elements of these records are traditions of foundation legends and their heroes: their example and the belief to be closely linked to them are supposed to have inspired the sense of community. The Anglo-Saxons, for example, look back at the heroic brothers Hengist and Horsa, who—through prowess and cunning—acquired land for their people to settle in when they first came to Britain in the middle of the fifth century and whose ancestry, according to the Anglo-Saxon monk and scholar Bede in his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (I.15), written about 731 C.E., can be traced back to the pagan chief god Woden himself.[4] And when the Langobards, after long migrations, came up against the Vandals, they supposedly got their name—the "long beards"—as well as victory in the battle from Woden and his wife Frea, who suggested the tribe's women drape their long hair over their faces to make it look like beards to attract her husband's attention and favor, as told by the seventh-century *Origo gentis Langobardorum*.[5]

The Vikings' activities in the Irish Sea were recorded to some extent, albeit not in detail, by the contemporary Irish chronicles as well as some Welsh and Old English sources. None exist, however, directly relating to the early Vikings (ninth and early tenth centuries) in the Isle of Man, until a thirteenth-century chronicle gives account of events happening after the middle of the eleventh century. Before then, research is dependent on the circumstantial evidence provided by the external sources and inferences drawn from them—and on archaeological, epigraphic, and art-historical information.

4. See Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People; The Greater Chronicle; Bede's Letter to Egbert*, edited by Judith McClure and Roger Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27.

5. See Georg Waitz, ed., *Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI–IX,* Monumenta Germaniae historica (Hanover: Hahn, 1878), 2–3.

Archaeology faces difficulties of its own in approaching the question of "ethnos" and ethnicity: first, in classifying objects in regard to ethnicity, archaeology has to rely on the assumption that the ethnic identity of a person or a group at any given time in history has found expression in these objects—in their use, design, and/or decoration.[6] Any attempt to interpret and distinguish which of the items that have come down to us today does in fact represent a feeling of identity and sense of belonging and unity of medieval groups as well as individuals (and in which way they would have been meant to do so) is extremely difficult, or even nigh impossible, beyond the most basic classifications, especially in periods of culture clash or assimilation/acculturation.

In the special case under discussion here, however, the two ethnic groups involved (or at least part of them) differ significantly in a number of ways, such as geographical origin, cultural background (e.g., material culture, architecture, customs, law, writing systems, and language), and political intention as well as religion and burial custom. Some of these factors (and their differences) are on display in the archaeological record and—to a certain degree and with all due caution—can be used to distinguish between "the native Manx" and "the (pagan) Vikings." Of course, various caveats apply, such as in the cases of Insular/Irish objects being imported and used by Vikings instead of Scandinavian ones, or Scandinavians being buried in Christian fashion, without grave-goods, thus indistinguishable from locals. These deviations from the theoretical ideal do not, however, affect the picture of material differences and the definition of two distinct groups in their entirety.

Second, archaeological research has unearthed a relatively great amount of Viking-Age burial sites, grave-goods, and tombstones, as well as some metal and coin hoards and settlement sites, for so small an island.[7] But neither are there classes of objects in statistically significant numbers to try to establish patterns of cultural developments; nor did the Isle of Man in the Middle Ages produce a specific "Manx style" in its material culture to distinguish it from styles or customs in neighboring territories, such as Ireland, Scotland, or Wales. Again, the stark contrast between the corpus of local

6. See Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 106.

7. See David M. Wilson, *The Vikings in the Isle of Man* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2008).

Manx' and the Scandinavian material cultures (or the custom of lavishly furnished graves introduced by the Vikings) allows a tacit classification of the two groups.

Ideally, any study into the ethnogenesis of a community would want to trace the social and political realities as they existed within each of the groups concerned, before and during the processes of encounter, acculturation, and hybridization as well as afterward in the newly formed community. In practice, doing so is virtually impossible due to the inherent difficulties in establishing ancient ethnicity and the severe limitations of the available evidence.

3. The Dublin Vikings and the First Conquest of the Isle of Man: The Archaeological Evidence

After first sailing into the Irish Sea in the final years of the eighth century, the Vikings extensively raided the churches and monasteries of Ireland. In around 841 C.E., the Irish chronicles record, they first established permanent settlements on Irish soil. In 853 C.E., Ólafur (ir. *Amlaíb*), son of the king of "Laithlind," and his brother Ívar (ir. *Ímar*) arrived in the Viking town of Dublin, took control over it, and assumed the throne. For some years, the brothers consolidated their position in Ireland through diplomacy and warfare until the 860s, when they left Ireland for the first time and engaged in campaigns abroad: Ívar joined the Great Army in East Anglia and eventually conquered York and established a Viking kingdom in Northumbria, while Ólafur repeatedly sailed to Scotland to fight the Picts and collect tributes.[8] Unrecorded by the Irish or Welsh chronicles, they conquered and settled the Isle of Man, strategically situated in the middle of the Irish Sea between Dublin and the budding Viking realm of York. The date of that conquest is not known precisely but indications suggest some time between 866 and 874 C.E..[9]

When they settled on the Island, the Vikings introduced a

8. See, e.g., Clare Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: The Dynasty of Ívarr to A.D. 1014* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2009); Anne-Christine Larsen, *The Vikings in Ireland* (Roskilde: Vikingeskibshallen, 2001).

9. See Dirk H. Steinforth, *Die skandinavische Besiedlung auf der Isle of Man: Eine archäologische und historische Untersuchung zur frühen Wikingerzeit in der Irischen See*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 93 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015); Dirk H. Steinforth, "The Early Vikings in the Isle of Man: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 11 (2015): 203–29.

completely new and different culture. While the native population was characterized as "Celtic" and Christian, building round houses and burying their dead in rather austere flat graves with an occasional gravestone, the new settlers were Scandinavians or Hiberno-Scandinavians who lived in rectangular buildings and, being (presumably) predominantly pagan, constructed large and lavishly furnished mound and ship graves.[10] Burial custom is generally considered the most "ethnic" element of archaeology inasmuch as it expresses basic religious beliefs and reflects time-honored traditions that involved the respect afforded to deceased ancestors and their memory. While other archaeological categories such as architecture are too ambiguous and metal hoards too late to contribute to a study of the early Viking Age in Man, it is fortunate that burials and grave goods are the richest category on the Island, with hundreds of native Manx graves known to us, dating to before, during, and after the Viking Age. In addition, there are about twenty-five furnished burials, which date exclusively from the late ninth/early tenth through the mid-tenth centuries centuries, and accordingly are considered "Viking" burials.[11] By about the 930s or 940s, the Vikings had also adopted the local custom of setting gravestones, including intricate decorations and runic inscriptions. These stones provide a valuable source for the examination of religious and social developments in the tenth century.

4. Burial Custom: Grave-Goods and Manx Crosses

Excavations have shown that since the introduction of Christianity to the Isle of Man in the fifth century, it had been the custom of the Island's inhabitants to bury their dead in cemeteries and to lay them to rest in shallow graves, either in massive stone cists (lintel graves), wooden coffins, or without recognizable protection. In general, they were found completely empty of objects: occasionally there was a single coin or a couple of quartz pebbles (presumably as symbols of

10. See Steinforth, *Skandinavische Besiedlung*, 97–111, 115–40, 157–206; Wilson, *The Vikings*, 25–56, 96–100; Christine Fell, Peter Foote, James Graham-Campbell, and Robert Thompson, eds., *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man: Select Papers from the Ninth Viking Congress, Isle of Man, 4–14 July 1981* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1983).

11. See Dirk H. Steinforth, *Die Wikingergräber auf der Isle of Man*, British Archaeological Reports, British Series 611 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2015).

the Resurrection), but mostly there were no objects at all, not even a belt buckle or a pin to fasten a shroud.[12]

When the Vikings introduced their custom of furnished burial to the Isle of Man, the contrast could not have been more dramatic. Some of the Viking graves in Man are among the most splendid Viking graves in Britain and Ireland, especially the ship burials at Balladoole (figure 1) and Knock y Doonee and the mound graves at Ballateare and Cronk Mooar, all set up in prominent positions on hills or ridges overlooking the sea and covered by huge barrows, and equipped with a great number of grave goods of weapons, riding equipment, tools, ornaments, cooking utensils, and other commodities (as well as animal and human sacrifices). This type of burial is well known in the Viking homelands in Scandinavia, and some of the Manx examples would not be out of place in Norway. Other graves were less lavishly furnished but often contained a set of weapons, usually sword, spear, and shield.[13]

It is important to notice that the majority of objects found in Manx Viking graves had not been imported from Scandinavia but were of Insular origin, made in Ireland, the Scottish Isles, or possibly the Isle of Man itself. Some objects, such as ringed pins or brooch pins, were probably crafted in Dublin.[14] These origins strongly indicate that the warriors and settlers did not come directly from Scandinavia but from a Viking "colony," probably Dublin, where they had need and opportunity to replace lost and worn-out items with local products.

Grave goods and mounds identify those responsible for them as adhering to the old Scandinavian traditions and probably to Nordic pagan religion, expecting the deceased to be able to use those objects in the afterlife in the mythical realms of the dead, such as the pagan chief god Óðinn's splendid hall at Valhöll, and eventually to fight on the gods' face in the apocalyptic battle of the Ragnarök, as is prophesied in the lays of the *Eddas*.[15]

12. See Steinforth, *Skandinavische Besiedlung*, 101–11; see also David Freke, ed., *Excavations on St Patrick's Isle, Peel, Isle of Man, 1982–88: Prehistoric, Viking, Medieval and Later* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), 58–82.

13. See Steinforth, *Skandinavische Besiedlung*, 207–40; Steinforth, *Wikingergräber*, 49–67; Gerhard Bersu and David M. Wilson, *Three Viking Graves in the Isle of Man*, The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph Series 1 (London: Society for Medieval Archaeology, 1966), esp. 84–92.

14. See Steinforth, *Skandinavische Besiedlung*, 229–31.

15. See, e.g., Caroline Larrington, ed., *The Poetic Edda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Figure 1: The site of the Viking ship-burial at Balladoole, Arbory parish, Isle of Man (Photo by author; courtesy of Manx National Heritage, Douglas, Isle of Man)

However, several weapons have been found in a Christian context in the cemeteries of Manx parish churches. These finds may be interpreted as the remains of graves of persons who had been buried in a state of spiritual reorientation, trying to hedge their bets by retaining just the most essential grave goods, their weapons, but choosing the sacred ground of the Christians for burial.[16] The last examples of furnished burial in Man known to date—a group of seven graves—have been found in an extensive Christian cemetery on the small islet of St. Patrick's Isle, off the town of Peel, located among hundreds of native lintel graves and dated to about the 960s. Among them is the grave of the famous "Pagan Lady of Peel," which contained no weapons but a conspicuously wide range of domestic objects and a magnificent necklace of seventy-one beads. The six other burials were found to hold just few items, such as coins, silver dress ornaments, belt buckles, knives, or pins, which still make them stand out among the Christian graves.[17]

As far as can be seen today, the two different practices—Norse pagan and local Christian burial customs—were used side by side for some time, from the Vikings' arrival in the late ninth century until about the 960s when furnished burials disappear from the

16. See Steinforth, *Skandinavische Besiedlung*, 194–98.

17. See Freke, *Excavations*, 66–71, 83–131.

archaeological record. By this time, it may be assumed that the Viking settlers had gradually adopted local burial custom as well as the Christian religion.

The process of religious reorientation on the part of the new settlers is evident in another expression of funerary tradition in Man, the gravestones. The native Manx used to erect simple grave markers, mostly crudely hewn stone stabs with the sign of the cross scratched into the surface (figure 2). By about the 940s or 950s, however, the Vikings had adopted this kind of monument and adapted it to their own tastes, developing it into elaborately carved works of art in their own styles: the Borre, Jellinge, Mammen, and Ringerike styles appear on the Manx Crosses in remarkably pure Scandinavian form, unaffected by local influences. Runic inscriptions now often record the names of the deceased, family members, and/

Figure 2: Manx gravestone (MM 21) on display in the Cross House in Maughold (Photo by author; courtesy of the Vicars and Wardens of the Parish of Maughold and South Ramsey, Isle of Man).

or the stone's sponsor, and both the runes and the language they are written in are Norse. The large cross present on each and every slab, however, clearly identifies these monuments as Christian.[18]

A small fragment of a Borre-style cross-slab in Andreas parish church (denominated Kirk Andreas MM 128) is decorated, back-to-back and next to the Christian cross, with two figurative scenes from both religions' imagery (figure 3). One face shows a man with a large bird on his shoulder, pointing a spear at a dog-like animal that seems to bite him in the foot. There is some discussion about the meaning of this scene, but it is frequently assumed that the man is Óðinn, chief god of the old Scandinavian religion, being killed by the demonic wolf Fenrir in the Ragnarök and marking the end of the pagan Norse world. On the other face, there is a man holding aloft a book and a cross with a fish in front of him and a knotted serpent beneath and above him, respectively. This man is generally interpreted as representing Christ trampling the vicious animals, a motif well known and quite popular in medieval Christian religious art, illustrating the Bible's Psalm 91:13 and promising divine protection and the resurrection at the End of Days. Accordingly, the overall message of both scenes is often taken to be the highly confrontational and missionary statement "Óðinn is dead, Christ rules!" If, however, the armed man on face 1 is identified as Óðinn's son Viðar, avenging his father's death by killing the wolf to survive Ragnarök and thus death itself, the common message of both scenes is most likely the promise of and hope for the Christian resurrection, transmitted in images of both the old religion and the new, for both residual pagans and Christians to understand.[19] This demonstrates that in the middle of the tenth century, motives from pagan mythology were still understood but could be utilized in a Christian context for a Christian message; and that at the same time a considerable degree of spiritual familiarization and even conversion had taken place, which must have brought the two ethnic groups in the Island closer together.

18. See David M. Wilson, *Manx Crosses: A Handbook of Stone Sculpture 500–1040 in the Isle of Man* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2018); Philip M. C. Kermode, *Manx Crosses, or, The Inscribed and Sculptured Monuments of the Isle of Man from about the End of the Fifth to the Beginning of the Thirteenth Century* (London: Bemrose, 1907; repr. Balgavies: Pinkfoot, 1994).

19. See Dirk H. Steinforth, *Thorvald's Cross: The Viking-Age Cross-Slab 'Kirk Andreas MM 128' and Its Iconography* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2021).

Figure 3: The two faces of the cross-slab Kirk Andreas MM 128 (Photos by author; courtesy of the Rector and Wardens of St Andrew's Church, Andreas, Isle of Man).

Furthermore, some runic inscriptions on the Scandinavian Manx Crosses betray direct family ties between the persons mentioned in them, bearing Norse names and Celtic names, respectively. For example, Þorsteinn (a Norse name) erected the stone Kirk Braddan MM 112 for Ófeigur (Norse), the son of Krinan (Celtic), and Kirk Michael MM 130 tells of Mallumkun (Celtic) mourning Malmura, Dufgal's daughter (both Celtic names), who had married Aðisl (Norse). Obviously, by the mid- to late tenth century, social barriers between both groups had broken down sufficiently to allow intermarriage as well as social interaction. It is also important to notice that sponsors with Celtic names commissioned crosses with Scandinavian decoration and inscribed in runes in the Norse Language.[20]

20. See Steinforth, *Skandinavische Besiedlung*, 273–96; David Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea: Conflict and Assimilation, AD 790–1050* (Stroud: History Press, 2010), 154.

5. The First Conquest: Summary and Analysis

Unfortunately, there are no documentary sources that could shed light on the pre-conquest community in the Isle of Man and the events connected with the Vikings' arrival and settlement on the Island in about 870 C.E.. Nor are there sources that discuss their interaction with the local population afterward, or on processes and conditions in the developing "Manx/Viking" community. Even information about Man's kings and their role in Irish Sea politics is sketchy.[21] Archaeological evidence—limited as it may be as a reflection of an individual's outlook—and inscriptions are, however, able to give us some indication of both religious and social developments after the initial conquest/settlement.

The evidence of the Manx Viking graves falls into several categories:

1. burials in purely pagan tradition,
2. burials in pagan tradition but in Christian cemeteries (including "graveyard weapons"),
3. "late pagan" furnished burials in Christian cemeteries,
4. (very) sparsely furnished burials in Christian cemeteries.[22]

Although, according to the current state of research, graves of categories 1 and 2 are generally dated to the interval of "late ninth or early tenth century" and those of categories 3 and 4 to the middle of the tenth century,[23] it would be unreasonable to assume that this ostensible correlation represents a gradual and simultaneous process that began only after the Norse encountered the Christians in the Isle of Man. In fact, it is very probable that the Vikings settling in Man had become familiar with Christianity

21. See Seán Duffy, "Man and the Irish Sea World in the Eleventh Century," in *A New History of the Isle of Man*, vol. 3, *The Medieval Period 1000–1406*, edited by Seán Duffy and Harold Mytum (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 9–26.

22. A fifth category, "unfurnished burials in Christian cemeteries and tradition," is merely hypothetical, as far as archaeology is concerned, as a Scandinavian buried this way would be indistinguishable from a native Manx (unless isotope analyses are able to supplement information about the geographical origin of the deceased).

23. See Steinforth, *Skandinavische Besiedlung*, 190–206, 244–46; see also Wilson, *The Vikings*, 35, 50; David M. Wilson, "The Chronology of the Viking Age in the Isle of Man." *Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society* 10.4 (1998): 361–62.

in Ireland earlier, very plausible that at least some of them were sympathetic toward the new religion, and very possible that others had converted already. Avoiding too precise chronological considerations, the important point to note is that the Viking settlers showed a marked inclination to make use of Christian graveyards and by about 960 C.E. had abandoned the pagan burial custom altogether.[24] Instead, as if to make up for the loss of the socially, dynastically, and politically efficacious displays of wealth and power provided by elaborate burials, rich furnishings, and conspicuous barrows, the Vikings in Man embraced the local, Christian practice of setting stone monuments by making them equally impressive.

This transition would indicate three things: first, the fundamental change in funerary practices shows a renunciation of the Old Norse religion and the acceptance of Christianity by the pagans among the Viking settlers by about 960 C.E. (also, that at least remnants of paganism had survived in the Island as late as then). A previous familiarity with Christianity on the part of the Vikings in their native Ireland/Dublin may well have been a powerful mediating factor between the new settlers and the resident Christians and helped to find common ground.

Second, the elaborate—and possibly expensive—design of the Manx Crosses surely is not exclusively due to spiritual factors but serves the same social, dynastic, and political purposes of the earlier furnished mound burials to demonstrate economic and political power of the deceased and their family. Thus, these memorials suggest that the Vikings increasingly became part of the social and civic proceedings in the Isle of Man. The names of later kings of Man, such as the brothers Maccus and Guðröður Haraldsson in the 980s or Guðröður Crovan (Gofraid Crobán) (†1095) in the late eleventh century, which are predominantly Norse and closely associated with the royal house of the Viking kings of Dublin, clearly show that the Vikings took over the leadership of the island and retained it for many years. The fact that Celtic natives commissioned Crosses in pure Scandinavian style and inscription suggests that they approved the "glamour" of the stones and their social

24. See Steinforth, *Skandinavische Besiedlung*, 188–206.

and political appeal and wanted to benefit from the new fashion of memorial.

Third, the runic inscriptions on the Manx Crosses clearly signify close family connections between persons—spouses as well as parents and children—with Norse and Celtic backgrounds, respectively, which must mean that the two groups did not oppose each other in hostility, antagonism, and separation when the stones were commissioned after the 930s/940s, but already were in an advanced state of social convergence on a family level as well as of religious adjustment. This process, it seems, would have begun at least a generation earlier with intermarriage between old and new settlers in Man.

The Vikings had come to stay among the native Manx, and elements of both cultures survived, such as the native Christian religion and burial custom and Scandinavian art styles decorating the gravestones, so there is no doubt that some form of co-existence was achieved. As far as can be perceived from the archaeological and epigraphic evidence, the conquest of the Isle of Man in the later ninth century was followed by social harmonization between the two groups and hybridization into one. Sadly, with the end of furnished burials, graves of settlers of Viking descent became virtually indistinguishable from native burials, and archaeology lost its single most important source. Important details thus will continue to elude us. With written evidence also absent, we are very much left in the dark—until the year 1066 C.E., when a local thirteenth-century chronicle recounts the story of the second "Viking" conquest of Man about two hundred years after the first one.

6. Guðröður Crovan and the Second Conquest of Man: The Historical Evidence

The first (and only) coherent and detailed narrative source focusing on the medieval history of the Isle of Man is the *Chronica regum Manniæ et Insularum* (abbr. CRM), commissioned in or shortly after 1257 C.E.[25] After a few entries not related to Man, it records the

25. *Chronicle of the Kings of Man and the Isles*; also *Manx Chronicle*; London, British Library, Cotton MS. Julius A. VII, fols. 31r–52r. See George Broderick, ed., *Cronica Regum Mannie et Insularum: Chronicle of the Kings of Man and the Isles (BL Cotton Julius Avii)* (Douglas: Manx Museum and National Trust, 1979); see also Bernadette Williams, "The Chronicles of the Kings of Man and the Isles," in *A New History of the*

history of the kings of the Isle of Man between the years 1066 and 1257 C.E. with a few further items after that date until 1316 (figure 4). Despite detailed and occasionally lengthy accounts of events, the *Chronicle* does not provide any information about or description of conditions in Man as they were in the middle of the eleventh century. Instead, it begins with the tale of an Insular-Scandinavian warrior called Guðröðr Crovan (< Irish *crob bhán,* "White hand"; English *Godred*, Irish *Gofraid*),[26] who was of royal Irish-Viking ancestry (in fact, of the House of Ívar, king of Dublin) and had his base in the Hebrides. After participating in the failed invasion of England by the Norwegian king Haraldur *harðráði* ("the hard ruler") in 1066, Guðröður came to the Isle of Man, to visit its king, also named Guðröður, son of Sigtryggur (Gofraid mac Sitric) (†1070), who probably was his kinsman:

> De qua fuga quidam godredus cognomento crouan filius haraldi nigri de ýsland fugiens uenit ad godredum filium sýtric qui tunc regnabat in Mannia & honorifice susceptus est ab eo.
>
> (From this flight there escaped a certain Godred, nicknamed Crovan, son of Harald the Black of Ysland, and he came to Godred, son of Sitric, who was then ruling in Man, and was honourably received by him.)[27]

Guðröður Sigtryggsson, the *Chronicle* continues, died four years later, and his son Fingal took his throne (Here again is the constellation of father and son, one with a Norse name, the other with a Celtic name, as the inscriptions of the Manx Crosses had attested to about 130 years earlier).[28]

Nothing is known about the career of Guðröður Crovan until he returned to Man in 1079 C.E., this time to conquer and rule the Island. With a seaborne army of followers, probably islanders

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Isle of Man, vol. 3, *The Medieval Period 1000–1406*, edited by Seán Duffy and Harold Mytum (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 305–28.

26. See Duffy, "Man and the Irish Sea World," 17–21.

27. CRM s.a. 1047 recte 1066: Broderick, *Cronica regum Mannie*, fol. 32v. The information given by the *Chronicle* about the father of Guðröður Crovan and Fingal Guðröðsson is open to debate. See Duffy, "Man and the Irish Sea World," 9–11.

28. See CRM s.a. 1051 recte 1070: Broderick, *Cronica regum Mannie*, 32v.

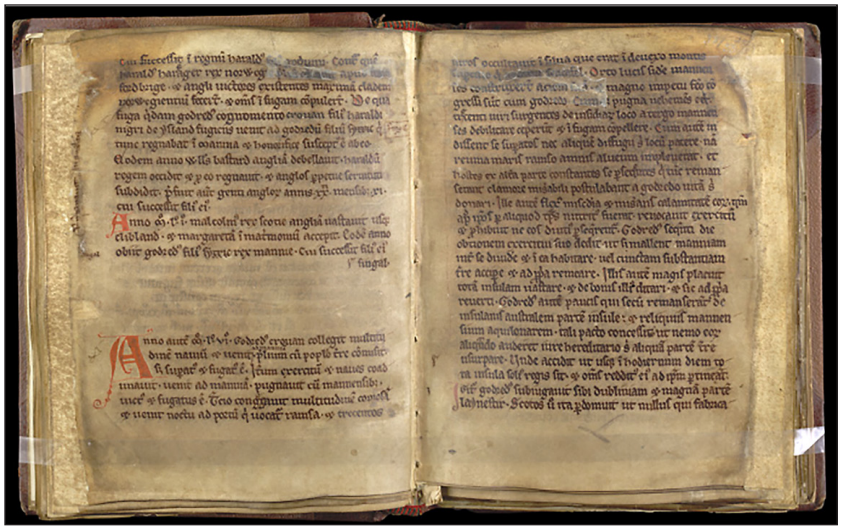

Figure 4: Chronica Regum Manniæ et Insularum: pages recording the years 1066 to 1079 (© British Library Board, London: Cotton MS. Julius A VIII, fols. 32v and 33r; reproduced with kind permission).

from the Scottish Hebrides, he landed near the town of Ramsey but was foiled twice in his attempts and fought off, before—by using clever tactics—he eventually succeeded in the battle of Scacafell to overcome the resistance of the valiant Manx defenders:

> Anno autem m.l.vi. Godredus crouan collegit multitudinem nauium & uenit ad manniam prelium cum populo terre commisit, sed superatus & fugatus est. Iterum exercitum & naues coadunauit, uenit ad manniam, pugnauit cum mannensibus, uictus & fugatus est. Tertio congregauit multitudinem copiosam & uenit noctu ad portum qui uocatur ramsa & trecentos uiros occultauit in silua que erat in deuexo montis supercilio qui uocatur scacafel. Orto lucis sidere mannenses construxerunt aciem suam & magnu impetu facto congressi sunt cum godredo. Cumque pugna uehemens esset trecenti uiri surgentes de insidiarum loco a tergo mannenses debilitare ceperunt & in fugam compellere. Cum autem uidissent se superatos nec aliquem diffugii sibi locum patere, nam reuma maris ramso amnis alueum impleuerat, et hostes ex altera parte constantes se persequentes qui tunc remanserant clamore miserabili postulabant a godredo uitam sibi donari. Ille autem flexus misericordia & miserans calamitatem eorum, quoniam

apud ipsos per aliquod tempus nutritus fuerat, reuocauit exercitum & prohibuit ne eos diutius persequerentur. Godredus sequenti die obtionem exercitui suo dedit, ut si mallent manniam inter se diuidere & in ea habitare, uel cunctam substantiam terre accipere & ad propria remeare. Illis autem magis placuit totam insulam uastare & de bonis illius ditari & sic ad propria reuerti. Godredus autem paucis qui secum remanserant de insulanis australem partem insule & reliquiis mannensium aquilonarem, tali pacto concessit ut nemo eorum aliquando auderet iure hereditario sibi aliquam partem terre usurpare. Unde accidit ut usque in hodiẹrnum diem tota insula solius regis sit & omnes redditus eius ad ipsum pertineant.

(Now in the year 1056 Godred Crovan mustered a great number of ships and came to Man; he joined battle with the people of the land, but was defeated and put to flight. Again he assembled an army and ships, came to Man, fought with the Manxmen, was defeated and put to flight. A third time he gathered a massive force and came by night to the harbour which is called Ramsey, and three hundred men he hid in a wood which was [33^{r}] on the sloping of the mountain called Sky Hill. At dawn the Manxmen formed up in battle order and after a massive charge joined battle with Godred. When the battle was raging vehemently, the three hundred men rose from their place of hiding at the rear of the Manxmen and began to weaken their resistance, and they compelled them to flee. Now when they saw themselves defeated without any place for them to escape to, for the tide had filled the river-bed at Ramsey and the enemy were pressing constantly from the other side, those who then were left begged Godred with pitiful cries to spare them their lives. Moved with compassion and taking pity on their plight, since he had been reared among them for some time, he called off his army and forbade them to pursue them further. The following day Godred gave his army the option of either dividing Man among themselves and living in it, if they so preferred, or of plundering the land entirely and returning home. It pleased them more to lay waste the whole island and to enrich themselves with its valuables, and thus to return to their homes. Godred on the other hand granted the southern part of the island to the few islanders who had stayed with him, and the northern part to the remainder of the Manxmen, on such terms that none of them should at any time dare usurp any part of the land for

himself by right of inheritance. Whence it has come to pass that up to the present day the entire island is the property of the king alone, and that all its dues belong to him.)[29]

This account is the first instance to mention a group name for the people of Man: "Mannenses" or "Manx(men)." Unfortunately, this name (or the even less specific "populus mannie") allows no inference as to their ethnic background or any social or political circumstances on the Island in the later eleventh century. However, one can assume that there were not two separate ethnic groups living in the Island but one, the "Manxmen," at least according to the *Chronicle*, looking back at the events from a distance of about two hundred years. In one of the very last entries of the *Chronicle*, about the battle of Ronaldsway in 1275 C.E., the same term is used—as well as, for the first and only time in the source, another one: "mannica gens," translated by Broderick as "Manx race":

Anno domini m.cc.lxx.v. Septima die mensis octobris applicuit nauigium domini Alexandri Regis Scottie apud Rognalwath in Mannia & sequenti die ante solis ortum commissum est prelium inter manenses & scottos, sed scotti uictores existents occiderunt de manensibus in illo conflicto quingentos xxx & septem uiros, unde quidam uersificator: L. decies x.ter & penta duo cecidere mannica gens de te dampna futura caue.

(In the year of the lord 1275 on the seventh day of the month of October the fleet of lord Alexander king of Scotland landed at Ronaldsway in Man, and the following day before sunrise a battle was fought between the Manxmen and the Scots; but the Scots were victorious, and they cut down five hundred and thirty seven Manxmen in that conflict, wherefore a certain rhymster [writes]: "ten times 50, three times 10, and five and two did fall, O Manx race, beware lest future catastrophe befall you.")[30]

Even more than the name "Mannenses," this passage gives the impression of there being on the Island a community that was

29. CRM s.a. 1056 recte 1079: Broderick, *Cronica regum Mannie*, fols. 32v, 33r.
30. CRM s.a. 1275: Broderick, *Cronica regum Mannie*, fol. 50r.

considered (and/or considered itself) united. But as this entry refers to an event some four hundred years after the initial settlement by the Vikings of Dublin, the notion that during this long period, some sense of commonality and solidarity would have developed, is rather moot. These two terms, "mannenses" and "gens mannica," are the closest we get to an ethnic name for medieval inhabitants of Man—whatever their ethnic composition and background might actually have been.

Most of the details recorded in the *Chronica regum Manniæ et Insularum* about Guðröður Crovan and his career are particular to this source. Apart from the notice in the *Annals of Ulster* that in 1087 C.E. a "sea expedition" was launched from Ulster against the Isle of Man but was unsuccessful (AU s.a. 1087), the Irish annals contain no information about the fate of Man or about Guðröður's activities until 1091 C.E. when the *Annals of Tigernach* mention "Goffraidh mac Maic Arailt, rí Atha cliath" (Goffraidh son of Maic Arailt [i.e. son of Haraldur's son] king of Dublin), indicating that he assumed the kingship of the city.[31] After this, he appears to have campaigned successfully in Ireland, subduing "to his rule Dublin and a great part of Leinster" as again told by the *Manx Chronicle*,[32] but in 1094 C.E. his luck ended. The *Annals of Inisfallen* record "Coccad mór isin bliadain eter h-Ua m-Briain ocus Leth Cuind & Gofraid, ríg Átha Cliath" (great warfare in [this] year between Ua Briain and Leth Cuinn and Gofraid, king of Áth Cliath [Dublin]), at the end of which Guðröður was banished from Dublin.[33] He died in the Hebridean island of Islay in the following year, probably of the plague.[34] In their list of casualties, the *Annals of Inisfallen* style him "Gobraith, ríg Atha Cliath & Inse Gall" (king of Áth Cliath and Insi Gall [Dublin and the Isles]).[35]

31. See Whitley Stokes, "The Annals of Tigernach: The Continuation, A.D. 1088–A.D. 1178 (Rawl. B., Fo. 19a 2)," *Revue Celtique* 18.1 (1897): 9–59 at 13; my translation.

32. Broderick, *Cronica regum Mannie*, fol. 33r.

33. Seán Mac Airt, ed, *The Annals of Inisfallen (MS. Rawlinson B. 503)* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1951), 247.

34. Traditionally, the standing stone at Carragh Bhàn on Islay is supposed to mark his grave; see James Graham-Campbell and Colleen E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2002), 89.

35. Mac Airt, *Inisfallen*, 250–51. See Wilson, *The Vikings*, 120–21; Duffy, "Man and the Irish World," 20–21.

7. Guðröður Crovan as "Founding Father"

The Irish chronicles depict Guðröður Crovan as a mighty warrior and founder of a sea kingdom that even included Dublin, but the *Manx Chronicle* goes further. In the long paragraph recounting his exploits in 1079 C.E., the text paints a picture of him not only as a cunning, resourceful, and tenacious military leader who will overcome strong resistance, but also as merciful and circumspect in victory as well as strong and just—a truly heroic figure.

As already mentioned, the chronicles record him as "king of Dublin and the Isles," making him the Kingdom of Man and the Isles, a powerful island realm that was to be a major player in Insular politics for almost two hundred years, and founder of his own royal dynasty, which ruled the kingdom until 1275 C.E..[36]

A remarkable instance can be seen at the end of the *Chronicle*'s paragraph in which it is recounted that Guðröður gave the two parts of the island to his followers and to the native Manx, respectively, "on such terms that none of them should at any time dare usurp any part of the land for himself by right of inheritance. Whence it has come to pass that up to the present day the entire island is the property of the king alone, and that all its dues belong to him."[37] Especially the second sentence applies astonishingly well to the Isle of Man of today as it is a self-governing Crown Dependency that is subject only to the monarch of Great Britain and Northern Ireland without being a part of England, or of the United Kingdom, or a member (or associate) of the European Union. This clearly makes it appear as if Guðröður in 1079 C.E. had laid the foundation of the Island's political status, which remained valid "to the present day" (which is not quite correct: Man is a crown dependency only since 1765).

Furthermore, Guðröður is said to have been a lawman—indeed the "founding father of Manx law."[38] His name (in the form "Orrye") is mentioned in a letter to John Stanley, "King of Man

36. See, e.g., Peter J. Davey, "Kingdom of Man and the Isles," in *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia*, edited by John T. Koch (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 1057–58; David Freke, "History," in *The Isle of Man: Celebrating a Sense of Place*, edited by Vaughan Robinson and Danny McCarroll (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1990), 113–15.

37. Broderick, *Cronica regum Mannie*, fol. 33r (see above).

38. Wilson, *The Vikings*, 137.

and the Isles," in 1422 C.E., concerning the customs of jurisdiction, quoting legal procedures in "King Orrye's Dayes" as precedent[39]—unless the term means, as George Broderick suggests, nothing more than "time immemorial."[40] He is also thought to have established the Tynwald system of legislation, similar to (and very likely based on) the Scandinavian Thing, where each year an assembly would be held on Tynwald Hill in St John's to administer justice and to decide and promulgate new laws.[41] This, in fact, is still done to this day, each year on Tynwald Day, July 5th. Even though the Manx parliament (which is still called Tynwald) now meets in the Island's capital, Douglas, new acts must be proclaimed from Assembly Hill (figure 5) within eighteen months or become invalid.[42] In view of all this evidence, Guðröður—warrior, king, administrator—can well be seen as a founding father who introduced important structures that have shaped the legal and political landscape of the Isle of Man to this day.

As much as Guðröður Crovan left his mark in Manx history and tradition, he appears also to have entered the realm of myth and folklore. Under the names "Gorry/Gorree" or "Orry" (which are obviously variations of the name Goðröður (Goðrøðr/Gofraid/Godred),[43] this legendary figure is even afforded a quasi-divine origin:

> When Orry came to Man he landed at the Lhen on a bright starry night. Those who gathered on the shore asked him whence he had come, and pointing upwards to the Milky Way, he said, "Yonder is the road whence I came, and along that star-spangled dome is the way that leads to my country." Ever since that time the Milky Way has been called in Manx *Raad mooar Ree Orry*, or "the great road of King Orry."[44]

39. Mark Anthony Mills, ed., *The Ancient Ordinances and Statute Laws of the Isle of Man* (Douglas: Phoenix Press, 1821), 17.

40. George Broderick, "Tynwald: A Manx Cult-Site and Institution of Pre-Scandinavian Origin?" *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 46 (2003): 67.

41. See William Cubbon, *Island Heritage* (Manchester: Falkner, 1952), 77–79; T. H. Hall Caine, *The Little Manx Nation* (New York: United States Book Co., 1891), 12–14.

42. See Steinforth, *Skandinavische Besiedlung*, 270–74.

43. See Broderick, "Tynwald," 67–68.

44. Cubbon, *Island Heritage*, 102. See Caine, *Little Manx Nation*, 11.

Figure 5: Tynwald Hill, St John's, Isle of Man (Photo by author).

This motif is taken up in the second verse of the Manx national anthem, written in 1907 by William Henry Gill:

> When Gorry, the Dane,
> In Mannin did reign,
> 'Twas said he had come from above;
> For wisdom from heav'n
> To him had been giv'n
> To rule us with justice and love.[45]

The celebrated English writer and Manx resident Sir T. H. Hall Caine enthusiastically told "The Lost Saga" of "our Manx Alfred, our Manx Arthur, our Manx Lear," and proudly claimed that "we are King Orry's men still."[46] In about 1860, Edward H. Corbould "conceived a brilliant idea of creating a statue to 'King Orry the Dane' as an exemplification of all that was great in what might

45. William Cubbon, *A Book of Manx Poetry* (Douglas: Manx Language Society/World Manx Assoc., 1913), 56.

46. Caine, *Little Manx Nation*, 17–20, 49.

be called the golden age of Manx history,"[47] but this project was never realized and survives only in the shape of a drawing by E. H. Kelsey (figure 6). And it appears that when the remains of a (medieval?) interment were discovered in the megalithic long barrow in Gretch Veg, Lonan Parish (c. 2000 B.C.E.), in about 1840, it was given the anachronistic name "King Orry's Grave."[48] But even in modern days, Guðröður—and King Orry—are far from forgotten and still show up in various forms other than historical and folkloristic writing. Kelsey's drawing was adopted in detail in 1973 for the design of a Manx postage stamp (15 pence) showing "Vikings landing on Man 938 A.D.," and in 1979, Guðröður Crovan, standing in the prow of a Viking ship, was depicted on a one-crown coin commemorating the "Millennium of Tynwald." In Ramsey, site of Guðröður's landfall in 1079 C.E. and not far from the battlefield of Scacafell (Skyhill), the bronze sculpture of Guðröður and his son Ólafur playing chess, by local artist Amanda Barton, was commissioned in 2000 (figure 7), and in 2008, another postage stamp (44 pence) shows "King Orry, Godred Crovan" going ashore in Man.

These few instances clearly demonstrate the special place that Guðröður/Orry continued to occupy in the popular perception of the Manx and "what a great national hero [he] had become in the imagination of the people."[49]

8. The Second Conquest: Summary and Analysis

Unfortunately, there are two serious problems to be taken into account in the consideration of the "Manx national hero" Guðröður Crovan and/or "King Orry." First, the story told by the *Chronica regum Manniæ et Insularum* must be taken with a large pinch of salt. The *Chronicle*, though to some degree drawing on earlier accounts, was written about 180 years after the events of interest here, which must limit its value as a historical source. More importantly, it is not a neutral record of all events worthy of attention at the time but was created with a purpose—and thus with a clear bias. Magnús Ólafsson, King of Man and the Isles and great-great-grandson of

47. Cubbon, *Island Heritage*, 303.

48. See Steinforth, *Wikingergräber*, 29–30.

49. Robert H. Kinvig, *A History of the Isle of Man* (Liverpool: University Press of Liverpool, 1950), 53.

Figure 6: Proposed statue of "King Orry the Dane": sketch by E. H. Kelsey after a design by Edward H. Corbould, c.1860 (after Cubbon, Manx Poetry, vi; plinth omitted).

Guðröður Crovan, commissioned the chronicle from a monk of Rushen Abbey probably in 1257 C.E. or shortly afterward when his reign had come under threat in the course of the power struggles over the Scottish Islands between Alexander III of Scotland and Hákon IV of Norway."[50] His aim was to have his kingship legitimized by celebrating his line of ancestors and the rightful, just, and virtuous founder of his dynasty, which certainly involved showing them in a favorable light and as enjoying God's favor.[51] The plan,

50. Rushen Abbey on the Isle of Man had been founded in 1134 C.E. by Ólafur Guðröðsson, the son and successor of Guðröður Crovan.

51. See Williams, "Chronicles," 326.

Figure 7: Guðröður Crovan playing chess with his son, King Ólafur: bronze sculpture in Ramsey, Isle of Man, by local artist Amanda Barton, 2000 (Photo by author).

as it turned out, failed: Magnús died the last king of the house of Guðröður in 1265 C.E., and in the following year, Man was ceded to King Alexander III.

There is no need to dismiss the information given in the *Manx Chronicle* in its entirety, but it needs to be consulted with great caution, keeping its bias and limitations in mind. Instead of "history," the picture of Guðröður Crovan, as drawn by the *Chronicle*, and most of the rest of the text, should be considered as thirteenth-century dynastic propaganda that "encourages us to see Godred as dissimilar to and, to say the least, a cut above his predecessors," as the "apical figure" the biographer wants us to see in him.[52]

Second, some scholars have cast doubt on whether or not the historical Guðröður and the legendary Orry could have been the same person. Hall Caine, after his rapt praise of the heroic "Orry" quoted above, emphatically distances himself from Guðröður Crovan, whom he calls the "treacherous Goddard" and the "Manx Macbeth."[53] "Orry," reputed to have lived in the earlier tenth century, is said to have instituted several political and legal innovations in Man,[54] and it is possible that his credits were transferred to Guðröður Crovan. However, especially as Orry was supposed to have been the first of no less than twelve kings of the same name, who not only cannot be identified at all but are also incompatible with the few crumbs of valid historical information we have about the time between the later ninth and the middle of the eleventh centuries in Man,[55] many scholars later make no distinction between the two figures. Perhaps influenced by his positive depiction in the *Manx Chronicle*, it is (more or less tentatively) presumed that it was in fact the historical Guðröður who established those changes and who had been glorified by folklore into a larger-than-life hero.[56]

From the perspective of modern scholarship, most of the information given in the colorful tales of tradition and folklore as well as in

52. Duffy, "Man and the Irish Sea World," 17.

53. Caine, *Little Manx Nation*, 20.

54. See Edward Callow, *From King Orry to Queen Victoria: A Short and Concise History of the Isle of Man* (London: Stock, 1899), 13.

55. See James Gell, ed., *An Abstract of the Laws, Customs, and Ordinances of the Isle of Man*, The Manx Society 12 (Douglas: The Manx Society, 1867), 11–12.

56. See, e.g., Wilson, *The Vikings*, 120, 137.

the early printed accounts of Manx history is unverified, unreliable, and outdated.[57] Yet in their time, these books were read and the stories were heard, and they shaped the conception of local history and cultural roots in the contemporary reader's mind. And as with the Langobard women's "beards" mentioned above, historical accuracy and provable fact are not absolutely necessary for a foundation legend and for the emotions it inspires. To a certain degree, "imagination" is what ethnic identity is about: the *feeling* of belonging and the *belief* in common ancestry, tradition, customs—intensified by the common pride in a legendary founding father. Thus, we may consider the story of Guðröður Crovan in the *Chronicle* the Manx foundation legend that exemplifies rather than substantiates the conviction that the roots of the Manx go back to heroic Vikings settling in the Island—as well as to staunch Celts.

9. Summing Up and Looking Ahead

Twice Norsemen conquered the Isle of Man and introduced their ways into an established society, twice we have only a very incomplete, corrupt, and biased body of evidence from which to draw conclusions. Archaeology and history both cannot answer the question when and why the different ethnic groups eventually considered themselves one group. This feeling of commonality must have been created by the subjective view of people on any number of facts and circumstances, ideas, and traditions, even on an individual basis that is far beyond our reach. In both cases, there is evidence that each of the "two conquests," though initially violent, was followed by harmonization and mixing and the formation of a common community made up of people and characteristics of both groups. After the "first conquest," Manx Christian religion and burial customs prevailed over pagan practices, as did local/regional material culture, which was not replaced by Scandinavian imports, while the Vikings took over the political leadership of the Island, introduced their Norse language and runic writing system into the Island (without, most probably, completely replacing the native language), imported their art styles, and even created a mutually acceptable style of

57. See, e.g., vol. 1 of C. W. Airne, *The Story of the Isle of Man*, 2 vols. (Southport: Johnson, 1949–64); Callow, *From King Orry*; Caine, *Little Manx Nation*.

funerary monument. The two groups also intermarried. Sadly, archaeology cannot tell us about many intriguing details regarding that community in the late tenth century and first half of the eleventh century, and historical sources only provide the impression that it was politically dominated by the Norse. The "second conquest" would have upset many structures formed in the meantime, especially by dividing the Island and allocating one part to a foreign group of settlers. In doing so, Guðröður created a new situation, which complicates the attempt to trace and understand the progress of the ethnogenesis of the Manx begun about two hundred years before.

With the help of the *Manx Chronicle*, however, Guðröður's exploits add (if only seemingly, perhaps) historical gravitas and a glorious hero and founder of important medieval accomplishments. He thus provides a focus of identification, which eventually would inspire later generations.

After the end of the House of Guðröður Crovan and of Norse dominance over Man in 1266 C.E., the Island was claimed, fought over, plundered, and ruled in turn by England, Scotland, and Ireland before finally becoming the British Crown dependency it is today. Poet T. E. Brown bemoans this fate as "the football position of the Island, kicked about from Celt to Norseman, from English to Scot. This must have affected the language as well as the temper and spirit of the people."[58] He later adds that Man had "a poor history, no great cause to fight for, no thrill, no glow."[59] In 1859, however, the *Manx Society for the Publication of National Documents* proudly described the Isle of Man as "inhabited by an aboriginal tribe of the great Celtic family, with language, institutions, and laws peculiar to itself,"[60] a sentiment quite in keeping with the Celtic renaissance of the late Victorian era, anxious to construct a pan-Celtic identity and ethnicity of the Manx among the Island's Celtic neighbors in the face of cultural Anglicization while downplaying the idea of Norse contributions.[61] And although Sir T. H. Hall Caine echoed Brown

58. T. E. Brown, quoted in Arthur W. Moore, *Manx Ballads and Music* (Douglas: Johnson, 1896), x.

59. T. E. Brown, "New Letters from T. E. Brown," *Mannin* 9 (1917): 523.

60. William Harrison, *Bibliotheca Monensis: A Bibliographical Account or Works Relating to the Isle of Man*, The Manx Society 24 (Douglas: The Manx Society, 1876), 276.

61. See John Belchem, "The Little Manx Nation: Antiquarians, Ethnic Identity, and

in lamenting that "there is no heroism" in Manx history, he also took great pride in the institution of the Tynwald and the Manx Constitution, "kept alive for a thousand years, while it has died out of every other Norse kingdom."[62] This position may have led to the belief that "when the Manx people suffered from misgovernment and poverty, they gathered up and embodied in one heroic character the results of the wise government of a line of Norse kings."[63] It is tempting to assume that a longing for heroism would have been a driving factor for remembering—and embellishing—the Viking part in the Manx heritage, which appears to have culminated in 1979, as set forth by archaeologist Sir David M. Wilson:

> The Manx have become more conscious of their Norse heritage. In 1979 they invented a Millennium to celebrate the origins of Tynwald and, as a result of this splendid figment of the imagination, there has been a tendency to emphasise the Scandinavian element in Manx culture. One might say, over-emphasise. Before the Millennium the Manx considered that the Island was really Celtic—after 1979 the Manx had an identity crisis and now bow to the North in search of their roots.[64]

A different view is taken by John Belchem when he states—somewhat disapprovingly, it seems—that "the various heritage centres of the award-winning 'Story of Mann,' located throughout the Island, offer convenient access to a ready-packaged, Gaelic theme-park past (with some Norse—briefly accorded prominence in the Tynwald Millennium Year, 1979—thrown in for good measure)."[65]

It is beyond the scope of this paper and the expertise of the author to further assess or comment on the views today's inhabitants of the Isle of Man might hold on the issue of heritage, or on the proportion and impact of Celtic and Norse elements, respectively, on modern Manx social landscape and community life. That is a task for sociological studies to undertake.

Home Rule Politics in the Isle of Man, 1880–1918," *Journal of British Studies* 39.1 (2000): 217–40.

62. Caine, *Little Manx Nation*, 48.

63. Christopher Shimmin, cit. after Belchem, "Little Manx Nation," 223.

64. Wilson, "Chronology," 359.

65. John Belchem, ed., *A New History of the Isle of Man,* vol. 5, *The Modern Period 1830–1999* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 15.

However, with archaeological, epigraphic, and historical evidence severely limited in the quest for both details and confirmation, perhaps in the future modern science might be able to open new ways to identify the geographic origin of the medieval settlers or to determine the genetic composition of the Manx. Studies into mDNA- and/or Y-chromosome phylogeny as well as δ^{18}oxygen- and strontium-isotope analysis may offer interesting approaches, but on Viking-Age skeletons in the Isle of Man, only very few studies have been conducted to date. The "chieftain" of Balladoole was found (probably) to have been born and raised in Scandinavia, and the "Pagan Lady of Peel" was not the local Celtic woman she often was thought to be, who had married a pagan Viking and was buried according to his religion. Instead, she possibly was born in the Hebrides, raising the question whether she was a Scandinavian from a Viking realm in Scotland or perhaps a British, Scottish, or Pictish woman.[66] Many more analyses are needed before we can hope to obtain significant contributions to answering questions about the Celtic and Scandinavian origins of the Manx or social identities in the early Viking Age.

Until such evidence is available, we must be content with the conclusions provided by more traditional means, analyzing the rich archaeology and intriguing history of the Viking Age in the Isle of Man and the Irish Sea area. Both Celts and Vikings left their marks, of this there can be no doubt, and the Viking invasions of about 870 and of 1079 C.E. brought with them an influx of settlers who mixed with the resident population, introduced their own culture, and adopted elements of the one they found, eventually to merge and form a new, changed community: "So the Norsemen married the Celtic women, and from that union came the Manx people. Thus, the Manxman to begin with was half Norse, half Celt. He is much the same still."[67]

66. See Leigh Symonds, T. Douglas Price, Anne Keenleyside, and James Burton, "Medieval Migrations: Isotope Analysis of Early Medieval Skeletons on the Isle of Man," *Medieval Archaeology* 58 (2014): 1–20.

67. Caine, *Little Manx Nation*, 11–12.

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Literary Studies

"A Never-Ending Story"

History, Saga, and Secondary Creation

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For much of the twentieth century, scholarship on the *Íslendingasögur* was focused largely on arguing that these works were fiction rather than history.[1] Now that there seems to be a general agreement that such is the case, perhaps the time has come to reconsider the sagas once again as history, not "History" as contemporary historians understand it today, but "*saga*" as it was understood in the thirteenth and subsequent centuries.[2] This paper suggests some directions such a re-evaluation might take and is organized under

1. For a brief introduction to this scholarship, see Matthew James Driscoll, "What's Truth Got to Do with It? Views on the Historicity of the Sagas," in *Skemmtiligastar lygisögur: Studies in Honour of Galina Glazyrina* (Самые забавные лживые саги: Сборник статей в честь Г. В. Глазыриной), edited by Tatjana N. Jackson and Elena A. Melnikova (Moscow: Dmitriy Pozharskiy University, 2012), 15–27 and Else Mundal, "The Growth of Consciousness of Fiction in Old Norse Culture," in *Medieval Narratives between History and Fiction: From the Centre to the Periphery of Europe, c. 1100–1400*, edited by Panagiotis A. Agapitos and Lars Boje Mortensen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2012), 167–98. In the sections "Historical Fictions" and "Exercising Historical Invention," Ruth Morse, in *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages: Rhetoric, Representation, and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 92–105, 105–24, explores the rhetorical conventions invoked in the writing of history in order to invoke veracity. In concluding sections on "Convention and Invention" and "Truth and Convention," she considers "ways of representing what had happened and the ways rhetoric suggested manipulations of those representations" (Morse, *Truth and Convention,* 238–44, 244–48 at 246).

2. *Saga* is related to the verb *segja* ("to say," "explain"). See Ásgeir Blöndal, *Íslensk orðsifjabók,* 3rd ed. (Reykjavík: Orðabók Háskólans, 1995), 792, 801. Although Mikhail Ivanovich Steblin-Kamenskij argues for the word's polysemy, its basic meaning seems clear: "something said about," especially with a genitive or dative complement containing the name of a person or place. When this phrase is used to identify a narrative, e.g., *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* or *Sagan af Agli Skalla-Grímssyni*, then the appropriate translation of *saga* is "history," as that word was understood in the pre-modern world. Cf. *The Saga Mind,* translated by Kenneth Ober (Odense: Odense University Press,

four headings. The first is: "Re-orienting History," that is, analyzing the writing of *saga* in the light of recent French scholarship on the writing of "Histoire" as it was conducted in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This is followed by: "Writing *saga,*" which argues that the so-called "break" in saga writing variously dated to 1300 or 1400 is a persistent remnant of the nineteenth-century ideology of Icelandic romantic nationalism. Such a break appears never to have been recognized by the majority of Icelanders before the twentieth century and is therefore a scholarly invention, for there is no break. Rather, the writing of *saga* continued and evolved over the centuries, and it is our task to try to understand this trajectory. Part three, "Modern *saga,*" considers Laxness' *Gerpla* (1952) and Bergsveinn Birgisson's *Geirmundar saga heljarskinns* (2015) as *saga* and the essay closes with "Imagining *saga,*" which ventures some speculations on why the writing of *saga* has persisted down to the present.[3]

1. Re-Orienting History

Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen, in an entry on *Breta sögur,* suggests that the translations *Breta sögur* and *Trójumanna saga* were produced after 1220, that is, during the reign of King Hákon Hákonarson of Norway who ruled from 1217–1263, and who was also responsible for initiating the translation of French Romances into Norse.[4]

1973), 26–27; Мир саги / Становление литературы [The Saga Mind / The Formation of Literature], edited by D. S. Likhachev (Leningrad: Nauka, 1984), 25–26.

3. This paper is a revised version of a lecture given under the title "'A Never-Ending Story': Saga Writing from Ari Þorgilsson to Bergsveinn Birgisson," at the Miðaldastofa Háskóla Íslands (University of Iceland Centre for Medieval Studies), 16 March 2017. I would like to thank all those involved and in particular Sif Ríkharðsdóttir who invited me, and Haraldur Bernharðsson who took care of specifics. In choosing the title for my talk, I had in mind the novel by Michael Ende, *The Neverending Story,* trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Dutton, 1979), but I subsequently came across the essay by Pierre Chastang and Étienne Anheim, "L'écriture infinite: écrire l'histoire au Moyen Âge," in *L'Écriture de l'histoire au Moyen Âge: Contraintes génériques, contraintes documentaires,* edited by Étienne Arnheim et al., Rencontres 135 (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2015), 351–63, which similarly evokes the open-endedness of historical writing in the Middle Ages.

4. See Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen, "Breta sǫgur," in *Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för nordisk medeltid från vikingatid till reformationstid*, edited by Ingvar Andersson and John Granlund, 22 vols. (Malmö: Allhems förlag, 1956–1978), 2 (1957): cols. 220–23 at 222. The editor of the most recent edition is a little more

I would also add *Rómverja saga* to those texts mentioned by Halvorsen. The dominant view in the twentieth century associated with names such as Jakob Benediktsson and Stefán Karlsson was that these texts were not only translated from Latin, but that these translations were done very early, even in the twelfth century. On the other hand, those attempts to make a clear link between the Latin originals and their Icelandic counterparts have, in my opinion, floundered, and the direct connection remains far from proven while the early date is speculation and not based on manuscript evidence. I think the time has come to look more closely at these assumptions that have been taken for granted in studies of the so-called Sagas of Classical Antiquity. And while any detailed discussion of *Rómverja saga*, *Breta sögur*, and *Trójumanna saga* lies outside the scope of this essay, I would like to make one observation with respect to the so-called Darius Phrygius version of *Trójumanna saga*. It has never seemed possible to me that this text could have been translated from Latin, and now recent research suggests that this version of the Troy story, found only in a seventeenth century manuscript, is probably indebted to a fifteenth-century French prose retelling of the Troy story.[5]

But back to King Hákon Hákonarson and the translation of French Romances into Norse. The whole issue of the background and motivation for the production of such *riddarasögur* as *Tristrams saga, Ívens saga, Möttuls saga*, the *Strengleikar,* and so on is something that has been thoroughly studied and there is no dissention from the assumption that these translations were based on French texts of Anglo-Norman provenance. But why should King Hákon have also been interested in texts relating to classical antiquity? I think part of the answer can be found in the work of Gabrielle Spiegel, who makes a detailed investigation into why the Angevin and Capetian monarchs of England and France became intensely interested in reviving the knowledge of the history of Greece and

caution, but still places the translation soon after 1200: *La Saga des Bretons: Étude, edition et traduction des Breta Sögur islandaises*, edited by Hélène Tétrel, Textes littéraires du Moyen Âge 63 (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2021), 202–03.

5. See Sabine Heide Walther, "An Ideal Nobleman: Transformations of the Classical Hero Hercules in Old Norse *Trójumanna saga*," in *Crossing Borders in the Insular Middle Ages: 900–1500*, edited by Aisling Byrne and Victoria Flood, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe 27 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 299–320.

Rome in the vernacular.[6] As Francine Mora-Lebrun has also pointed out, these verse histories were written at the same time as the first tentative forays into writing the history of France in the vernacular.[7] These narratives are characterized by an ambiguous relationship to that history, which they re-mythify and rethink in the form of romance while at the same time wishing to preserve the factual "truth" of the history. In doing so, they contributed to the problematization of the writing of fables (i.e. fiction) and the writing of history, which the next generation of historians marked by writing their works in prose.[8] David Rollo looks at the use of fable and history in Latin historians such as William of Malmesbury, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Gerald of Wales, as well as in such writers in the vernacular as Wace and Benoît de Sainte-Maure.[9] He is particularly interested in the various claims of these writers to have had access to otherwise unknown textual sources in order to mask their fictions as history. This is a practice not entirely unknown in saga writing, as for example in *Klári saga,* which I would date to the early fourteenth century and that claims to be based on a Latin *rythmus*.[10]

6. See Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France*, The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics 23 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 99–213.

7. See Francine Mora-Lebrun, "*Mettre en romanz": Les romans d'antiquité du xiie siècle et leur postérité (xiiie–xive siècle)*, Moyen Âge—Outils de synthèse 3 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008), 25–96.

8. See Mora-Lebrun, "*Mettre en romanz*," 525.

9. See David Rollo, *Historical Fabrication, Ethnic Fable and French Romance in Twelfth-Century England*, The Edward C. Armstrong Monographs on Medieval Literature 9 (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1998). See also Laura Ashe, *Fiction and History in England, 1066–1200*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 68 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Jean Blacker, *The Faces of Time: Portrayal of the Past in Old French and Latin Historical Narrative of the Anglo-Norman* Regum (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994); Peter Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Inventing Vernacular Authority* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999); Monika Otter, *Inventiones: Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); and Nancy F. Partner, *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

10. This may be a joke, as *rythmus* is defined as "verse, poem, song, esp. light verse, verse of a disreputable nature, lampoon." *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources,* edited by R. E. Lantham, rev. ed., 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2018), 3:3187, col. 2. See the discussion in Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, "The Phantom of a Romance: Traces of Romance Transmission and the Question of Originality," in *Medieval Romances across European Borders,* edited by Miriam Edlich-Muth, Medieval Narratives in Transmission 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 133–52 at 134. That

As Gabrielle Spiegel also notes, there was a shift in the writing of the history of Antiquity in the early thirteenth century from verse to prose, which was considered to be more "truthful" than verse, freeing this history from the negative influence of romance.[11] Although Damian-Grint is somewhat skeptical,[12] the fact remains that this is a position taken by the early thirteenth-century historians themselves.[13] This significant change in the writing of history did not take place in a vacuum. Profound economic, political, and

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such a continental text may have existed is taken up again by Védís Ragnheiðarsdóttir, "*Clári saga* and its Continental Siblings: A Comparative Literary Approach to an Old Problem," in *Dominican Resonances in Medieval Iceland: The Legacy of Bishop Jón Halldórsson*, edited by Gunnar Harðarson and Karl G. Johansson, The Northern World 92 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 92–122, drawing heavily on the late version of the Griselda story, *Bianca di Tolosa*. by Luigi Alamanni (1495–1556), first published 1794.

11. See Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 178–94. The chapter cited was first published as "Social Change and Literary Language: The Textualization of the Past in Thirteenth-Century Old French Historiography," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 17 (1987): 129–48. See also Molly Lynde-Recchia, *Prose, Verse, and Truth-Telling in the Thirteenth Century: An Essay on Form and Function in Selected Texts, Accompanied by an Edition of the Prose "Thèbes" as Found in the "Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César,"* Edward C. Armstrong Monographs on Medieval Literature 10 (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 2000), 13–34.

12. See Damian-Grint, *New Historians,* 172–73. The relationship between verse and prose in vernacular histories in English appears ambiguous. See Richard J. Moll, *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 24–25, 27–28.

13. For example, Nicolas of Senlis' prose translation of the *Historia Caroli Magni*, completed around 1202, states in the prologue concerning the story of Charlemagne: "Maintes gens si en ont oï conter et chanter, mes n'est si mençonge non ço qu'il en dient e en chantent cil chanteor ne cil jogleor. Nus contes rimés n'est verais. Tot est mençongie ço qu'il dient car il n'en sievent rienz fors quant par oïr dire" ("Many people have heard it told or sung, but it is nothing but lies that they tell and sing, these singers and jongleurs. No rhymed tale is true; everything they say is a lie, for they know nothing of it except through hearsay"). Text and translation quoted from Wlad Godzich and Jeffrey Kittay, *The Emergence of Prose: An Essay in Prosaics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xiv. See also the chapter "Prose History" in Godzich and Kittay, *The Emergence of Prose,* 139–75, and further, "*Pseudo-Turpin* and the Problem of Prose," in Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, 55–98. The *Historia Caroli Magni,* usually referred to as the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, purports to tell of Charlemagne's defeat of the Muslims in Spain and was composed sometime in the twelfth century. It proved enormously popular, and in addition to an Anglo-Norman version there are at least six separate translations into Continental French between 1200 and 1230 (see Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, 70). It came to have a similar place in the French historiographical imagination as did Geoffrey of Monmouth's stories of Arthur for the English. On the other hand, historians in verse such as Wace affirmed their commitment to truth: "n'en voil por verité la menchonge affermer / ne le voir, se jel sai, ne voil ge pas celer" (I do not want to assert lies instead of the truth, nor do I wish to conceal the truth if I know it). Wace, *The "Roman de Rou,"*

social changes were taking place in France, leading to a centralized monarchy that became dominant after the Battle of Bouvines (1214) and was accompanied by a concomitant decline in the power and independence of the great aristocratic families. The earliest of these new prose histories was *L'Histoire ancienne jusqu'á César* in twelve books composed between 1208 and 1211. Fifty-eight manuscripts of the first redaction survive, although it unfortunately remains only partly edited.[14] This was followed in 1213–1214 by the enormously popular prose compilation, *Li Fet des Romains,* based on the works of Sallust, Suetonius, and Lucan.[15] The development of

edited by Anthony J. Holden, translated by Glyn S. Burgess (St. Helier, Jersey: Société Jersiaise, 2002), lines 1371–72 (p. 40; trans. pp. 41–42).

14. In "L'Histoire au fil des siècles: Les différentes versions de *L'Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César," Transcrire et/ou traduire: Variation et changement linguistique dans la tradition manuscrite des textes médiévaux*, edited by Reymund Wilhelm, Studia Romanica 182 (Heidelberg: Winter, 2013), 78–95, Richard Trachsler outlines the four versions of *L'Histoire ancienne* which were produced between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries. Only scattered episodes from the first and second redactions have been published to date. These are (first redaction unless specified otherwise):: Book I (Genesis): *The Heard Word: A Moralized History: The Genesis Section of the "Histoire ancienne" in a Text from Saint-Jean d'Acre*, edited by Mary Coker Joslin; rev. ed., Romance Monographs 45 (University, MS: Romance Monographs, 1986); Book III (Thebes): Molly Lynde-Recchia, *Prose, Verse, and Truth-Telling*, 13–34; Books II–IV (Assyria, Thebes, Minotaur, Amazons, Hercules): *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César (Estoires Rogier),* edited by Marijke de Visse-van Terwisga, 2 vols., Medievalia: série "Textes du Moyen Age" 19, 30 (Orléans: Paradigme, 1995–99); *L'Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César (deuxième redaction): Édition d'après le manuscrit OUL 1 de la bibliothèque de l'Université Otemae, ancien Phillipps 23240*, edited by Yorio Otaka and Catherine Croizy–Naquet, 2 vols., Medievalia 88–89 (Orléans: Paradigme, 2016); Book V (Troy): Marc-René Jung, *La légende de Troie en France au moyen âge: Analyse des versions françaises et bibliographie raisonnée des manuscrits*, Romanica Helvetica 114 (Basel: Francke, 1996), 359–430; *La Roman de Troie en Prose: Prose 5*, edited by Anne Rochebouet, Textes littéraires du Moyen Âge 59 (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2021) [expanded version from the Second Redaction]. Books VI–VII (Aeneas and Rome): [unedited]. Book VIII (Persia): Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César: *L'histoire de la Perse, de Cyrus à Assuérus*, edited by Anne Rochebouet, Alexander Redivivus 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015); Book IX (Alexander): Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César: *L'histoire de la Macédoine et d'Alexandre le Grand*, edited by C. Gaullier-Bougassas, Alexander Redivivus 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012); Books X–XI (Rome again, Julius Caesar): [unedited]. See also Maria Teresa Rachetta, *L'Histoire* ancienne jusqu'á César: *Saggio di storia della cultura francofona del XIII secolo*, I libri di Viella 435 (Rome: Viella, 2022) for more on the textual complexity of this work and its importance in the thirteenth century.

15. See *Li Fet des Romains: Compilé ensemble de Saluste et de Suetoine et de Lucan,* edited by Louis-Fernand Flutre and Kornelis Sneyders de Vogel, vol. 1, *Texte critique*, vol. 2, *Introduction—Commentaire—Index des noms propres—Glossaire* (Paris: Droz, 1937–38); repr. in 1 vol., Geneva: Slatkine, 1977. See also Louis-Fernand Flutre, *Li fait des Romains dans les littératures française et italienne du XIIIe au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1932). Additionally, see *Les Manuscrits des Faits des Romains* (Paris: Hachette, 1932); repr. in 1 vol., Geneva: Slatkine, 1974.

these histories in prose has been examined in detail by Catherine Croizy-Naquet, and she notes that, from the beginning, the two texts situate themselves in different historiographical currents.[16] The one, moving in the sphere of universal history, involves the reading and writing of facts in the light of the totality of the work, unifying particular strands parallel to or according to the chronology; the other focuses exclusive attention on an essential moment of Roman history as perceived by the source text; that is, it is more episodic, something Spiegel had earlier noted.[17] The result is a divergent understanding of the Roman past, even though the compilers, by comparison to their predecessors, who wrote their histories in verse, have the great merit of striving for objectivity in the representation of the history of Rome.[18] In passing, it might be noted that the use of episodic structure and action-oriented narrative are both characteristics of the writing of *saga*.

A feature that both the verse romances of antiquity and their prose successors have in common is that for their compilers, it was not a matter of simply translating classical texts but also of interpreting them in the light of twelfth- and thirteenth-century customs and behaviors and in doing so introducing all manner of anachronisms into the text. These anachronisms have been studied in detail by Aimé Petit, who notes they include influences from the history of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, such as events from the First Crusade being reflected in the *Roman de Thèbes* or the tactics and waging of war reflecting twelfth-century realities rather than classical practice.[19] And since combat on horseback was the preferred aristocratic way to fight, in the French versions of the history of Troy and Thebes the

16. See Catherine Croizy-Naquet, *Écrire l'histoire romaine au début du xiiie siècle: "L'Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César" et "Les Faits des Romains,"* Nouvelle Bibliothèque du Moyen Âge 53 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999).

17. "Vernacular history differed from Latin historiography (hence from its own Latin sources) in its division of the narrative into a series of episodic units, aimed at presenting sharply defined, visualized scenes and exemplary heroes in action-oriented narrative" (Spiegel, "Social Change," 186).

18. See Croizy-Naquet, *Écrire l'histoire romaine,* 327.

19. See Aimé Petit, *L'anachronisme dans les romans antiques du xiie siècle: Le "Roman de Thèbes," Le "Roman d'Énéas," le "Roman de Troie," le "Roman d'Alexandre,"* Nouvelle bibliothèque du Moyen Âge 65 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002), 61–72. Additionally, I have suggested that accounts of the Battle of Bouvines (1214) influenced the differing accounts of the Battle of Stamford Bridge in *Morkinskinna*, *Fagurskina* and *Heimskringla*. See Shaun F. D. Hughes, "The Battle of Stamford Bridge and the Battle of Bouvines," *Scandinavian Studies* 60 (1988): 30–76.

heroes of both sides fight on horseback. In response to the question of how the twelfth century viewed these texts, Petit observes that that part of the audience, say of the *Roman de Thebes*, which was comprised of knights, would find in the narrative a medieval universe in which they would recognize themselves and with which they could identify. At the same time, they would encounter a classical world with which they would be less familiar and would surprise them. Together these two strands bring into being a literary universe created through the mixture of the two civilizations.[20] Clerics, on the other hand, could admire the erudition of the compiler, the fidelity of the text to the ancient world, and the ways that the adaptation had been handled. All of this is a way of looking at these texts that is no longer available to us. This "mimetic anachronism," as it has been called, has, in Spiegel's explanation, "contributed to the rhetorical intensity of the romance author's depiction of antiquity and hence to its persuasive force as exemplarist history,"[21] and she notes that "[t]hirteenth-century French adaptations of classical texts privilege an ideological reading of ancient history in which the past is seen less as a prefiguration of the present than as a material replica of the medieval world."[22] Udo Schöning concurs, and he also remarks that these texts are at the same time a subjective and contemporary understanding of both how they work as witnesses of the Classical past and as a part of the present.[23]

Given the extraordinary popularity of works such as *L'Histoire ancienne jusqu'á César* and in *Li Fet des Romains* in the French-speaking world of the early thirteenth century, it stands to reason that they should have come to the attention of King Hákon and that he should have commissioned versions of some of these texts to be translated into Old Norse in the same spirit that he commissioned prose translations of the secular romances. And if Hákon were aware of the writing of prose histories in the vernacular of France and the prestige that attended them, it stands to reason that he

20. See Petit, *L'anachronisme*, 281.

21. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, 104.

22. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, 104.

23. See Udo Schöning, *Thebenroman—Eneasroman—Trojaroman: Studien zur Rezeption der antike in der französischen Literatur des 12. Jahrhunderts*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie 235 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 333.

also would have encouraged the writing of vernacular histories in his own language, that is, the *konunga sögur,* extolling the accomplishments of his predecessors. While the enthusiasm of Icelanders may have had something to do with the success of this project, it is remarkable that this is a Norwegian phenomenon and not one replicated in the Kingdoms of Denmark and Sweden.

The emergence of the writing of *saga*, that is vernacular history, in Norse during the thirteenth century is another argument suggesting that the way of writing history as exhibited in *L'Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*, *Les Faits des Romains*, and related texts made its way to Scandinavia. We should keep in mind that the modern classifications *Konunga sögur*, *Samtíðasögur*, *Íslendingasögur*, *Fornaldarsgur Norðurlanda*, and *Riddarasögur* are just that: modern classifications, and that despite their heterogeneity, all these texts are *saga*, that is, history, whatever their subject matter.[24] Furthermore, the writing of *saga* in the thirteenth century in Iceland seems to bear some remarkable similarities to the writing of history at the same time in France, especially the prose accounts of the early thirteenth century. Halldór Kiljan Laxness in his "Minnisgreinar um fornsögur" (1945) noted:

> Þó fornsögurnar hafi það markmið meðal annars að glæsa fortíðina, segja þær mest um samtíma sinn, 13du öldina á Íslandi. Þær sýna ekki aðeins hverjar hugmyndir 13da öldin gerir sér um heiðna og hálfheiðna fortíð sína fyrir þrjúhundruð árum eða meir, heldur

24. The question of what constitutes a *genre* in Old Norse has led to heated exchanges among scholars. See the surveys in Sverrir Tómasson, *Formálar íslenskra sagnaritara á miðöldum: Rannsókn bókmenntahefðar,* Rit 33 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1988), 73–80; Massimiliano Bampi, "Genre," in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas,* edited by Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (London: Routledge, 2017), 4–14; and Anatoly Liberman, *The Saga Mind and Beginnings of Icelandic Prose* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2018), 35–39. See also the contributions to Massimiliano Bampi, Carolyne Larrington, and Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, eds., *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*, Studies in Old Norse Literature 5 (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2020). Matthew James Driscoll, *The Unwashed Children of Eve: The Production, Dissemination and Reception of Popular Literature in Post-Reformation Iceland* (Enfield Lock: Hisarlik Press, 1997), 4–6 underscores the inadequacies of the modern "genre" distinctions, but still believes that "Icelanders from the medieval period onwards did nevertheless distinguish in a general way between narratives with a greater or lesser degree of verisimilitude, between what we might call 'history' and 'fiction'" (6). While this may indeed have been the case for some members of the educated elite, there is mounting evidence that this was not the case for the majority of the populace.

> hvernig öndvegismenn þessarar sömu aldar ímynda sér sannan manndóm . . . Fornsögurnar kunna aðeins fátt um 9du og 10du öld, en eru hinn fullkomnasti spegill þeirrar aldar sem þær eru samdar á. Þar liggur sagnfræðilegt gildi þeirra.[25]
>
> (Although the Family sagas have the goal among others to embellish the past, they say most about their own time, the thirteenth century in Iceland. They show not only what kind of ideas the thirteenth century had regarding the pagan and half-pagan past three hundred or more years earlier, but rather how the social elites of the same century imagined true manhood . . . The family sagas know only a little about the nineth and tenth centuries but are the perfect mirror of the century in which they are compiled. In this lies their historical validity.)[26]

But Laxness is still thinking in terms of history in the modern understanding of the word, and so he should be, because he published this piece at a time when many still saw the sagas, at least the classical ones, as factual and historically valid descriptions of Iceland in the period before the acceptance of Christianity in the year 1000.[27]

But what did "history" mean in the thirteenth century? The most recent attempt to explore this is found in Pierre Courroux's magisterial study of the topic, especially the sections "Penser l'histoire au Moyen Âge" and "Fiction, vérité et récit historique."[28] Why do medieval historians have such a bad press, and do they deserve it? The answer would be "yes" if they are to be judged by the

25. Halldór Kiljan Laxness, "Minnisgreinar um fornsögur," *Tímarit Máls og menningar* 8.1 (1945): 13–56; repr. with additions in *Sjálfsagðir hlutir*, 3rd ed. (Reykjavík: Helgafell, 1980), 7–74 at 46.

26. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

27. See also Shaun F. D. Hughes, "Halldór Jakobsson on Truth and Fiction in the Sagas (1789)," *Gripla* 27 (2016): 7–50.

28. Pierre Courroux, *L'Écriture de l'histoire dans les chroniquesfrançaises (XII^{e}–XV^{e} siècle)*, Histoire culturelle 1 (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2016), 59–127, 445–857. See also his "Hériter du passé, inventer le passé chez Jean d'Outremeuse et Philippe Mousket," in *Des nains ou les géants? Emprunter et créer au Moyen Âge,* edited by Claude Andrault-Schmitt et al., Culture et société médiévales 28 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 149–66 and Joachim Knape, *Historie in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit: Begriffs- und Gattungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen im interdisziplinären Kontext,* Saecvla spiritalia 10 (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner,1984).

absolute and uncompromising standards of the present.[29] But in the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, history was not a science but a serious diversion. It was fully a literary genre, and the main point of the art of the historian had to be displayed in the narration.[30] The good chronicler is the one who knows how to paint situations and individuals with finesse.[31] The historians are not just content to draw from their sources: they modify events thanks to a consistent practice of stylistic and thematic amplification in utilizing the contradictions of their various sources. Then when faced with a gap, the chroniclers do not hesitate to make things up. These inventions are not free and correspond to historical criteria; sometimes, the chronicler copies an already known historical schema, and sometimes he invents in a plausible manner in order to make his narrative coherent. These are the narrative attempts to approach veracity by means of a very great verisimilitude and coherence. Fiction is not opposed to history nor to the narrative of reality. These histories are seen as literary works giving a truthful historical narrative of the past. It is not the use of fiction, nor the methodology, nor the form that distinguishes these works from other medieval genres: it is their rapport with reality, sustained by a certain mimetic stance and by a pact of faith made with the reader that clearly establishes the equivalence between the truth of the narrative and the empirical world.[32] History, fiction, and truth, then, are three concepts that are intimately intermingled

29. Especially by those who were attempting to achieve a "value free" and "objective" historiography. These were the same scholars who responded negatively to Hayden White's claims in *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) that history is "made," not "found." See further, Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

30. "The older, longer tradition of history as serious entertainment was a particularly rich one in England" (Partner, *Serious Entertainments*, 4).

31. See Courroux, *L'Écriture de l'histoire*, 859.

32. Monika Otter, coming from a twentieth-century stance, sees this "pact of faith" or "contract" bracketing truth claims as a feature of the "game of fiction" (*Inventiones: Fiction and Referentiality*, 7). However, the narratives she studies "make specific, empirically verifiable truth claims about historical dates, places, people, and events" and suggests that "[o]ne modern way to account for the dubious truth status . . . is to posit a Christian-Platonic model of truth that differs sharply from our own sense of historical accuracy. In this model, the ultimate standard of truth is conformity to the highest truth, Christian revelation; faithfulness to outside reality, or individual, contingent circumstances is comparatively less important" (36).

in giving medieval history its form. Without this fiction, without the verisimilitude of the narrative, the past would have otherwise remained a shadow and inaccessible.[33]

If these observations had not been taken from a volume examining the nature of medieval French history in the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, one might well be excused for assuming that these remarks applied to the writing of *saga* in Iceland, no matter what "genre."

2. Writing Saga

If writing the history of the past was an imaginative act, then this helps us understand why, in effect, the writing of *saga* has never ceased and continues into the present. The early nineteenth-century Icelandic cultural nationalists such as the *Fjölnismenn* used the

33. This is another way of reaching conclusions similar to those of Steblin-Kamenskij in the chapter "What is Truth?" in *The Saga Mind* (21–48; "Что Такое Правда? Мир саги, 20–43). There he develops the concept of "syncretic truth" or синкретическая правда (Мир саги, 23). This term is defined as being something that is neither "historical truth" (историческая правда) nor "artistic truth," (художественная правда) but a third entity: "something as impossible as a cross between a camel and a tiger . . . [when] methods fundamentally contradicting one another are simultaneously applied in varying proportions . . . Whoever reported syncretic truth about the past strove simultaneously for accuracy and for reproduction of reality in all its living fullness. But then this was not only truth in the proper sense of the word but also art, or an organic combination of what in the consciousness of modern man is incapable of combination. Syncretic truth is something lost forever" (*The Saga Mind,* 24) [нечто столь же невозможное, как помесь верблюда и тигра . . . (когда) в различных пропорциях ирименяются одновременно методы, в корно противоречащие друг дургу . . . Тот, кто сообщал синкретическую правду о прошлом, стремился одновременно и к точности, и к воспроизведению действительности во всей ее живой полноте. Но тем самым это была не только правда в собственном смысле слова, но также искусство или органическое сочетание того, что в сознании современного человека несочетаемо. Синкретичная правда нечто навсегда утраченное (Мир саги, 23)]. Sverrir Tómasson critiques this position, claiming that the Old Norse compilers were able to distinguish between that which was true, *historia*, and that which was not (*Formálar* 189–94, esp. 193, 245–60). However, there is no evidence that compilers of *saga* made any such distinction about the material contained in their work. Rather they went out of their way to confirm the veracity of their accounts no matter how fantastical and were just as ready to use "mimetic anachronism" as their French counterparts. There has been renewed interest in Steblin-Kamenskij's work. See Jonathan Wilcox, "The Ghost of M. I. Steblin-Kamenskij: Interpreting Old English Literature through Saga Theory," in *Anglo-Saxons and the North,* edited by Matti Kilpiö et al., Essays on Anglo-Saxon Studies 1 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2009), 109–20, and Liberman, *The Saga Mind*.

Íslendingasögur in their struggle against Danish colonial rule.[34] But they did not approve of all the sagas. The sagas were to be interpreted as history and as true, and therefore only those that laid some claim to fulfill these criteria could be considered as "genuine" or "classical." And yet, probably the most popular saga in the centuries before 1800 was not *Njáls saga* or *Laxdæla saga* but the late fourteenth century *Víglundar saga og Ketilríðar* or *Króka-Refs saga*.[35] There were ideological reasons behind this move. First, cultural nationalists wanted to have narratives as role models that supposedly expressed the ideals of the independent farmer-chieftain elite of the period before Christianity. Second, they wanted to force a break with traditional rural literary taste, which favored primarily religious devotional literature and then *fornaldarsögur, riddarasögur,* and *rímur.* While the more recent

34. See Vanessa K. Iacocca, "Saga-sites of Memory: Jónas Hallgrímsson, Icelandic Nationalism, and the *Íslendingasögur*," *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies,* 28 (2021): 260–89.

35. *Víglundar saga* was first printed in *Nockrer Marg-Frooder Søgu-Pætter Islendinga,* edited by Björn Markússon (Hólar: Halldór Eiríksson, 1756); repr. Íslenzk rit í frumgerð 1 (Reykjavík: Endurprent, 1967), 15–33; again in *Bárðarsaga Snæfellsáss, Víglundarsaga, Þórðarsaga*, edited by Guðbrandur Vigfússon, Nordiske Oldskrifter 27 (Copenhagen: Det nordiske Literatur-Samfund, 1860), 47–92; and separately as *Víglundar saga*, edited by Valdimar Ásmundarson, Íslendinga sögur 38 (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1902). See Ellen E. Peters, "*Íslendingasaga*—Couple Romance—Exemplum: *Víglundar saga* and the Mediality of the Söguöld," in *RE:writing: Medial Perspectives on Textual Culture in the Icelandic Middle Ages*, edited by Kate Heslop and Jürg Glauser, Medienwandel—Medienwechsel—Medienwissen 29 (Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 2018), 295–325. *Króka-Refs saga* was likewise first published in 1756 in the volume *Agiætar Fornmanna Søgur*, edited by Björn Markússon (Hólar: Halldór Eiríksson, 1756), 35–68, and again in *Krókarefssaga, Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls og Ölkofra þáttr*, edited by Páll Sveinsson (Copenhagen: Louis Klein, 1866), 1–37. A scholarly edition was prepared as *Króka-Refs saga og Króka-Refs rímur*, edited by Pálmi Pálmason, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 10 (Copenhagen: Møller, 1883), and the saga was printed twice more in popular editions before the end of the century: *Saga Krókarefs* (Ísafjörður: Jóhannes Vigfússon, 1890), and *Króka-Refs saga*, edited by Sigurbjörn Jónsson (Selkirk, Man.: Prentsmiðja Freyja, 1900). Konrad Maurer dates *Króka-Refssaga* to 1325–1350. See Konrad Maurer, review of *Krókarefssaga, Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls og Ölkofra þáttr*, edited by Páll Sveinsson, *Germania* 12 (1867): 482. Many of the sagas printed in Björn Markússon's two volumes, such as *Grettis saga*, *Þórðar saga hreðu*, *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, *Kjalnesinga saga*, and *Harðar saga og Hólmverja*, later came to be viewed with suspicion as having been corrupted by later generations of careless copying and retelling, and regarded as largely inauthentic and derivative. Ármann Jakobsson investigates the popularity of various family sagas before the publication of the first complete edition thereof, which appeared 1891–1902. See Ármann Jakobsson, "Íslendingasögur í mótun: um fyrsti heildarútgáfa Íslendingasagnanna, samhengi hennar og áhrif," *Andvari* n.s. 59 (2017), 110–15.

Icelandic literary histories recognize that saga writing continued in Iceland into the nineteenth century and beyond, the older view, which held that the writing of prose and poetry went into a fatal decline after 1400, still has traction outside of Iceland.[36] Why, for example, does the new edition of skaldic poetry, like the one of Finnur Jónsson from a century earlier, still have an artificial cut-off date of 1400 when there continues to be excellent poetry in skaldic meters being written in the fifteenth century and later?[37] Anthologies of saga literature, particularly anthologies of *Íslendingasögur,* confine themselves to the anywhere between thirty-six and forty "classical" sagas with an effective cut-off date of around 1450, as in the most recent, self-proclaimed "complete edition" (*heildarútgáfa*) of the sagas edited in five volumes by Aðalsteinn Eyþórsson et al. (2018).[38]

This distinction between "genuine" and "inauthentic" sagas has a long history, and its effects are still felt in the present.[39] When Peter A. Jorgensen published articles on two late sagas, *Hafgeirs saga Flateyings* and *Þjóstólfs saga hamramma,* he did so using the rhetoric of deception, calling them "forgeries," following in a long tradition

36. Scholars such as Sigurður Nordal (1886–1974) and Einar Ólafur Sveinsson (1899–1894) championed this point of view which privileged literary realism and supposed historical verisimilitude. However, as Ármann Jakobsson and Yoav Tirosh demonstrate, this approach is full of its own problems, and that the grouping of the family sagas into "classical" or "post-classical" ones does not stand up to detailed examination. See Ármann Jakobsson and Yoav Tirosh, "The 'Decline of Realism' and Inefficacious Old Norse Literary Genres and Sub-Genres," *Scandia: Journal of Medieval Norse Studies* 3 (2020): 102–38.

37. See also the remarks in the introduction by Martin Chase in *Eddic, Skaldic, and Beyond: Poetic Variety in Medieval Iceland and Norway*, edited by Martin Chase (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 1–15 at 5–6.

38. See *Íslendingasögur. Íslendingaþættir. Heildarútgáfa,* edited by Aðalsteinn Eyþórsson, et al., 5 vols. (Reykjavík: Saga Forlag, 2018). Apart from printing some sagas in more than one version, this edition follows the selection of narratives found in *Íslendinga sögur og þættir*, edited by Bragi Halldórsson, Jón Torfason, Sverrir Tómasson, and Örnólfur Thorsson, 3rd ed., 3 vols. (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1998); first published in 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Svart á hvítu, 1985–86). This three-volume edition has served as the basis for the five-volume translation of the sagas published in English (Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997) and the parallel five-volume translations published by Saga Forlag in 2014 into Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian.

39. Konrad Maurer called the post-medieval sagas "Apocrypha." See his "Über isländische Apokrypha," *Germania* 13 (1868): 59–76, where he discusses, among other texts, Halldór Jakobsson's *Ármanns saga*. A follow-up article, "Über isländische Apokrypha II," *Germania* 20 (1875): 207–23, is devoted to *Hrana saga hrings*.

of denigrating post-1500 *saga*-writing reaching back at least as far as the days of Árni Magnússon (1663–1730) and still in full force when he published his articles.[40] The first article expresses a sense of betrayal: "The grandly presumptuous twelfth-century dating on the flyleaf definitely eliminates the possibility of a post-medieval author producing his own original work of art, while the exceedingly late verses and style can lead one to believe either in the extreme naïveté of the copyist or in the existence of a clever hoax."[41] This hoax, he continues, is likely to be the work of a single individual who is identified as Þorlákur Magnússon Ísfiord (1748–1781), and who, in order to meet the demand in Denmark and Sweden for rare and curious Icelandic sagas, composed *Hafgeirs saga,* borrowing heavily from *Hálfdans saga Brönufóstra,* a fourteenth-century *fornaldarsaga*. The same is true for *Þjóstólfs saga hamramma*, although this time the "forger" is Þorleifur Arason Adeldahl (1749– ?), and the saga is set in Iceland. Both Þorlákur Magnússon and Þorleifur Arason were in Denmark when they composed their sagas, and both had found good employment as copyists. For this reason, their sagas did not circulate in Iceland. *Hafgeirs saga* still remains unpublished although Guðni Jónsson published *Þjóstólfs saga* in his collection of *Íslendingasögur.*[42]

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40. See Peter A. Jorgensen, "*Hafgeirs saga Flateyings*: An Eighteenth-Century Forgery," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 76 (1977): 155–64, and "*Þjóstólfs saga hamramma*: The Case for Forgery," *Gripla* 3 (1979): 96–103. One must assume that his position had the approval of his editors, P. M. Mitchell (1916–1999) and Jónas Kristjánsson (1924–2014), and of the anonymous outside readers. See also Philip Lavender, "Sailing and Sinking on the Sea of Forgery: The Tradition of Fake Sagas in Seventeenth-and Eighteenth-Century Sweden and Denmark," in *Faking It! The Performance of Forgery in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, edited by Philip Lavender and Matilda Amundsen Bergström, Intersections 84 (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 262–95 at 285–92.

In his notes on the sagas collected in the manuscript Ny kgl. Sml. 1836, 4o, Árni Magnússon, referring to a copy of *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* that he received, which is so textually corrupted that he considers it "verra enn ónitt (worse than useless), adds the comment: "Hæc corrumpendi libertas proxime ad imposturam accedit, essetque reverâ castigatione digna" (This freedom of introducing corruptions comes close to forgery, and ought to be in fact worthy of punishment). Commenting on *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*, he states: "Et verum est, impostura enim est, Jons Eggertssonar" (And it is true, it is a forgery by Jón Eggertsson [1643–1689]). Jón Helgason, "Athuganir Árna Magnússonar um fornsögur," *Gripla* 4 (1980): 33–64 at 40–41.

41. Jorgensen, "*Hafgeirs saga Flateyings*," 156.

42. See Guðni Jónsson, ed., *Íslendinga sögur*, 13 vols. (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1953), hereafter GJ, 8:361–97; first published 1946–49. On the 1953 edition of Jónsson's thirteen-volumed *Íslendinga sögur,* see Ármann Jakobsson, "Sögurnar hans

In the nineteenth-century manuscript tradition, collectors of sagas and compilers of saga collections such as Magnús Jónsson í Tjaldanesi (1835–1922) did not make any particular distinction between "authentic" and "inauthentic" sagas, although the bookseller and publisher Sigurður Kristjánsson (1854–1952) did.[43] In 1886, Sigurður tried to cash in on the market for chapbooks by initiating a series called *Ævintýra-sögur.* This was to be a cut above the popular printings of Einar Þórðarson, edited from good manuscripts and with notes. But the series fizzled out after only two numbers, the first containing *Ingvars saga víðförla,* the second *Erex saga.*[44] He had better luck with an edition of the *Fornaldsarsögur Norðurlanda* based on C. C. Rafn's edition of 1829–1830. The Reykjavík printer Sigmundur Guðmundsson (1853–1898) had initiated the venture by publishing the first volume in four parts, 1884–1885.[45] Sigurður published volume 2 under his own imprint in 1886 with volume three following in 1889. Two years later, in 1891, he reprinted volume 1.[46] That same year, Sigurður began publishing an inexpensive version of the family sagas, which ran to thirty-eight numbers. The final two, *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* and *Víglundar saga og Ketilríðar,* appeared

Guðna: 'Lýðveldisútgáfa' Íslendingasagnanna, hugmyndarfræði hennar og áhrif," *Skírnir* 192 (2018): 105–17.

43. On Magnús Jónsson í Tjaldanesi, who was an indefatigable collector of saga texts and copier of manuscripts, see the following articles by Matthew James Driscoll, "Last Man Standing," in *Skandinavische Schriftlandschaften: Vänbok till Jürg Glauser,* edited by Klaus Müller-Wille et al., Beiträge zur Nordischen Philologie 59 (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2017), 248–52, and "'Um gildi gamalla bóka': Magnús Jónsson í Tjaldanesi und das Ende der isländischen Handschriftenkultur in Island," *Text—Reihe—Transmission: Unfestigkeit als Phänomen skandinavischer Erzählprosa 1500–1800,* edited by Jürg Glauser and Anna Katharina Richter, Beiträge zur Nordischen Philologie 42 (Tübingen: Francke, 2012), 255–82; and "Writing in the Twilight: The Manuscripts of Magnús í Tjaldanesi," in *Hidden Harmonies: Manuscripts and Print on the North Atlantic Fringe, 1500–1900*, edited by Matthew James Driscoll and Nioclas Mac Cathmhaol, Opuscula 19; Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 54 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2021), 187–223.

44. See *Ingvars saga víðförla*, Ævintýra-sögur 1 (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1886); *Erex saga*, Ævintýra-sögur 2 (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1886). The list price appears to have been 35 aura per volume. These must have sold very poorly because later that same year the unsold sheets of both sagas were repackaged as a single volume (keeping the separate page numbers for each saga) with a total purchase price of 25 aura. There is no preface and the notes to Ingvars saga are reset and printed on the back cover: *Ævintýra-sögur*, edited by Valdimar Ásmundarson (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1886).

45. See *Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda*, edited by Valdimar Ásmundarson, 4 parts (Reykjavík: Sigmundur Guðmundsson, 1884–85).

46. See *Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda*, edited by Valdimar Ásmundarson, 3 vols. (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1886–91).

in 1902.[47] With this set of *Íslendingasögur,* Sigurður took no risks. Beginning with two non-saga texts, Ari's *Íslendingabók* followed by *Landnámabók*, it included only thirty-six of those sagas that had some claim to be historical. The importance of these inexpensive volumes cannot be overestimated because they put Iceland's medieval heritage back within the reach of ordinary people. The enterprise was an enormous commercial success and extremely influential in determining and modifying people's opinions concerning the corpus of sagas to be taken seriously, an unintended side effect that continues to have important ramifications. But it should be noted that so strict were its criteria for inclusion that the collection even omitted some sagas that came to be included among the thirty-nine in the thirteen prestigious and definitive volumes of *Íslendingasögur* published under the auspices of Hið íslenzka fornritafélag.[48]

After World War II, a concerted effort was made to provide an upscale replacement for Sigurður Kristjánsson's volumes from earlier in the century. This was undertaken by a publishing enterprise called Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, and sometimes also Haukadalsútgáfan, whose newspaper advertisements always included prominently the words "handritin heim." The editor of thirty-three of the forty-two volumes in the collection, which appeared in elegant, gold-stamped, black or brown leather bindings, was Guðni Jónsson (1901–1974), who eventually became professor of history at the University of Iceland. His previous editorial experience had included editing two volumes for the Íslenzk Fornrit series, *Grettis saga,* volume 7 (1936), and (with Björn Karel Þórólfsson), *Vestfirðinga sögur,* volume 6 (1943). Of interest here is Guðni's edition of the *Íslendingasögur* in thirteen volumes with a first-ever index volume to the corpus listing people and places.[49]

In addition to *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók,* Guðni's collection contained not thirty-six sagas but fifty-eight, along with

47. *Íslendinga sögur*, edited by Valdimar Ásmundarson and Þórleifur Jónsson, 38 vols. (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1891–1902). The *Íslendingasögur* edition was followed by *Fjörutíu Íslendinga-þættir,* edited by Þorleifur Jónsson (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1904); *Sæmundar Edda: Eddukvæði*, edited by Finnur Jónsson (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1905); *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, edited by Finnur Jónsson (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1907); and *Sturlunga saga*, edited by Björn Bjarnason and Benedikt Sveinsson, 4 vols. (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1908–15).

48. For example, *Færeyinga saga*, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, and *Króka-Refs saga.*

49. GJ, *Íslendinga sögur*, 13 vols. (see note 40).

sixty-nine *þættir,* or shorter pieces. Among the sagas included are fourteen that were composed after 1400, and I have listed these in the Appendix. Guðni has a more traditional and less ideological understanding of what a "saga" is. To quote from his introduction:

> Í safn þetta höfum vér tekið upp allmargar ungar Íslendinga sögur, jafnvel frá 19. öld. Kann vera, að slíkt þyki fljótt á litið orka tvímælis, en við nánari athugun teljum vér, að mönnum muni falla það vel í geð. Sumar af þessum sögum hafa verið prentaðar áður í lélegum útgáfum, en aðrar eru óprentaðar. Þær eru í sjálfu sér engu ómerkari en sumar af sögunum frá 14. öld og samdar með sömu aðferðum sem þær.[50] Þær eru ritaðar í anda og stíl Íslendinga sagna og hljóta að teljast grein á sama meiði frá bókmenntalegi sjónarmiði. Vér lítum því svo á, að um heildarútgáfu Íslendinga sögum sé vart að ræða, nema þessar sögur séu teknar með. Þann mun höfum vér þó gert þeirra og hinna eldri í prentuninni, að þær eru settar með litlu þéttara letri og nokkuru unglegri stafsetningu í sumum greinum.[51]
>
> (In this collection we have included a great number of recent family sagas, even from the nineteenth century. It may be that such may seem questionable at first glance, but on closer inspection we consider that people will be pleased with them. Some of these sagas have been printed before in poor editions and others are unprinted. They are in and of themselves no less unremarkable than some of the sagas from the fourteenth century and composed on the same principles as those are. They are written in the spirit and style of the classical family sagas and ought to be considered a branch of the same tree from a literary point of view. We consider it to be the case that we can

50. Jón Torfason demonstrates that the mid-fourteenth century *Þórðar saga hreðu* is every bit as carefully constructed as the thirteenth-century "classical" sagas. See Jón Torfason, "Góðar sögur eða vondar: Athugun á nokkrum frásagnareinkennum í Íslendinga sögum, einkum með hlíðsjón af Þórðar sögu hreðu," *Skáldskaparmál* 1 (1990): 118–30. The saga was first published in 1756 in Björn Markússon, *Nockrer Margfrooder Søgu-Pætter*, 59–81; followed by *Sagan af Þórði hreðu*, edited by Halldór Kr. Friðriksson, Nordiske Oldskifter 6 (Copenhagen: Nordiske Literatur-Samfund, 1848); again in the same series, *Bárðarsaga Snæfellsáss; Víglundarsaga; Þórðarsaga*, edited by Guðbrandur Vigfússon, Nordiske Oldskrifter 27 (1860), 93–105, and then as *Þórðar saga hreðu,* edited by Valdimar Ásmundarson, Íslendinga sögur 29 (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1900).

51. GJ 1:xxvi.

> scarcely speak of a complete edition of the family sagas unless these sagas are included. We have however, made the following distinction between their presentation and that of the older stories, in that they are printed in more compact type and with somewhat more modern spelling in some instances.)

Despite the claims of completeness, this edition does not by any means contain all the sagas written after 1400 claiming to be family sagas. But there are more included than in any edition before or since. *Ármanns saga ok Þorsteins gála*, *Ásmundar saga Atlasonar*, *Helga saga Hallvarðssonar*, *Illuga saga Tagldarbana*, *Þjóstólfs saga hamramma*, and *Þorsteins saga Geirnefjufóstra* are all published here for the first time. The oldest of the late sagas is *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*. It is one of the sagas not included by Sigurður Kristjánsson in his collection, but it was published as early as 1866 along with *Króka-Refssaga* and *Ölkofra þáttur* in a semi- scholarly edition prepared by Páll Sveinsson, which Guðni Jónsson used as the basis for his text.[52] A popular saga, to judge by the number of surviving paper manuscripts from the seventeenth century and later, it was dated to the fourteenth century by Finnur Magnússon (1781–1847) even though there is no vellum witness. Because of this, it is included by Jóhannes Halldórsson in volume 14 of the Íslenzk Fornrit series, *Kjalnesinga saga*, a collection that includes other sagas of dubious pedigree such as *Víglundar saga og Ketilríðar* and *Þórðar saga hreðu*. *Gunnars saga* is unique among the classical family sagas because none of the characters in it appear anywhere else. In addition, the episodes in the sagas have parallels with other narratives in the corpus. Jóhannes Halldórsson is of the opinion that the saga was composed sometime in the fifteenth century.[53] But because 150 years ago it was assigned to the fourteenth century, it still apparently warrants inclusion in a series whose policy it is not to include texts from after 1400.

While the search for the "authors" of the classical family sagas has proved frustratingly elusive, that is not an issue with many of the later sagas, and I am not sure that there is much to be gained

52. See *Krókarefssaga, Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls og Ölkofra þáttr* (1866), 39–63.

53. See Jóhannes Halldórsson, foreword to *Kjalnesinga saga*, edited by Jóhannes Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 14 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1959), lxxiv.

by knowing who wrote what.[54] Be that as it may, Gísli Konráðsson (1787–1877), the father of Konráð Gíslason (1808–1891), the so-called "last of the *Fjölnismenn,*" made a name for himself as an assiduous copier of manuscripts and composer of *sagnaþættir,* or local histories, and he was always ready to prepare materials for payment. For example, according to his autobiography, in the winter of 1817–1818, he made a copy of the chronicle of Icelandic history composed by Jón *sýslumaður* Espólín (1769–1836), which in its printed form totals 1890 pages.[55] This task took him 4 months to complete in addition to his responsibilities on his farm. The payment he received for this took care of his annual land-rent with enough left over to make a substantial gift to the family that was fostering one of his daughters. He was probably prompted by inquiries as to the existence of *Skald-Helga saga* (and the offer of financial compensation if he could come up with a copy), which led to his composing his own version around 1820 based on the older *rímur*.[56] The saga survives in at least five manuscripts in the National Library. The earliest surviving copy was made by Þorsteinn Gíslason á Stokkahlöðum (1776–1838) in 1827, who noted: "'Þáttur af Skáld-Helga,' which Gísli skáld Konráðsson composed based on the old 'Skáld-Helga rímur.'"[57] This version lacks the first chapter and the verses. Soon afterward, Gísli prepared a revised version correcting these deficiencies, and a copy in his own hand

54. There are several essays dealing with the scholarly desire to identify saga authors in: Lukas Rösli and Stephanie Gropper, ed., *In Search of the Culprit: Aspects of Medieval Authorship*, Andere Ästhetik—Studien 1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021).

55. See Jón *sýslumaður* Espólín, *Íslands Árbækur í sögu-formi*, 13 vols. (Copenhagen: Hið íslenzka bókmentafélag, 1821–55); repr. *Árbækur Espólíns*, 13 vols. in 4 (Reykjavík: Lithoprent, 1943–47). See further Gísli Konráðsson, *Ævisaga Gísla Konráðssonar ens fróða skrásett af sjálfum honum*, edited by Jóhann Kristjánsson, Sögurit 8 (Reykjavík: Gutenberg, 1911–14), 142.

56. This is a poem in seven fitts composed around 1400 and based on a lost *Saga af Skáld-Helga*. See "Skáldhelgarímur," *Rímnasafn: Samling af de ældste islandske rimer*, edited by Finnur Jónsson, 2 vols., Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 35 (Copenhagen: Møller, 1905–22), 1:105–65. It was not uncommon for new sagas to be written based on *rímur*. *Úlfhams rímur* (*Rímnasafn*, 2:133–69), a poem in six fitts from around 1400 and based on a lost *fornaldarsaga*, was rewritten in prose in the nineteenth century. See *Úlfhams saga*, edited by Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, Rit 53 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 2001).

57. "'Þáttur af Skáld-Helga' ('Er Gísli skáld Konráðsson reiti eptir Skáld-Helga rímum gømlu')," Lbs 1316, 8vo. Páll Eggert Ólason, *Skrá um Handritasafn Landsbókasafnsins*, 3 vols. (Reykjavík: Gutenberg, 1918–37), no. 3698, 2:256.

survives, dated around 1830.[58] The saga continued to circulate, and a copy of it appears as the ninth and last item of volume 3 of the collection *Íslendingasögur* completed in 1888 by Magnús Jónsson í Tjaldanesi.[59] Furthermore, a decade later, it was thought of sufficient interest and of sufficient commercial potential to bring into print.[60]

Skáld-Helga saga was not the only family saga Gísli was responsible for. In his autobiography, in an entry that appears to refer to the winter of 1826–1827, he discusses his visits to Jón *sýslumaður* Espólín. There, he writes:

> Gísli diktaði og sögu Þorsteins Geirnefsfóstra, og sýndi Espólín að gamni sínu, og kallaði Espólín hana sennilega samda að orðfæri og öðru, sem forn væri. [61]

> (Gísli also composed the saga of Þorsteinn Geirnefsfóstri and showed it to Espólín to amuse him, and Espólín said that it was convincingly put together so far as the diction and other matters, which were archaic.)

Two almost identical manuscripts of this saga in Gísli's hand survive and were used to prepare the text published for the first time in Guðni Jónsson's *Íslendingasögur*.[62] Espólín had good reason to appear as a connoisseur of saga style, as it has been argued that he is the author of *Sagan af Hrana hrings*.[63]

Gísli is also responsible for *Saga Hellismanna,* the story of a band of outlaws in the hills of Borgafjörður during the period 950–1000.

58. Lbs 1132a, 4o. Páll Eggert Ólason, *Skrá*, no. 453, 1:453.

59. Lbs 1511, 4o. Páll Eggert Ólason, *Skrá*, no. 1[8]40, 1:538–59.

60. *Sagan af Skáld-Helga*, edited by Sigfús Eymundsson (Reykjavík: Dagskrár, 1897).

61. Gísli Konráðsson, *Ævisaga*, 157.

62. See GJ 8:399–453. Guðni calls the saga "Þorsteins saga Geirnefjufóstra," following the form of the title in the manuscripts he used. These are Lbs. 284, 8vo from 1818, and Lbs. 2404, 8vo, said to be from around 1805; Páll Eggert Ólason, *Skrá*, nos. 2658 and 8550, 2:66 and 3:339. However, Katarzyna Anna Kapitan points out that the paper used in Lbs. 2404, 8vo is watermarked "1810," so the manuscript cannot have been written until sometime after that date. See Katarzyna Anna Kapitan, "Studies in the Transmission of *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*" (PhD diss., University of Copenhagen, 2018), 143–44.

63. *Sagan af Hrana hrings*, edited by Þorleifur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Möller, 1874). For the attribution to Espólín, see Maurer, "Über isländische Apokrypha II," 223.

This saga has the distinction of being the only saga to have separate "first editions" published in the same year, one in Iceland and the other in Canada. Björn Árnason (1846–1920), the goldsmith, published *Saga Hellismanna* in Ísafjörður in 1889, basing his text on a manuscript he obtained from Sighvatur Grímsson Borgfirðingur (1840–1930) and asserting in the afterword that the saga is of historical value.[64] Also in 1889, Gunnar Gíslason (1823–1898) published what he believed to be the first edition of *Hellismannasaga* in Winnipeg.[65] This edition contains a seven-page foreword vouching for the "authenticity" of the saga and an afterword explaining that the text was based on a manuscript in the possession of Kristmundur Sæmundsson (1855–1940), who copied it from a manuscript written by Sighvatur Grímsson Borgfirðingur, who had copied it from an old codex in the possession of the goldsmith, Björn Árnason. Since *Hellismannasaga* is listed among Gísli's works in his autobiography based partly on lists in Sighvatur's possession,[66] one cannot but help suspect that Björn Árnason and Kristmundur Sæmundsson, in their eagerness to obtain a copy of a saga thought long lost, fell victim to a bit of shady dealing on the part of Sighvatur Grímsson.[67]

Also of interest is *Atla saga Ótryggssonar.* This saga is about an unpromising youth who snaps out of his lethargy and revenges insults to his family at the hands of the local bully. He also disposes of the men Haraldur *hárfagri* sends to kill him and has other adventures before leaving Norway to settle in Iceland. The saga was first

64. See *Saga Hellismanna*, edited by Björn Árnason (Ísafjörður: Prentsmiðja Ísfirðinga, 1889), 56.

65. *Hellismannasaga*, edited by Gunnar Gíslason (Winnipeg: Heimskringla, 1889); foreword, iii–ix and afterword, 65–66.

66. See Gísli Konráðsson, *Ævisaga*, xiv.

67. There was also a scandal on the appearance of *Sagan af Natan Ketilssyni* (Ísafjörður: Jóhannes Vigfússon, 1892), a volume that stated prominently on the title page: "Skrifuð af Sighvati Grímssyni Borgfirðing" (Written by Sighvatur Grímsson Borgfirðingur). This was immediately called into question in an extremely sharply-worded review under the heading, "Nýprentað: *Sagan af Natan Ketilssyni*," in *Þjóðólfur* 44.55 (November 28, 1892): 217–18, where it was pointed out that the printed text was almost word for word the same as that in the manuscript JS 123, 8vo in the hand of Gísli Konráðsson from around 1860 (Páll Eggert Ólason, *Skrá*, no. 5666, 2:644). Sighvatur's defense, "Vörn," occupied four full-page columns in *Þjóðviljinn ungi* 2.8 (23 January 1893): 31–32. On the other hand, the printer adds a note to Sighvatur's piece, saying that he had been informed that some correction was necessary, but only after the book had been printed and distributed. Otherwise the title page of the manuscript he received was exactly as printed (see 32).

published in Seyðisfjörður in 1886, edited by Þorleifur Jónsson, who says in the "formáli": "Um sannleika sögu þessarar skal eg öngum orðum eyða hér. Það mál kemr fornfræðingunum við, en mér ekki" (Concerning the historicity of this saga I shall waste no words here. That matter concerns the experts in medieval scholarship but not me).[68] Þórleifur also states in the preface that he only became aware of the existence of this saga during the winter of 1885–1886 thanks to Símon Bjarnason Dalaskáld (1844–1916), who also referred Þórleifur to the farmer Halldór Stefánsson (1843–1922) from Skútar in Eyjafjörður, who had a copy of the saga. But then that same summer, 1886, he says he received a MS from Dalasýsla. It was in pretty bad shape but had originally been well written and he noted that it contained many abbreviations. Also, there were laudatory phrases about Atli, in Latin, in the margins. The major difference between the two MSS was that the one from Dalasýsla had five stanzas instead of the one stanza in Halldór's manuscript. The 1886 printed edition is a composite text, Þórleifur taking the best from both MSS as he saw fit.

The saga is preserved in at least eleven manuscripts in Landsbókasafn Íslands, the earliest being from 1817 and 1820 respectively, and the most recent acquisition containing *Atla saga* being the mid-nineteenth century Lbs 4971 8vo, which came to the National Library in 2015 by way of Árborg, Manitoba.[69] Guðni Jónsson used the manuscripts from 1817 and 1820 to establish the text he printed in his edition of the *Íslendingasögur,* and while Þórleifur acknowledges the existence of the second of these manuscripts, he did not consult it.[70] The fact that all the surviving MSS have a

68. *Atla saga Ótryggssonar*, edited by Þórleifur Jónsson (Seyðisfjörður: Prentsmiðjan "Austra"—B. M. Stephansson, 1886), iv.

69. See https://handrit.is/is/manuscript/view/Lbs08–4971. To these eleven manuscripts I can add a twelfth, in my possession, dated 1860, and missing the final page. It contains the text with only one stanza and is written by Jónas Benjamínsson, whom I take to be the *barnakennari* of the same name (1841–1893), from Garðshorn in Svarfaðardalur.

70. See GJ 4:451–71, and *Atla saga Ótryggssonar*, edited by Þórleifur Jónsson, iii. The manuscripts are JS 629, 40 and ÍBR 7, 40; Páll Eggert Ólason, *Skrá*, nos. 5522 and 7667, 2:614 and 3:210–11. In Þorleifur's day the latter manuscript was catalogued as A 9.b. See *Skýrsla um handritasafn hins Islenzka bókmentafèlags*, edited by Sigurður Jónasson and Finnur Jónsson, 2 vols. (Copenhagen: Bianco Luno, 1869–85), "Viðbætir B," 2: 223–24 at 224 for two MSS that should have been inserted after the MS cataloged as A.9 ("Viðbætir, A" 1: 225–30 at 226).

northern origin and only one stanza calls into question the existence of Þórleifur's Dalasýsla manuscript, whose early date is to be surmised from its being rotten with the passage of time and having many abbreviations along with its annotations in Latin.

At this stage I am prepared to suggest that Þórleifur "improved" the style of the manuscript he received from Halldór Stefánsson, and that in addition to correcting the one stanza he found there, he added four more.[71] Guðni Jónsson based his text on the two earliest surviving MSS, but since they had only one stanza, he added the other four stanzas as they are found in Þórleifur's edition.

3. Modern Saga

These sagas, and the others I do not have time to discuss, which circulated widely in both manuscript and print, are witness to the demand for new sagas, reminding us of what Pierre Courroux observed with regard to medieval French history: "L'histoire n'est pas alors une science, mais un divertisssement sérieux; elle appartient pleinement à la littérature et l'essentiel de l'art de l'historien doit se déployer dans la narration: le bon chroniqueur est celui qui sait peindre avec finesse les situations et les hommes" (History, then, is not a science but a serious entertainment : it is fully a part of literature and the essence of the art of the historian should be deployed in the narration; the good chronicler is one who knows how to paint situations and people with a fine touch).[72] What this means in the Icelandic situation is that if people wrote entertaining narratives that fulfilled the criteria for verisimilitude, then so far as the general public was concerned, these works were *saga* and acceptable as history.

Such expectations may have had something to do with why there have been few publishing events in Icelandic literary history so widely anticipated as Halldór Kiljan Laxness' new novel in 1952, which was rumored to be set in the Icelandic Middle Ages.[73]

71. Þorleifur also provided explanatory notes for all five stanzas at the end of his edition; see *Atla saga Ótryggssonar*, 20–22.

72. Courroux, *L'Écriture de l'histoire*, 859.

73. Halldór Kiljan Laxness, *Gerpla* (Reykjavík: Helgafell, 1952). For a survey of the contemporary reception, see Shaun F. D. Hughes, "Cold-War Confrontations: *Gerpla* and its Early Reviewers," *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies* 26 (2019): 1–33.

The newspaper *Tíminn* devoted nearly half of its front page to the event the day the novel appeared and had a long interview with the author on page 2.[74] The catchphrase of the day was "*Gerpla* er komin út" (*Gerpla* has appeared in print). Up until now, what had sustained the writing of *saga* over the centuries had been the pact of faith made between compiler and audience, which clearly established the equivalence between the truth of the narrative and the empirical world. If that is what many readers were expecting to find in *Gerpla,* then they were to be deeply disappointed to find, in their judgment, that Laxness had violated that agreement. *Gerpla,* not *Hafgeirs saga Flateyings* or *Þjóstólfs saga hamramma,* was a forgery and a deception, and this partly accounts for the anger felt in some quarters. And in a sense, these readers are not to be blamed for their disappointment, as the novel had been marketed to capitalize on their expectations. *Gerpla* is a rich and complex work, yet despite its outward appearance, it is not *saga* any more than *Þórðar saga Geirmundarsonar* is *saga*.[75] This little work, which was first published in chapbook form in 1891, states on the title page that it had been edited from the best manuscripts by Benedikt Gröndal, a writer who had a very conflicted relationship to popular genres such as *saga* and *rímur*. Gröndal maintains the pact with the reader for the first page and a half until we get to the line where Þórður is being outfitted for a voyage to Iceland: "fekk Geirmundur honum þá tólf hundruð vaðmála og skyrtunnu; hann fekk honum og alþingistíðindin bundin í nautshúð, og kvað andskotann ekkert gjöra til hvað tímanum liði, kvaðst ekkert hirða um neina Chronologíu" (Geirmundur then provided him with five hundreds of worsted cloth and a barrel of *skyr*; he also provided him with a set of *Parliamentary Reports* bound in cow-skin, and said what the devil does it matter whatever should happen, said he didn't care about any Nautical Almanac).[76] The pact with the reader

74. See "Skáldsaga Kiljans um garpa fornaldarinnar komin út" [Kiljan's Novel about Medieval Heroes is Published], *Tíminn* 36.277 (5 December 1952): 1; Indriði G. Þorsteinsson, "Viðtal við Halldór Kiljan Laxness" [An Interview with Halldór Kiljan Laxness], *Tíminn* 36.277 (5 December 1952): 2.

75. See *Þórðar saga Geirmundarsonar færð í letur eptir sjálfs hans fyrirsögu og nú nákvæmlega gefin út eptir þeim beztu handritum er fengizt gátu af Benedikt Gröndal* (Reykjavík: Sigfús Eymundsson, Ísafoldarprentsmiðja, 1891).

76. *Þórðar saga Geirmundarsonar*, Benedikt Gröndal, 4.

is broken, and whatever one may make of the rest of the narrative, one thing is clear. This is not *saga*.[77]

But is the writing of *saga* still possible in the twenty-first century after being so thoroughly undercut by the likes of Gröndal, Laxness and others? The answer actually is a resounding "yes." *Geirmundar saga heljarskinns* appeared in 2015.[78] In case one missed the point, this was presented as an Íslenzk fornrit volume but without the imprimatur of Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag. The narrative is written as an *Íslendingasaga* from a twenty-first-century viewpoint that takes into account recent research crediting walrus hunting in the North-West Atlantic, not resentment over the perceived tyranny of Haraldur *hárfagri,* as the primary motivation for coming to Iceland.[79] *Geirmundar saga* has the ring of verisimilitude about it, and it is a pity in some ways that it was not published 65 years ago when there was still a considerable body of readers who were used to reading *saga* in the traditional way.[80] *Geirmundar saga* is *saga,* that is, history, as it was understood in the Middle Ages.

4. Imagining Saga

It may be that the question of why the composition of *saga* continues after 1400 or after 1800 or after 2000 is the wrong one to ask. As the scholars analyzing medieval French historical writing have emphasized, the writing of history and its reception involved a pact

77. Jón Bjarnason á Ballará (1721–1785) composed a Robinsonade, which proved popular enough to be printed three times and appears by some at least to have been considered historical: *Sagan af Parmes loðinbirni*, edited by Jón Sighvatsson (Reykjavík: Ísafold, 1884). When it was published in Canada, it was identified as a "skáldsaga" (novel): *Parmes loðinbjörn: Skáldsaga* (Gimli, MB: G[ísli]. P[étur]. Magnusson, 1910). But it is *saga* again for the third edition: *Saga af Parmes loðinbirni* (Vestmannaeyjar: Þorsteinn Johnson, 1943).

78. Bergsveinn Birgisson, *Geirmundar saga heljarskinn*, Íslenzk fornrit (Reykjavík: Bjartur, 2015).

79. There is an increasing body of research that supports such a contention. See, e.g., Karin M. Frei et al., "Was it for Walrus? Viking Age Settlement and Medieval Walrus Ivory Trade in Iceland and Greenland," *World Archaeology* 47 (2015): 439–66.

80. A useful companion piece to *Geirmundar saga* is Bergsveinn Birgisson, *Leitin að svarta víkingum*, translated by Eva Hauksdóttir and Bergsveinn Birgisson (Reykjavík: Bjartur, 2016); rev. enl. ed. of *Den svarte vikingen* (Oslo: Spartacus Forlag, 2013). The volume outlines the historical, geographical, and other research that Bergsveinn Birgisson undertook in preparation for his writing of *Geirmundar saga*.

between historian and reader. So, perhaps the more appropriate question is, why did large numbers of Icelanders in the early modern period continue to enjoy, copy, and chase after sagas, which in many cases they knew to be contemporary compositions? While twentieth-century research has demonstrated that the "authentic" or "classical" sagas, written as they were three to four hundred years after the events they describe, are themselves fictional and unreliable historical witnesses, Ralph O'Connor has persuasively argued that for a sizable portion of the population, any text during this period identified as *saga* was a history and therefore "true" and to be taken seriously.[81]

One way to understand this is to think of the period of Icelandic history before the conversion to Christianity in the year 1000 as an active node in the imaginary of generations of Icelanders over the centuries—not for everyone, but for the vast majority. This imaginary was kept active by constant exposure to these narratives and became a collective "sub-creation" in Tolkien's sense as developed in his essay, "On Fairy-stories," from 1939.[82] Nor is this a recent or modern phenomenon. I would argue that this collective sub-creation is already very much in evidence in the thirteenth century, when the classical family sagas were composed. These sagas are works of imagination, whatever they may owe to oral and written sources. This sub-creation or Secondary World, the world of pre-Christian Iceland, like Middle-earth or Westeros, is a consistent imaginative world, into which Icelandic authors of the thirteenth century and later could insert their narratives, a *hliðarheimar* ("secondary world"), as Torfi Tulinius has described it.[83]

81. See Ralph O'Connor, "History or Fiction? Truth-Claims and Defensive Narrators in Icelandic Romance-Sagas," *Medieval Scandinavia* 15 (2005): 101–69.

82. "The mental power of image-making is one thing, or aspect; and it should appropriately be called Imagination. The perception of the image, the grasp of its implications, and the control, which are necessary to a successful expression, may vary in vividness and strength: but this is a difference of degree in Imagination, not a difference in kind. The achievement of the expression that gives (or seems to give) 'the inner consistency of reality'; is indeed another thing, or aspect, needing another name: Art, the operative link between Imagination and the final result, Sub-creation." J. R. R. Tolkien, *On Fairy-stories: Expanded Edition with Commentary and Notes*, edited by Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson (London: HarperCollins, 2008), 59.

83. See Torfi H. Tulinius, "Landafræði og flokkun fornsagna," *Skáldskaparmál* 1 (1990): 52.

Tolkien also characterizes narrative traditions as "the Pot of Soup, the Cauldron of Story, [that] has always been boiling, and to it have continually been added new bits, dainty and undainty."[84] In Iceland, this cauldron of story contained a particularly rich broth and there were generation after generation of skillful cooks who were expert at creating a satisfying feast out of what, at first sight, might have seemed fairly thin gruel.[85] Nor should we forget that even the old stories were retold and reimagined. The early fourteenth-century *Klári saga* is very different from the one printed in Reykjavík in 1884.[86] The fifteenth-century *Tiodeilis saga* is almost unrecognizable in the version collected or composed by Magnús Jónsson í Tjaldanesi at the end of the nineteenth century.[87] *Úlfhams saga* underwent considerable changes over the centuries. Jónas Kristjánsson identified three distinct versions of *Dínus saga drámblata* from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, although he only saw fit to edit the first two. This is an area of research that, it seems to me, deserves to be given more attention along the lines of what Ásthildur Helen Gestsdóttir has done for *Dínus saga* or Aðalheiður

84. Tolkien, *On Fairy-stories,* 44–45.

85. In the volume *Munnmenntir og bókmenning* (Oral Literature and Literary Culture), Vésteinn Ólason has a chapter concerned with the history of the book in Icelandic folk culture. In it there is a section, "Fornsagnastælingar" (Saga Pastiches), in which Vésteinn echoes Guðni Jónsson in his evaluation of the late sagas, seeing them as "merkilegt fyrirbæri frá menningarsögulegu sjónarmiði. Þær sýna lifandi áhuga á fornsögum og löngun til að auka við slíkt efni. Jafnframt má í mörgum þessara sagna sjá mjög þokkaleg tök á stíl og orðfæri sem nærri fer búningi fornsagna" (a remarkable phenomenon from a cultural-historical point of view. They show a living interest in the medieval sagas and the desire to add to such a corpus. In addition, one is able to see in many of these sagas a very decent grasp of style and phraseology which closely resembles the presentation of the medieval sagas). He concludes by using the imagery of a treasury rather than a pot of soup: "Flestar hinna íslensku fornsagnastælinga er þó naumast hægt að líta á sem falsanir. Miklu fremur má hafa þær til marks um lífandi áhuga á efninu og viðleitni til að bæta enn nýjum sögum í þann sjóð sem men sóttu stöðugt í" (However, most of the Icelandic saga pastiches can hardly be looked on as forgeries. Rather by far, one may consider them as indications of a lively interest in the corpus and the attempt to continue to add new sagas to that treasury people were constantly drawing upon). Vésteinn Ólason, "Bóksögur," in *Munnmenntir og bókmenning,* edited by Frosti F. Jóhannsson, Íslensk þjóðmenning 6 (Reykjavík: Þjóðsaga, 1989), 222–23. See further on the collective use of motifs in the *riddarasögur,* Shaun F. D. Hughes, "Stories Found on Stone Walls: Contemporary Research on the *Riddarasögur,*" *Scandinavian Studies* 93 (2021): 114–40 at 132–33.

86. *Sagan af Klárusi keisarasyni,* edited by Bjarni Bjarnason (Reykjavík: Ísafold, 1884).

87. *Tiodielis saga,* edited by Tove Hovn Ohlsson, Rit 72 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í Íslenskum fræðum. 2009). Magnús's version, "Sagan af Teódílus riddara," copied (or composed) 1899 is printed on pp. 77–106.

Guðmundsdóttir for *Úlfhams saga*.[88] And what about the classical sagas? Did they too undergo reworking during the centuries? We have been so obsessed by our desire to find the ur-text, the version of a saga a close as possible to the "author's original," that we have too easily dismissed later adaptations and retellings as "worthless" and therefore of no interest.[89] But while these late versions may be "worthless" in establishing an ur-text, they may tell us a great deal about how a saga was read, understood, and consumed in the time the manuscript was written.

The world of pre-Christian Iceland as a collective imaginary and as a wellspring for creative sub-creation differs from Middle-earth or Westeros in that it is securely anchored in the geographical reality of the primary world, at least for the most part. With no permanent buildings, the Icelandic landscape hardly ever changed, and such structures as there were blended into the environment, as can still be seen in the watercolors made by W. G. Collingwood (1854–1932) during his visit to Iceland in 1897.[90] The features of the landscape continued to be read and used as mnemonic devices in connection with stories from the saga age and more recent history.

88. See Ásthildur Helen Gestsdóttir, "Sagann af Dijnus hinumm dramblätа: Þróun hirðlegra einkenna og minna í handritagerðum riddarasögunnar Dínus sögu drambláta" (master's thesis, Háskóli Íslands, 2012). In her edition of *Úlfhams saga*, Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir prints three versions of the saga (39–61): "A" is from a manuscript from around 1700; "B" is probably by Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík (1705–1779), preserved in a manuscript from around 1750; and "C" is preserved in a manuscript from the end of the nineteenth century written by Guðbrandur Sturlaugsson (1820–1897) (see *Úlfhams saga*, Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, xxv–xxx). Guðbrandur was a neighbor and good friend of Magnús Jónsson í Tjaldanesi. See Matthew James Driscoll, "Pleasure and Pastime: The Manuscripts of Guðbrandur Sturlaugsson á Hvítadal," in *Mirrors of Virtue: Manuscript and Print in Late Pre-Modern Iceland,* edited by Margrét Eggertsdóttir and Matthew James Driscoll, Opuscula 15 Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 49 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2017), 225–76.

89. Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, in her analysis of a seventeenth-century recasting of *Egils saga*, demonstrates that such post-medieval retellings of classical sagas are far from being worthless and without interest. See Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, "Egil Strikes Again: Textual Variation and the Seventeenth-Century Reworkings of *Egil's saga*," *Egil, the Viking Poet: New Approaches to "Egil's saga,"* edited by Laurence de Looze et al., Toronto Old Norse and Icelandic series 9 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 182–93.

90. See W. G. Collingwood, *Fegurð Íslands og fornir sögustaðir: Svipmyndir og sendibréf úr Íslandsför W. G. Collingwoods 1897*, edited by Haraldur Hannesson and Ásgeir S. Björnsson (Reykjavík: Örn og Örlygur, 1988). See also Einar Falur Ingólfsson, *Sögurstaðir: Í fótspor W. G. Collingwoods,* Rit Þjóðminjasafns Íslands 22 (Reykjavík: Crymogea and Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, 2010) for contemporary photographs of many of the places Collingwood visited and painted.

The point then becomes not whether the narratives are either based on tradition or made up but the way in which they operate in this imaginary world of pre-Christian Iceland and the real world of contemporary landscapes. *Hrafnkels saga* is considered a "classical" saga but appears to be neither an historical, anthropological, or even legally accurate account of events in the East Fjords around 900 C.E. Yet, if *Hrafnkels saga* can be taken seriously, why cannot *Atla saga Ótryggssonar, Hellismannasaga,* or *Geirmundar saga heljarskinns*? As Guðni Jónsson remarked, sagas such as these are no worse than some of the "authentic" sagas of the fifteenth- century. The "secondary world" of pre-Christian Iceland remained viable and open to succeeding generations of writers, and the narratives they inserted into it, no matter what century they were composed in, are all equally viable, all "grein á sama meiði frá bókmenntalegi sjónarmiði" ([A] branch of the same tree from a literary point of view), as we have seen Guðni Jónsson insist.[91] Tolkien interprets sub-creation as a process of recovery, escape, and consolation, and I believe we can argue that all three are relevant to the continued composition of saga literature. Recovery Tolkien calls a "prophylactic against loss" (and in the primary instance, in Iceland would be the final loss of independence in 1262, the culmination of a process that had been long underway).[92] Escapism is escapism, and for Tolkien something positive in moderation. Consolation he finds in the eucatastrophe or "happy ending,"[93] and I think we would be hard pressed to find any saga of whatever genre that does not end on a positive note, with a marriage or some other upbeat conclusion, never mind what other disasters may have occurred in the main body of the narrative. This applies to *Njáls saga* and *Grettis saga* as much as it does to *Hrana saga hrings* or *Þorsteins saga Geirnefjufóstra*.

It is time to pay more attention to the sagas composed after 1400 and to the ways in which *saga* texts in general were rewritten over the centuries and to how they continued to evolve. Such an approach will, I believe, give us a more nuanced appreciation of the nature of *saga* narrative and a better understanding of the role these works played in Icelandic intellectual life for generation after generation.

91. GJ 1:xxvi.

92. Tolkien, *On Fairy-stories*, 68.

93. Tolkien, *On Fairy-stories*, 75.

Appendix

Íslendinga sögur composed after 1400 and available in print:

Ármann: 17th century. Composed by Jón *sýslumaður* í Múlasýslu Þorláksson (ca. 1643–1712) ca. 1700 based on *Ármanns rímur* by Jón Guðmundsson *lærði* (1574–ca. 1650), composed in 1637. *Ármanns saga ok Þorsteins gála*. Printed: GJ 12: 377–414.
18th century. Composed by Halldór *sýslumaður* Jakobsson (1734–1810). *Ármanns saga in yngri*. Printed: *Ármanns saga*. Hrappsey: n.p., 1782; *Ármanns saga*, edited by Hallgrímur Þorsteinsson. Akureyri: Prentsmiðja Norður- og Austurumdæmisins, 1858. GJ 12: 415–68.

Atli: 19th century. Earliest MS 1817. Printed: *Atla saga Ótryggssonar*, edited by Þórleifur Jónsson. Seyðisfjörður: Prentsmiðjan "Austra"—B. M. Stephansson, 1886; GJ 4: 451–71.

Ásmundur: 18th century. *Ásmundar saga Atlasonar*. Printed: GJ 4: 473–83.

Geirmundur: 21st century. Bergsveinn Birgisson. *Geirmundar saga heljarskinns*. Íslenzk fornrit. Reykjavík: Bjartur, 2015.

Grímur: 18th century. *Gríms þáttur í Grímstungu*. Printed: GJ 7: 479–84.

Gunnar: 15th century Printed: *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*. In *Krókarefssaga, Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls og Ölkofra þáttr*, edited by Páll Sveinsson. (Copenhagen: Louis Klein, 1866. 39–63. Included in GJ 10: 453–86 and Íslenzk fornrit 14: 341–79.

Helgi: 19th century. *Helga saga Hallvarðssonar*. Printed: GJ 2: 467–75.

Skáld-Helgi: 19th century. Composed by Gísli Konráðsson (1787–1877). Printed: *Sagan af Skáld-Helga*, edited by Sigfús Eymundsson. Reykjavík: Dagskrár, 1897; better text: GJ 1: 413–39.

Hellismenn: 19th century. Composed by Gísli Konráðsson, ca. 1830. Printed: *Saga Hellismanna*, edited by Björn

Árnason. Ísafjörður: Prentsmiðja Ísfirðinga, 1889; *Hellismannasaga*, edited by Gunnar Gíslason. Winnipeg: Heimskringla, 1889; GJ 2: 399–466.

Hrani: 18th/19th century. From ca. 1800, perhaps by Jón *sýslumaður* Espólín (1769–1836). Printed: *Sagan af Hrana hrings*, edited by Þorleifur Jónsson. Copenhagen: Möller, 1874. Re-edited: GJ 9: 415–40.

Illugi: 17th century. *Illuga saga Tagldarbana*. Printed: GJ 3: 421–503.

Þórir: 17th/18th century. Attributed to Jón *sýslumaður* Þorláksson (ca. 1643–1712). Printed: *Páttr of Þóri hast ok Bárði birtu*, edited by Þorleifur Jónsson. Copenhagen: Möller, 1874; GJ 8: 351–60.

Holta-Þórir: 19th century. Attributed to Einar Jóhannsson gamli í Þórisholti (1796–1879). Printed: *Sagan af Holta-Þóri*, edited by Magnús Sigurðsson. Reykjavík: Einar Þórðarson, 1876; GJ 11: 472–98.

Þjóstólfur: 18th century. Composed c. 1772–77 by Þorleifur Arason Adeldahl (1749– ?). *Þjóstólfs saga hamramma*. Printed: GJ 8: 361–97.

Þorsteinn: 19th century. Composed by Gísli Konráðsson ca. 1810. *Þorsteins saga Geirnefjufóstra*. Printed: GJ 8: 399–453.

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The Aesthetics of Concealment and Revelation in the Skaldic Poetry of Kári Sölmundarson

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In *Brennu-Njáls saga* there is a moment shortly after the burning in which Njáll's son-in-law, Kári Sölmundarson, attempts to rest amidst his plans to take vengeance on Njáll's killers. In this passage, Kári has been welcomed by Ásgrímur Elliða-Grímsson and has just related the news of Njáll's burning. At this point in the saga, Kári has just narrowly escaped being burned along with Njáll and the rest of his family, but the devoted son-in-law is already raising a group of men to confront the burners. Kári has been single-mindedly focused on retribution. A man of action, he knows the best way to honor his slain family is to avenge them. Earlier, he tells a friend grieving over Njáll that "annat karlmannligra en gráta þá dauða" (there are other manly things to do than weep for the dead).[1] Kári's comment suggests that he takes a dim view of open emotional displays—an attitude typical in the Icelandic sagas.[2] While visiting Ásgrímur, however, Kári does something that may cause readers to wonder what lies beneath his stoic demeanor. The saga writer informs us that "Svá er at segja frá Kára, at hann mátti ekki *sofa* of nætr" (It is to be said about Kári that he was not able to sleep at night).[3] Ásgrímur wakes to find him out of bed one evening, and, at Ásgrímur's prompting, Kári offers this skaldic stanza as an explanation for his insomnia:

1. *Brennu-Njáls saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 12 (Reykjavík, Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1954), 339. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

2. See further, Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature: Translations, Voices, Contexts*, Studies in Old Norse Literature 1 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017).

3. *Brennu-Njáls saga*, 345.

15 Kemrat, Ullr, um alla,
álmsíma, mér grímu,
beðhlíðar man ek beiði
bauga, svefn á augu,
síz brandviðir brenndu
bǫðvar nausts á hausti,
ek em at mínu meini
minnigr, Níal inni.[4]

To me no sleep comes to the eyes,
"Ullur <god> of the 'elm-cords'"
[bow-strings > MAN],[5]
all night[6] I remember
the "demander of the 'bed-slope
of rings'" [shield > MAN][7],
since, in autumn, the "'fire-
trees' of the 'boathouse of
battle' [shield > WARRIOR][8]
burned Njáll in his house,
I am mindful of my harm.[9]

Despite Kári's rejection of open displays of emotion, his poetic utterance here is itself a public emotional display. In it Kári associates his sleeplessness with the inner turmoil of remembering his fallen

4. *Njáls saga*, 346.

5. The conventions used to resolve the poetic diction are as follows. Alternative poetic names are indicated by an equal sign: "Viðrir" (= Óðinn)." Angle brackets are used to give the sense of mythological and legendary names: "Ullur <god>." Kennings are given in full within quotation marks and resolved in small capitals within square brackets: "enwrapped one of the filigree" [WOMAN]." When there is a sequence of kennings, the first one is in single quotation marks and its resolution in small capitals with an angle bracket to indicate what is the final result: the " Ullur <god> of the 'elm-cords'" [bow-strings > MAN]. Here the "cords of the elm" are the strings of a bow, and the "god of the bow" is a man. Since the kenning involves military equipment, the translation "warrior" is also appropriate.

6. *Gríma* literally means "hood," and here as in other poetic usages is a metaphor for the darkness of night.

7. According to Rudolph Meissner, the second half of this kenning, "bed-slope of rings," refers to a shield in that the outer rim represents a ring and the board (or bed) of the shield is that which slopes away from it. See Rudolph Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden: Ein Beitrag zur skaldischen Poetik*, Rheinische Beiträge und Hülfsbücher zur germanischen Philologie und Volkskunde I (Bonn: Kurt Schroeder, 1921; Rpt. Hildesheim: Olms, 1984), 175. Thus, "demander of the bed slope of rings" is a *rekit*-style kenning (one containing three or more elements) for "warrior."

8. *Brandviðir* ["fire-trees"] is a kenning for "warriors," but it may have two resonances. The first is to consider *brand* as a sword, which coupled with *viður* makes a conventional man-kenning, but *brand* is also a word for "fire." This potential pun takes on greater meaning when we consider that Kári here is referring to Flosi and his men, who burned Njáll and become known as "the burners." "Boathouse of battle" refers to a shield (Meissner 170). A boathouse gives shelter, much as a shield gives shelter in battle.

9. I am indebted to Robert D. Fulk for sharing his preliminary translations of Kári's *lausavísur*, an edited version of which appears in Poetry of Sagas of Icelanders, edited by Margaret Clunies Ross, †Kari Ellen Gade, and Tarrin Wills, 2 vols., Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 5 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), 2:283–93.

loved ones. All through the night they are present in his mind, and this mental distress prevents him from taking any rest. The violence due to which Kári has lost his family intensifies his suffering. Njáll has been burned alive "in his house," and the audacity of this act agitates Kári to such an extent that he can think about little else. Notably, Kári ends his stanza with an expression of his own interiority. While his actions depict a man bent on vengeance, he remains ever mindful of his grief.

In this essay, I argue that Kári's skaldic utterances reveal an intersection between emotion and aesthetic experience. His skaldic poems mediate between his own thoughts and feelings and the external world that he strives to assimilate. Examining Kári's poetry reveals a process of apprehension whereby he reconciles his inner understanding of the world with his external experience of it. In Kári's case, his cognitive perceptions are found in the way he conceives of and speaks about the burning at Bergþórshvöll. His external experience is the burning itself—what he saw and heard there and what other characters in the saga say about it. His poetry flows out of the conflict between these two elements and, by the end of Kári's verse-making, this conflict resolves as he successfully assimilates these two influences. This cognitive and emotional reconciliation produces what is perhaps the most traditional marker of aesthetic experience: pleasure. It is not the pleasure derived from regarding a beautiful object per se, but pleasure derived from a moment of apprehension. This pleasure is akin to what A. S. Byatt describes as the "pleasure in noticing, or making, analogies."[10] Pleasure, then, occurs when a character forges a connection between one's own mental categories and the objects perceived by the senses. Kári's poetry demonstrates how oblique language of the kind employed by skalds can transform emotional events in ways that create a new understanding from the interplay between what is known and what is unknown or, perhaps, what is not yet known. The dual process of revealing and concealing through giving voice to emotion in poetry seems to have a sustaining effect on Kári. In what follows, I will examine all six of Kári's skaldic poems as well as analogous cases

10. A. S. Byatt, "Feeling Thought: Donne and the Embodied Mind," *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, edited by Achsah Guibbory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 247–58 at 254.

in the family sagas (*Íslendingasögur*) to illustrate the aesthetics of concealment and revelation at work in them. Along the way, it will also be instructive to present evidence for such a poetic process as it arises in Snorri Sturluson's mythology of poetry. In some family sagas, poetry born of emotion can soothe troubled minds. It can help characters like Kári reconcile the often violent and inhospitable realities of medieval Icelandic culture with their own personal desires for peace, security, and understanding.

The process I observe in Kári's case will be better understood in the context of the broad range of possible functions for skaldic poetry more generally in the family sagas. Often scholars characterize skaldic poetry by distinguishing between poems inserted into prose narratives for the purposes of historical corroboration and verse included in narratives that serve as dialogue for saga characters.[11] Focusing on the role of skaldic poetry in thirteenth-century Icelandic literary culture, Guðrún Nordal views the shift between corroborative verse and dialogue verse as indicative of the movement between orality and literacy.[12] Accordingly, Nordal observes that in the first half of the thirteenth century, Snorri Sturluson incorporated skaldic verse in the kings' sagas to preserve historical memory.[13] In the second half of the thirteenth century, the period during which the first family sagas were written, Nordal suggests that there was a second approach to the inclusion of skaldic verse in prose works that stems from Ólafur Þórðarson's use of verse in *The Third Grammatical Treatise*.[14] Unlike Snorri, Ólafur cites anonymous skalds and many of his verses in this text may have been written by Ólafur himself.[15] This deviation from Snorri's practice is due to his purpose in writing. Ólafur is less concerned with historical authority than he is with illustrating the ways in which

11. See, for example, Bjarni Einarsson, "On the Role of Verse in Saga-Literature," *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 7 (1974): 118–25 at 118.

12. Guðrún Nordal, "Attraction of Opposites: Skaldic Verse in *Njáls Saga*." *Literacy in Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavian Culture*, edited by Pernille Hermann (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2005), 211–36 at 213.

13. Guðrún Nordal, "Attraction of Opposites," 213.

14. Guðrún Nordal, "Attraction of Opposites," 214.

15. See Gísli Sigurðsson, "Óláfr Þórðarson *hvítaskáld* and Oral Poetry in the West of Iceland c. 1250: The Evidence of References to Poetry in the *Third Grammatical Treatise*," *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, edited by Margaret Clunies Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 96–115 at 111–13.

skaldic poetry, as the native poetry of the medieval Icelanders, can be set on equal aesthetic footing with classical poetry. The result, Nordal argues, is a movement away from historical corroboration and toward a more literary approach to skaldic verse as we move further into the thirteenth century.

Even accounting for this shift, the family sagas incorporate skaldic poetry in a variety of ways for different effects. Guðrún Nordal observes that saga writers treat skaldic poetry differently from saga to saga and sometimes even within the same saga. To illustrate this, Nordal points to "the four great thirteenth-century sagas *Egils saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, and *Njáls saga*."[16] Based on manuscript evidence, Nordal shows that each one represents different approaches to the use of skaldic verse. *Egils saga*, for instance, "resides on the boundaries between kings' sagas and the new *genre* of the sagas of Icelanders . . . and Egill's verse, though the authenticity of some of it has been disputed, is generally thought to have been composed in the tenth century."[17] By contrast, *Laxdæla saga* features a few simple skaldic stanzas that Nordal notes "were probably composed at the same time as the saga."[18] As for *Eyrbyggja saga*, Nordal observes that verse is incorporated in order to justify the behavior of Snorri goði Þorgrímsson.[19] The characterization of skaldic verse in *Brennu-Njáls saga* is more difficult. Nordal remarks that the use of verse seems to fall into two categories as it relates to either the first half of the saga, which follows the life and times of Gunnar Hámundarson, or the quest of Kári in the saga's second half. Nordal finds that the skaldic stanzas in the saga accentuate important themes. In the first half, the themes Nordal marks are "the spoken word, the power of gossip and talk."[20] In the second half, particularly with reference to Kári's stanzas, Nordal gestures to the themes of "grief and remembrance."[21] Given this thematic focus, Kári's poems show that his "actions are driven by his memory, by remembering the past."[22]

16. Guðrún Nordal, "Attraction of Opposites," 2.
17. Guðrún Nordal, "Attraction of Opposites," 217–18.
18. Guðrún Nordal, "Attraction of Opposites," 218.
19. Guðrún Nordal, "Attraction of Opposites," 218.
20. Guðrún Nordal, "Attraction of Opposites," 232.
21. Guðrún Nordal, "Attraction of Opposites," 232.
22. Guðrún Nordal, "Attraction of Opposites," 232.

In recent years, scholars have elaborated upon the literary character of skaldic verse in the family sagas. Heather O'Donoghue identifies this quality as a form of *littérarité*, which, for her, refers to an "artistic or literary method and style" rather than attempting to determine what is fact and what is fiction.[23] Thus, O'Donoghue treats skaldic poetry in the family sagas as though the "authors who present their characters as speaking their dialogue in *dróttkvætt* are, with certain important caveats, (re)producing a textual illusion for literary effect, rather than relating a naturalistic event."[24] The caveats O'Donoghue mentions center on distinguishing between skaldic verse that marks a movement from "narrative prose to dialogue verse as a character speaks *in* skaldic verse . . . and the report of a recitation *of* a skaldic verse or poem."[25] Blending the historical and the literary is a distinct feature of the family sagas, which, O'Donoghue reminds us, straddle the line "between history and fiction."[26] O'Donoghue observes that "the action of the family sagas takes place not in a self-evidently fictional world, but in a semi- and pseudo-historical one."[27] Accordingly, a treatment of Kári's stanzas as historical artifacts falls outside the scope of the present study. But if skaldic verses in the family sagas can have a literary character, what do such verses yield to literary analysis? In speaking of the skald Gísli Súrsson, for example, O'Donoghue raises the question: "What, then, might it be about a saga character that would prompt a saga author . . . to attach verses to his story?"[28] In the case of Gísli, O'Donoghue's answer is that the audience gains a window into Gísli's inner feelings. In this O'Donoghue takes a cue from Dronke, who argues that "Gísli becomes a skald so that . . . dimensions of thought shall not be cut away from his actions."[29] She extends this reasoning to claim that the conflict between Gísli's "'acute sense of honourable behaviour' and the

23. Heather O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse and the Poetics of Saga Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 12.

24. O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, 12.

25. O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, 12.

26. O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, 8.

27. O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, 8.

28. O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, 139.

29. Ursula Dronke, "The Poet's Persona in the Skalds' Sagas," *Parergon* 22 (1978): 23–28 at 26.

'series of cold blooded killings' for which he is responsible render that subjectivity an area of particular fascination."[30] If it is true that instances of skaldic verse signal moments of interiority and subjectivity, then to what end is the audience of *Brennu-Njáls saga* offered Kári's interiority?

The conditions under which Kári speaks his first stanza are broadly similar to the circumstances Dronke observes in Gísli's case. Both characters feel at odds with their society in some way, and they each attempt to mediate their feelings through poetry. Emotional expression for Kári is a fraught enterprise. His attitude toward expressions of emotion aligns with the treatment of emotion within the framework of a Germanic heroic ethic. Certainly, Beowulf discourages emotional displays in the proverbial wisdom he offers to the Danish King, Hrothgar, when Grendel's mother kills his friend and advisor: "Ne sorga, snotor guma. || Selre bið æghwæm / þæt he his freond wrece || þonne he fela murne" (Be not sorrowful, wise man. || It is better for every man / that he avenge his friend || than he mourn much).[31] Thomas Hill observes this trend in Eddic poetry and attributes it to Old Norse literature more generally when he remarks that "one of the conventions of Old Norse-Icelandic literature is a kind of stoic suppression of emotion." [32] Thus, in the family sagas when characters do make outward displays of emotion, they are often chastised. When Egill, perhaps the most expressive figure in the family sagas, displays his grief over what is presumed to be the loss of his brother, Þórólfur, his close friend Arinbjörn admonishes him: "nú þó at þú hafir fengit skaða mikinn um bróður þinn, þá er þat karlmannligt, at bera þat vel" (Even though you have suffered a great loss with your brother, the manly thing to do is to bear it well).[33] Indeed, Egill appears to be aware of the social

30. O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, 139.

31. *Klaeber's Beowulf,* edited by R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, 4th ed., Toronto Old English Series 21 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008) 48.1384–85.

32. Thomas D. Hill, "*Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta*: Guðrún's Healing Tears," *Revisiting the Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Heroic Legend*, edited by Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington (New York: Routledge, 2013), 107–16 at 115.

33. *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, edited by Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit 2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1933), 148.

obligation to conceal his emotions, and he addresses it in a skaldic composition just after burying his brother:

17 Gekk, sás óðisk ekki, jarlmanns bani snarla þreklundaðr fell, Þundar, Þórólfr, í gný stórum; jǫrð grœr, en vér verðum, Vínu nær of mínum, helnauð es þat, hylja harm, ágætum barma.[34]	The slayer of the jarl who feared nothing went quickly in the great "clash of Þundur (=Óðinn)" [BATTLE], the strong-minded Þórólfur fell; the earth becomes green near to the River Dvina over my famous brother, It is death-distress I must hide my grief.

This stanza demonstrates both the Old Norse cultural imperative to suppress emotion as well as the tendency for those experiencing feelings to find an outlet for them in verse. It is worth noting, that in the immediate context of Egill's poem, the stanza does precisely the opposite of concealing grief, becoming instead a vehicle for making grief known. Even so, its only explicit mention of emotion is to identify it and to express the necessity of hiding it. Emotions, then, can be expressed in a culturally acceptable way as long as characters do so indirectly—in a manner that conceals emotions even as it makes them known.

The particular emotional experience relevant to Kári's narrative is one of conflict. It may be an experience of internal, personal conflict, as with a troubling idea or event one has difficulty accepting, as well as a conflict between personal emotions and the acceptable social discourse concerning those emotions. The barrier between private emotion and public expression can be seen in Barbara Rosenwein's notion of "emotional communities." Rosenwein's study of emotion in the Middle Ages adheres to the view that emotional experience was socially determined within "groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value."[35] Adopting such a view may allow us to perceive the sometimes-invisible

34. *Egils saga*, 142.

35. Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 2.

forces that shape emotional responses within the family sagas. Unlike prosaic speech—which Rosenwein views as closely bound up with social constructs in her study of early medieval emotional communities [36]—the oblique quality of skaldic poetry moves beyond socially scripted expressions of emotion even as it utilizes social conventions. The aesthetics of concealment and revelation, then, mediate between the personal and the public. The meter, the syntax, even the component elements used in kennings are filtered through social, cultural, and mythological convention, but these features are molded and arranged to give voice to deep personal need.

As the verses from *Egils saga* suggest, skaldic poetry in the family sagas can serve as a suitably oblique medium for emotive content. In addition to this social rationale, there is also a mythological influence at play in the association between skaldic poetry and emotional expression. Carol J. Clover sees this emotive function as linked to what she calls the "skaldic sensibility." Clover appeals to the personal nature of skaldic poetry, and observes that the skald's emotional life and his responses to emotional situations appear to be "the chief concern of the [skaldic] strophe."[37] For Clover, the emotional utterances of the skald derive from the numerous images that depict poetry itself as a liquid to be repeatedly imbibed and then poured forth from the mouth. These images grow out of the mythological roots of the mead of poetry. To illustrate this point, Clover seizes on a kenning for poetry that refers to it as the "wave of the breast."[38] This kenning takes many variant forms, but its application is clear enough in the first stanza of Egill Skalla-Grímsson's *drápa* for King Eiríkur blóðöx, *Höfuðlausn*:

1	Vestr fórk of ver, en ek Viðris ber munstrandar mar, svá's mitt of far;[39]	West over the sea I fared, and I bear "Viðrir's (=Óðinn's) 'sea of the ‹mind-shore›'" [BREAST > LIQUID > POETIC MEAD = POEM], so is my behavior;

36. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 52.

37. Carol J. Clover, "Skaldic Sensibility," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 93 (1978): 63–81 at 64.

38. Clover, "Skaldic Sensibility," 70.

39. *Egils saga*, 185.

Here the kenning Egill uses for poetry is "Óðinn's sea of the mind-shore," which can be compressed to mean "Óðinn's breast-sea." This kenning is best understood within its narrative context. At this point in the saga, Egill happens by chance to arrive in England, where he is thrust into the company of the king he has offended. Egill uses the opportunity to make amends, but instead of bringing a tribute of gold, he brings a tribute of poetry. Óðinn is the god of poetry, and in this kenning, poetry is a liquid flowing from his breast. This kenning is an outgrowth of the mythological origins of poetry as told in *Skáldskaparmál* wherein Snorri offers multiple kennings for the mead of poetry.[40] The kenning "Óðinn's breast-sea" depends on the long and varied chain of events that characterize the mead of poetry in Snorri's mythology. The mead of poetry is first created when the Æsir and the Vanir seal a truce by combining their spittle in a vat. Out of this vat of spittle, the Æsir fashion a man, whom they name Kvasir. Kvasir is said to be so wise that "engi spyrr hann þeira hluta er eigi kann hann órlausn" (no one could ask him any questions to which he did not know the answer).[41] The dwarves Fjalar and Galar murder him and collect his blood in three receptacles. The dwarves then mix honey with the blood so that it becomes mead. Whoever drinks of this mead "verðr skáld eða frœðamaðr" (becomes a poet or a scholar).[42] The dwarves gift this mead to the giant Suttungur as compensation for yet two more murders, and the Æsir come by the mead of poetry when Óðinn, ever eager for acquiring wisdom, deceives Suttungur's daughter, Gunnlöð, into exchanging three draughts of the mead—one from each vessel— for three nights with him. Transforming himself into an eagle, Óðinn flies back to Ásgarður with Suttungur, having assumed a falcon form, in hot pursuit. Once Óðinn reaches his destination, he regurgitates the mead into yet more containers.[43] Roberta Frank cautions readers against laying too much stress on Snorri's mythological rationale for these kennings. Because of Snorri's "preference for interpretations that could yield mythological names and allusions," Frank argues he sometimes overlooked the philological basis of these

40. Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál 1: Introduction, Text and Notes*, edited by Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998), 3.

41. Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, 3.

42. Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, 3.

43. Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, 3.

circumlocutory phrases.[44] The common element Frank identifies in these mythological kennings, however, is the notion of poetry as "intoxicating drink."[45] The goal of engaging in poetry, then, was to achieve a divinely induced mind-altering state.[46] Notably, Frank recognizes that in each case the mead of poetry involves some kind of "regurgitated liquid."[47] Such a characterization preserves the sense that poetry arises from and is poured out of bodies after some kind of agitation. The boundaries between the physical and emotional precipitating causes are permeable. Often they coincide. This account demonstrates the many mythic elements that underpin kennings used to denote poetry. In each case, poetry is distilled into a liquid to be consumed. It is poured out from bodies, much as it is figuratively poured from the breasts of skalds. The "mead of poetry" myth offers some insight into how skaldic poetry might allow saga characters to make sense of difficult experiences. This effect is something akin to what Richard North identifies as the cathartic power of poetry conferred upon it by its religious and mythological associations with the mead of poetry.[48] Also embedded in the poetic-mead kenning is a clue to how poetry mediates the relationship between internal thought and external reality, resulting in a kind of cognitive integration. That which is external (the sea of poetry) is consumed by skalds where it is incorporated and informs their inner thought-life. During moments of troubling emotion, that same poetry is agitated and stirred up, this time in the form of the "breast-sea."

The mind and breast can easily be conflated in Old Norse theories of emotion. The literary writings of the medieval Icelanders as well as the Anglo-Saxons locate the "mind" as the seat of emotion, and they seem to have regarded this notion of the mind as something that merged the metaphorical and the literal.[49] Old English scholar

44. Roberta Frank, "Snorri and the Mead of Poetry," *Speculum Norroenum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, edited by Ursula Dronke (Odense: Odense University Press), 155–70 at 169.

45. Frank, "Snorri and the Mead of Poetry," 169.

46. Frank, "Snorri and the Mead of Poetry," 170.

47. Frank, "Snorri and the Mead of Poetry," 169.

48. Richard North, "The Pagan Inheritance of *Sonatorrek*," *Atti del 12. Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull' Alto Medioevo: Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages: The Seventh International Saga Conference*, edited by Teresa Pàroli (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull' Alto Medioevo, 1990), 147–67 at 161–67.

49. Leslie Lockett, "700—1050: Embodiment, Metaphor, and the Mind in Old English Narrative," in *The Emergence of Mind: Representations of Consciousness in Narrative*

Leslie Lockett identifies this conception as the "hydraulic model of the mind" in which emotions are thought to be physically located in the chest (i.e., breast) and subject to both heating and cooling. These temperature shifts cause them to expand and contract within this space of the human body.[50] When one experiences troubling emotion, the mind is heated, the body swells, and pressure must be released. In Old Norse literature, there are a number of examples of this phenomenon. In *Völsunga saga*, the hero Sigurður is caught up in a love triangle with Brynhildur and Guðrún. When he must forsake Guðrún against his will, the saga tells us he was so grieved that "svá þrútnuðu hans síður, at í sundr gengu brynjuhringar" (so swelled his sides, that the rings of his byrnie broke asunder).[51] Egill experiences a similar event in his own saga when his young son dies at sea. His grief was so great that "þat er sǫgn manna, at hann þrútnaði svá, at kyrtillinn rifnaði af honum ok svá hosurnar" (people say he became so swollen that his tunic and hose burst off his body).[52] As these cases show, this hydraulic model of the mind can manifest itself in strikingly physical ways. If, as Lockett observes, the mind resides in the breast and is the seat of emotion, what pours forth from the skald's mouth takes on a distinctly personalized and emotional texture. This process of reflection upon the world and pouring poetry back into it serves as a fitting image for the process at work in Kári's poetry.

As I have said above, Kári's skaldic compositions come only

Discourse in English, edited by David Herman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 48–68 at 43–55.

50. Lockett, "Embodiment, Metaphor, and the Mind," 49–53 and for more on the "hydraulic model," see also Lockett's *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions*, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series 8 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), chapters 2–3, 54–178. Sigmund Freud also advances a hydraulic model of the mind, but it is not related to Lockett's except in the similarity of its central metaphor. Freud's theory derives from literary expressions concerning emotion such as "to cry oneself out" or "to blow off steam," see Julia Russell and Matt Jarvis, *Angles on Applied Psychology* (London: Nelson Thornes, 2003), 37. Lockett's theory stems from her reading of Old English literature.

51. *Völsunga saga*, in *Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda*, edited by Guðni Jónsson, 4 vols. (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan 1950), 1:109–218 at 187. On this episode see Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, 136–38.

52. *Egils saga*, 244. See Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, 76–77 and Sarah Baccianti, "Swelling in Anger: Somatic Descriptors in Old English and Old Norse Literature," in *Emotion and Medieval Textual Media*, edited by Mary C. Flannery, Early European Research Series 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 51–73.

after witnessing and surviving the burning, and the mythological background of the mead of poetry may offer some answers as to why this is the case. Kári experiences a particularly extreme kind of emotional trauma and subsequent grief. We see that the saga draws attention to his character's emotional experience through skaldic verse. He speaks in skaldic verse to express his inner feelings about his grief, and he uses circumlocutory phrases to describe some of the more horrific elements of his experience. Lockett's hydraulic model of the mind also aligns with Snorri's account of the mead of poetry in fascinating ways. In *Skáldskaparmál*, Snorri uses recurring tales of a physical outpouring of bodily fluid in his presentation of the mead of poetry. This fluid flows out of the body, is ingested by other beings, and is subsequently poured out once again. Snorri's mythological accounts depict these outpourings as explicitly linked to the transforming substances that constitute the mead of poetry.

As we see in Kári's first stanza, he is plagued by grief and, until he speaks this verse, does not express his loss. Kári's emotional distress agitates him, and his poetry flows out of his mouth. The oblique expressions Kári employs in this and subsequent poems may reveal how poetry enables him to express his inner feelings in order to assimilate his distressing experience of the burning. In this first stanza, Kári utilizes three phrases that have a concealing function, and all of them refer to men or warriors. The first, ostensibly, is meant to address Ásgrímur: "Ullr álmsíma" ("Ullur <god> of the 'elm-cords'" [bow-strings > man = WARRIOR]). The second kenning, "bauga beðhlíðar beiði" ["demander of the 'bed-slope of rings'" [shield > man = WARRIOR], is a reference to Njáll, and, lastly, the "brandviðir bǫðvar nausts" ("'fire-trees' of the 'boathouse of battle' [shield > man = WARRIOR]) is a reference to Flosi and the burners. Here Kári appears to follow skaldic convention in referring to men as trees. Snorri identifies tree terms as a common kenning for "man" in *Skáldskaparmál*.[53] The rationale he offers for using "tree" as part of a kenning for "man" stems from a pun: a man is a *viður* (performer, achiever), and *viður* is also a word for "tree." Taking Snorri at face value here has a somewhat chilling effect on the literary interpretation of these phrases. The conclusion that the

53. Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, 40.10–14.

homonymic connection is the only one present is tempting, but it is often not borne out by a careful examination of specific instances of this usage. Indeed, Gerd Wolfgang Weber breaks with this conclusion rather stridently. Speaking of Snorri's explanation of the tree terms in man-kennings, Weber notes, "Snorri is, of course, wrong, as far as the origin of the kenning principle is concerned."[54] Weber recognizes that in permitting only this rationale for such kennings, Snorri "does so at the expense of its metaphorical character."[55] Weber, on the other hand, views such phrases as figurative speech that "'fully' overlays 'virtual' speech and develops into an entirely new lexicon of its own' with 'trees' substituted for 'humans'."[56] Seen in this light, Kári's man-kennings that use terms for trees as their base-word can serve to distance him from the immediacy and the incomprehensibility of the burning by giving him a coded language through which to filter the experience. Even adopting conventional circumlocutory phrases may aid Kári in giving voice to his sorrow as these oft-used expressions offer him a ready set of terms to use and configure to his own ends. These common expressions may be especially helpful when one has difficulty finding one's own words to express intense emotions. Though such a technique may be derivative, the combinations in which they are used and the larger metaphors they construct may be unique to individual skalds. In this way, the kennings Kári employs supply him with known concepts with which to overlay troubling and unassimilated experiences.

Part of what precipitates this skaldic stanza is Kári's need to express and make sense of his distressing experience. Yet Kári himself was present at the burning, and, to that extent, he knows it as well as any living person can. For Kári, the burning is that which is both unknown and known, and, as such, a medium of expression capable of concealment and revelation is well suited to make sense of it. Kári's insomnia may also be a clue to the unassimilated quality of his experience of the burning. Kári's uneasiness at night calls to mind other saga characters who are *myrkfælinn* (afraid

54. Gerd Wolfgang Weber, "Of Trees and Men: Some Stray Thoughts on Kennings and Metaphors—And on Ludvig Holberg's Arboresque Anthropology," *NOWELE: North-Western European Language Evolution* 21/22 (1993): 419–46 at 429.

55. Weber, "Of Trees and Men," 429.

56. Weber, "Of Trees and Men," 432.

of the dark)—particularly the skalds Gísli Súrsson and Grettir Ásmundarson.

Both of these men become afraid of the dark following troubling experiences: Gísli because in it he is haunted by a "worse dream-woman" (*verri draumkona*),[57] and Grettir because of his encounter with the *afturgöngur* Glámur.[58] Marion Poilvez discusses this fear of the dark in relation to Sigmund Freud's *Das Unheimlich* (*The Uncanny*), observing that these nighttime hauntings represent an unsettling convergence of the familiar and the foreign.[59]

These uneasy experiences with darkness may be uncanny in yet another way that relates more directly to these characters' attempts to assimilate difficult experience through poetic expression. Freud asks, "Where does the uncanny effect of silence, solitude and darkness come from?"[60] Nicholas Royle argues that these three elements of the uncanny "all belong together" as facets of Freud's "complex, shifting figuration of what remains enigmatic."[61] Freud's theory of the uncanny relates to knowing in his second definition of *heimlich*: "concealed, kept hidden, so that others do not get to know of it or about it and it is hidden from them."[62] Within this secondary definition, Freud includes a number of examples that use *heimlich* to denote "secret wisdom."[63] Later Freud explains that the fear arising from an uncanny experience may be caused by "something that has been repressed and now returns." [64] In his first stanza, Kári explains his insomnia in terms similar to these. He cannot sleep because he is haunted by his memories of the burning all night long. Darkness also figures into Freud's interpretation of Hoffman's Sand-Man tale.

57. *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, in *Vestfirðinga sǫgur*, edited by Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit 6 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1943), 3–118 at 75.

58. *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, edited by Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit 7 (Reykjavík, Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1936), 118–23.

59. Marion Poilvez, "The Inner Exiles: Outlaws and Scapegoating Process in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* and *Gísla saga Súrssonar*," (MA thesis, Háskóli Íslands, 2011), 32.

60. Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, translated by David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003), 153.

61. Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 109.

62. Freud, *The Uncanny*, 129.

63. Freud, *The Uncanny*, 129.

64. Freud, *The Uncanny*, 147.

Freud argues that "the sense of the uncanny attaches . . . to the idea of being robbed of one's eyes."[65] In the immediate context of the Sand-Man tale, Freud links this fear of losing one's eyes to the infantile fear of castration.[66] But losing one's eyes may also relate to darkness in that, as Royle observes, "losing one's way in the dark" is a recurring theme of "'the uncanny' as 'something one does not know one's way about in'."[67] The uncanny fear of darkness in the family sagas, then, may indicate a confrontation with an experience that is at once known and unknown, and the impulse to approach such an experience in the oblique medium of poetry is an attempt, finally, to integrate it.

Kári continues to process his experience of the burning in his second skaldic stanza. Once again, he is prompted to speak in verse after Gissur the White raises the topic of Njáll's burning. When Gissur draws attention to Kári's great luck in surviving the attack, the saga writer tells us that "Þá varð Kára vísa á munni" (then a verse came to Kári's mouth).[68] The outpouring of language here recalls the outpouring of the mead of poetry that takes the form of so many various kinds of bodily fluids. There is ostensibly a distinction to be made between physical and verbal outpourings, but there are other places in *Brennu-Njáls saga* in which this line becomes blurred.

Indeed, cognitive states can and do lead to a physical outpouring of bodily fluids for some characters in *Brennu-Njáls saga*. The case of Þórhallur Ásgrímsson is one example. The saga writer tells us that, upon hearing of Njáll's burning, Þórhallur, one of his erstwhile foster-sons, experiences a violent reaction to this disturbing news: "hann þrútnaði allr ok blóðbogi stóð ór hvárritveggju hlustinni, ok varð eigi stǫðvat, ok fell hann í óvit, ok þá stǫðvaðisk. Eptir þat stóð hann upp ok kvað sér lítilmannliga verða" (he swelled all over and a gush of blood poured from both ears, and it did not stop, and he fell down senseless, and then it stopped. After that he stood up and said that this had been unmanly).[69] Two things are noteworthy about this scene. First, the cultural imperative to suppress emotion holds even for seemingly involuntary displays. Þórhallur appears

65. Freud, *The Uncanny*, 138.
66. Freud, *The Uncanny*, 139–40.
67. Royle, *The Uncanny*, 109; Freud, *The Uncanny*, 125.
68. *Njáls saga*, 354.
69. *Njáls saga*, 344.

to be disappointed in his "unmanly" reaction to the news. Second, the nature of Þórhallur's reaction can be understood within the hydraulic model of emotion. Distressing information causes physical agitation. Þórhallur's blood seems to swell as a result of this agitation and cannot be contained within his body. It flows out of the body from the organs that receive the distressing news. It is as if Þórhallur's emotions cannot be contained. They create a kind of physical pressure that must find release. In this case, the release comes at a personal cost. Þórhallur determines that his behavior is "lítilmannliga" (unmanly). Þórhallur resolves to use legal means to bring Flosi and the burners to justice, but these efforts ultimately fail. Along the way, he experiences other instances of swelling and the outflow of his bodily fluids. As Þórhallur instructs his father on how to proceed with the case against the burners, his face appears as though it were filled with blood, and the saga writer describes another involuntary display of emotion: "stórt hagl hraut ór augum honum" (large tears [literally, hail] fell from his eyes).[70] In this scene, Þórhallur cautions his father against hasty action because he believes the law is sufficient to achieve justice for Njáll. But even here Þórhallur seems to be suppressing his own desire to act, which precipitates this emotional display. High emotion causes his blood to rise, and this time, the emotion finds an outlet not in blood from the ears but in tears from the eyes. The passage depicts these tears as something violent. Here "hraut" (v. *hrjóta*) can be glossed "fell," "flew," or "flung," and creates an image of a torrential hailstorm. While Þórhallur releases some body fluid through these tears, he still experiences a physical swelling. He develops a large boil on his foot that prevents him from presenting his case against Flosi and the burners in person. When he realizes that there will be no justice for Njáll at the Alþingi, he takes up the spear given to him by Skarpheðinn and thrusts it into his boil, releasing yet more bodily fluid. As a result, "blóðfossinn fellr ok vágfǫllin, svá at lœkr fell eptir gólfinu" (a gush of blood and pus flowed like a stream along the floor).[71] Here is yet another instance of a violent outpouring of

70. *Njáls saga*, 378.

71. *Njáls saga*, 402. On this episode, see Kirsi Kanerva, "Disturbances of the Mind and Body: Effects of the Living Dead in Medieval Iceland," in *Mental (Dis)Order in Later Medieval Europe,* edited by Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Susanna Niiranen, Later Medieval Europe 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 219–42 at 238–41.

bodily fluid that follows disturbing news. In this last case, he does not bleed from the ears but from the foot. Ironically, this deed of self-violence enables Þórhallur to act by taking matters into his own hands. With his faith in the legal process diminished, Þórhallur marches to the scene of the legal proceedings and starts a brawl at the Alþingi. As he does so, the saga writer makes sure to inform the reader that he now walks without limping (*óhaltur*) despite the wound he has inflicted upon himself.[72]

Kári's second poem can then be understood as welling up within his body and flowing out of his mouth. Just as the mead of poetry, in all its various substances, conflates the outpouring of bodily fluid and poetry itself, Kári experiences a similar emotional agitation, which leads to the pouring out of poetry as a response to emotion. An examination of the poem's content may also allow us to see how this stanza functions as a way for Kári to express his interiority. The stanza reads:

17 Hjálmskassa fór hvessir,	A "whetter of 'helmet-troll–women'"
herðimeiðr, af reiði	[AXE > MAN][75] went,
út ór elris sveita	a "sword-tree" [MAN],[76] in anger
ófúss Níals húsa,	out from the "alder's sweat" [SMOKE],
þá er eld-Gunnar inni	unwillingly from Njáll's house
óðrunnar[73] þar brunnu;	when burned there inside
menn nemi mál sem ek inni	the "fiery-bushes of the 'fire-Gunnur
mín; harmsakir tínum.[74]	<Valkyrie>'" [SWORD > MEN];
	let people men listen to my
	words, which I relate;
	I recount the causes of my grief.

72. *Njáls saga*, 402.

73. The main manuscripts read at this point "oddrunnar" ("sword-point-bushes" [MEN]), but that leaves stranded the phrase "eld-Gunnar" ("the fire of Gunnur <Valkyrie>" [SWORD]) which is itself in the genitive and therefore part of a kenning. In his edition of *Njáls saga,* Finnur Jónsson suggested that "oddrunnar" should be emended to "óðrunnar" ("fiery-bushes") which would act as a tree *heiti* in the kenning "óðrunnar eld-Gunnar." The Íslenzk fornrit edition adopts this reading. See *Brennu-Njálssaga (Njála),* edited by Finnur Jónsson, Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek 13 (Halle [Saale]: Max Niemeyer, 1908), 324–25.

74. *Njáls saga*, 354.

75. The "whetter of axes" (literally "whetter of helmet-trollwomen") is Kári himself. The kenning as a whole signifies "warrior."

76. That is, Gissur, whom Kári addresses.

This is one of Kári's most poignant stanzas, in part because of his final appeal for others to "listen." Kári is overwhelmed by the need to tell of his grief, and the saga writer offers verse as the medium for expressing what would otherwise stay locked within. In this stanza, Kári uses various kennings to refer to the smoke he recalls from the burning (*elris sveita*) and the children of Njáll (*eld-Gunnar óðrunnar*) who burn there. The first of these kennings personifies the beams of wood from which Njáll's home is built, presenting the smoke from the fire as their sweat. The oblique mode of expression depicts Njáll's sons as fiery bushes that burn along with the wood of the house. Finding a mode of discourse that departs from ordinary, prosaic language allows Kári to make the event manifest to himself and his hearers by simultaneously expressing the horror of the burning and obstructing knowledge of the event. The stanza is a combination of oblique identification and direct reference. Kári speaks of his brothers-in-law as bushes (trees) who burn within the house like wood, but he also mentions Njáll by name. When he does mention Njáll, it is in a term of possession that links him to his house. When he speaks of the burning itself, however, he returns to oblique references.

The kennings identify and misidentify—a function consistent with the dual role of kennings in general. The kenning's function of concealment is set forth explicitly by Snorri Sturluson in his *Skáldskaparmál*. When Bragi, the Norse god of poetry, explains the origin of a kenning for gold, he mentions that such a term can "felum í rúnum" (conceal [its referent] in secret language).[77] Verse in the family sagas used in this way appears in *Gísla saga* when Gísli cryptically confesses to the killing of Þorgrímur. He utters a verse that he believes will conceal his admission of guilt, and perhaps it would have, had his sister Þórdís not marked it as worthy of unraveling. The saga tells us "Þórdís nam þegar vísuna, gengr heim ok hefir ráðit vísuna" (Þórdís remembered the verse, went home, and interpreted what it meant).[78] Gísli refers to Þórgrímur with three kennings. He calls him "föluvinar tál-grím[ur]" ("the destroyer-Grímur of the 'troll-woman's friend'" [GIANT > Þór = Þórgrímur), a play on his name, "[sá] gunnbliks

77. Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, 3.6–7.

78. *Gísla saga*, 59.

Gaut[ur]" (the "Gautur [= Óðinn] of the 'battle-gleam' [SWORD > man) and "grímu Þrótt[ur]" (the Þróttur [= Óðinn] of the helmet [MAN])," both poetic expressions for "warrior."[79] After puzzling over these verses, it becomes clear, at least to Þórdís, that Gísli means for these phrases to stand in for Þórgrimur. They serve a dual function of revealing and concealing, and in this way Gísli commands and defies the witness of those who hear him. We may see a similar attempt at concealment in the kennings of Kári. These kennings do not necessarily lessen the blow of the event. His personification of the house itself and the alder's sweat that issues from the burning building may even intensify the impact. But recounting the burning in oblique terms may help Kári make sense of the event by allowing him to tell it as it seemed to him—as part of the emotional experience of the burning.

There are other instances of characters within the *Íslendingasögur* who seek to reframe troubling experiences through poetry. For instance, Þórarinn svarti's response to the events of the *Máhlíðingamál* shows how saga characters can utilize skaldic poetry in an effort express and assimilate difficult and intense emotional experiences. This sequence of events takes place in *Eyrbyggja saga* and deals with the consequences of violent acts performed by a man with a decidedly non-violent nature. In the prose account leading up to Þórarinn's skaldic dialogue, the reader becomes acquainted with his law-abiding personality. In O'Donoghue's analysis of the *Máhlíðingavísur*, she makes note of Þórarinn's passivity, referring to his reliance upon the law rather than his own ability to achieve his goals through battle.[80] When Þorbjörn inn digri arrives at Mávahlíð to search Þórarinn's farm for horses he believes to be stolen, Þórarinn allows him to do so after making sure Þorbjörn has complied with the legal demands for the search. Afterward, Geirríður, Þórarinn's mother, incites him to attack with the following words: "Ofsatt er þat, er mælt

79. *Gísla saga*, 58.

80. O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, 96. See also Ásdís Egilsdóttir, "Masculinity and/or Peace? *Eyrbyggja saga*'s *Máhlíðingamál*," in *Frederic Amory in Memoriam: Old Norse-Icelandic Studies*, edited by John Lindow and George Clark, Wildcat Canyon Advanced Seminars, Occasional Monograph Series 2 (Berkeley: North Pinehurst Press, 2015), 135–46 and chapter three of Elín Bára Magnúsdóttir, *Eyrbyggja saga: Efni og höfundareinkenni*, Studia Islandica 65 (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2015), 83–116.

er, at meir hefir þu, Þórarinn, kvenna skap en karla" (It's quite true what people say, that you, Þórarinn, have more of women's disposition than men's).[81] Þórarinn then mounts a passionless attack on Þorbjörn and his men that ends with the death of a few servants on either side of the conflict and an injury: the maiming of Þórarinn's wife Auður, apparently at his own hands. As Þorbjörn and his men leave, Þórarinn pursues and overtakes them in time to overhear their ridicule. Þórarinn strikes Þorbjörn on the head with his sword, and he and his men proceed to rout those opponents who remain, wounding some and putting others to flight.[82]

Following this scene is a sequence of seventeen skaldic stanzas known as the *Máhlíðingavísur*. Rather than forming a single long poem commemorating Þórarinn's victory in battle, these verses are *lausavísur* set into the prose narrative primarily as responses to others asking Þórarinn about the conflict.[83] As O'Donoghue observes, these verses do much more then present the facts of the battle, and what they do provide deviates widely from the typical skaldic content that usually follows such victories.[84] Þórarinn infuses these stanzas with his own emotional reaction to the violence into which he has been dragged so unwillingly through the whetting speech of his mother.[85] Like Kári, Þórarinn uses his poetry to approach this troubling occurrence in an oblique way through his dense use of kennings to refer to the men he has slain and the violence he has inflicted. Indeed, O'Donoghue remarks that such opaque diction "transform[s] his reaction to the killing into an oblique and highly metaphorical commentary on it."[86]

81. *Eyrbyggja saga*, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórdarson, Íslenzk fornrit 4 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1935), 36.

82. *Eyrbyggja saga*, 33–40.

83. In an attempt to reconstruct the procedure whereby the prose author wove together the skaldic poetry with the prose narrative, Russell Poole suggests that *Máhlíðingavísur* was more likely a long, continuous poem around which the writer inserted portions of prose as a narrative cue and not strict *lausavísur*. See Russell Poole, "The Origins of the *Máhlíðingavísur*," *Scandinavian Studies* 57 (1985): 244–85 and Kari Ellen Gade, "Poetry and its Changing Importance in Medieval Icelandic Culture," in *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, edited by Margaret Clunies Ross, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 61–95 at 68.

84. See Heather O'Donoghue, *The Genesis of Saga Narrative: Verse and Prose in Kormaks Saga* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 61; O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, 100.

85. O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, 111.

86. O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, 97.

Because of this opaque quality, O'Donoghue characterizes his stanzas as "detached."[87] In one sense, this is indeed the case as Þórarinn seems interested in justifying his act through his poetic responses and as he rarely refers to those involved directly by name. But in another sense, speaking of the men he has harmed in an oblique way could show how deeply troubled Þórarinn is by his actions. He chooses instead to speak of those men he attacked as "hjaldurviðir" (battle-trees) and "haldendur skjaldar" (a holder of shields), whereas he refers, in some cases, to those with whom he is speaking by name, as he does with Vermundur.[88] He has no emotional imperative to distance himself from Vermundur, but his horror at the violent proceedings with Þorbjörn and his men cause him to hold them at a distance through periphrastic appellations rather than direct speech. It is, of course, skaldic convention to refer to "men" with these types of kennings, but while there may be nothing innovative in the terms Þórarinn uses, it may still be a psychologically protective decision to speak of these men in a medium that affords him this kind of descriptive liberty.

Þórarinn's stanzas turn the traditional expectations of skaldic battle poetry on their heads when, rather than gloating over his victory, he expresses revulsion.[89] At face value, his first stanza speaks of his triumph, as the first several lines indicate, but after that he says:

3b	barkak vægð at vígi valnaðrs í styr þaðra, mælik hól fyr hœli hjaldrsgoðs af því sjaldan.[90]	I bore no mercy in battle in the tumult of "corpse- adders" [SWORDS] there I seldom boast of this before those who praise the gods of battle.

Þórarinn can take little pride in his violent actions, and he expresses this in a verse that, in every other respect, aligns with the traditional skaldic response. His reservations are couched not in terms of a

87. O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, 98
88. *Eyrbyggja saga*, 41, 47.
89. O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, 100–2.
90. *Eyrbyggja saga*, 38.

complete negation of the conventional attitude ("I do not boast of this"), but rather he expresses his distaste for violence through an oblique litotes ("I seldom boast of this"). In presenting his feelings in such a way, Þórarinn conveys his ambivalence toward violence and perhaps even his regret in resorting to it. Þórarinn then offers a direct statement on his feelings not just about this battle but on all battle in a stanza offered in the following chapter:

14 Muna munum vér at vǫrum Vermundr glaðir stundum, auðar þǫll, áðr ollum auðvarpaðar dauða, nú séumk hitt, at hlaupa, hǫr-Gerðr, mynim verða, leið erum randa rauðra regn, fyr prúðum þegni.[91]	Vermundur and I will remember that we were happy sometimes, "fir-tree of wealth" [WOMAN],[92] before I caused the death of the "wealth-distributor" [MAN][93] Now, "linen-Gerður <goddess>" [WOMAN], I fear that I must make my escape, from the proud man;[94] the "rain of red shields" [BATTLE] is loathsome to me

In this stanza, Þórarinn expresses both fear (*séumk*) and loathing (*leið*): fear at how Snorri will adjudicate his case (which one might also understand as the consequence of his violent acts and his need to flee the coming judgment) and loathing at the prospect of more battle. Also evident from this example is how the discontinuous syntax common to skaldic poetry can be employed to yield further characterization of an individual's innermost thoughts and feelings. The phrase "leið erum randa rauðra / regn" (the rain of red shields is loathsome) includes a fairly graphic kenning for "war," and this diction is common to skaldic war poetry. But the graphic quality of the skaldic war poem typically used to gloat over one's prowess in battle is here employed to the opposite effect. It is not Þórarinn's efficacy in battle that he emphasizes but rather his distaste for it.

91. *Eyrbyggja saga*, 47.

92. This suggests that the poem is being addressed to Guðný Þórólfsdóttir, Vermundur's wife. *Eyrbyggja saga*, 47 (note).

93. That is, Þorbjörn inn digri.

94. That is, Snorri goði.

Þórarinn's case ends in exile—a physical consequence commensurate with his emotional feelings of alienation.[95] The skaldic stanzas of *Máhlíðingavísur* confirm several of the functions of skaldic poetry in the Icelandic family sagas mentioned above. The character of Þórarinn is an example of how an individual experiences and attempts to process events that evoke extreme emotional responses from those involved. The emotions this situation elicits manifest not in the prose but in the poetry, and the poet handles these emotions not with the direct language of saga prose but with the flexible and oblique language of skaldic poetry. The kennings and fragmented syntax of skaldic verse give the speaker freedom to reconfigure the experience that he cannot assimilate, resulting in a versatile but opaque mode of personal expression in which meaning is fluid. This dual quality of skaldic poetry makes the troubling events in question more malleable, allowing them to be considered in ways that transgress social conventions.

Three of Kári's four remaining stanzas come in a rush, much the same way as the string of *lausavísur* Þórarinn composes in *Máhlíðingavísur*. On the first occasion, Kári must answer for murders he committed in vengeance at the Alþingi. He refuses to settle with his victims because he knows those with whom he would broker a settlement wish to set the murders he committed against the burning of Njáll and his family, thereby canceling out both offenses. In response, Skapti Þóroddson issues this rejoinder: "Betra væri þér, Kári, at hafa eigi runnit frá mágum þínum ok skerask nú eigi ór sættum" (It would have better for you, Kári, not to have run from your in-laws and now not to refuse to settle).[96] It should not be surprising that this rough reply would elicit a series of highly emotional stanzas, and here they are particularly interesting because their purpose is to defend Kári from the claim that he fled the battle, thereby altering his opponent's interpretation of the burning and its aftermath. Kári responds to Skapti's comment with these verses:

95. This function of skaldic verse, namely its ability to give voice to marginalized characters in the sagas, is suggested by O' Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, 80. As to some alternative interpretations, Vésteinn Ólason suggests that Þórarinn's ill-luck in this situation stems from witchcraft rather than his unfitness for conflict. Vésteinn Ólason also reads Þórarinn as being "astonished but not displeased" at his newfound aggression. See Vésteinn Ólason, '"Máhlíðingamál': Authorship and Tradition in a Part of *Eyrbyggja saga*," in *Úr Dölum til Dala: Guðbrandur Vigfússon Centenary Essays*, edited by Rory McTurk and Andrew Wawn, Leeds Texts and Monographs new ser. 11 (Leeds: Leeds Studies in English, 1989), 187–203 at 194.

96. *Njáls saga*, 409.

18 Hvat skaltú, runnr, þótt rynnim,
randlinns, of sǫk minni
hagl dreif skarpt á Skǫglar
skýjum, oss at frýja,
hinn er helt, þá er hjalta
hátungur mjǫk sungu,
brynju meiðr til búðar
blauðr með skeggit rauða.[97]

Why should you taunt me,
"bush of the 'shield-snake'" [SWORD > MAN], if I ran?
—Sharp hail[98] drove upon
the "clouds of Skögul <Valkyrie>" [SHIELDS] for lesser cause—
effeminate "pole of the mail coat" [MAN],
you who kept to your booth with the red beard[99]
when the "long tongues of hilts" [SWORDS]
sang out loudly.[100]

19 Varð, þá er víga Njǫrðu
vilja þraut at skilja,
lítt gekk skáld fyrir skjǫldu
Skapta mart at hapti,
er matsjóðar Móða
málmrógs flatan drógu,
slíkt er allt af æðru
inn í búð at trúðar.[101]

Much was an impediment to Skapti
when "the Njörður <god> of battle" [MAN] lacked the will to separate
— little walked the poet[102] before the shields —
when the cooks dragged
the "Móði (god) of 'weapon-strife'" [BATTLE > MAN][103]
flat on his back
into the booth of the juggler;[104]
such behavior was all from cowardice.

97. *Njáls saga*, 409.

98. That is, a hail storm of arrows and spear points.

99. Some take "með skeggit rauða" (with the red beard) to qualify the kenning "pole of the mail coat" (man). However, in the Íslenzk fornrit edition "með skeggit rauða" is attached to "búð" which suggests the editors read the phrase metonymically: "you who kept to your booth with 'the man with the red beard'."

100. That is, when men fought with swords.

101. *Njáls saga*, 410. This stanza is particularly discontinuous, and I have followed the word order given in the Íslenzk fornrit edition (footnote to "19. visa"): "Varð Skapta mart at hapti, þá er víga Njǫrðu þraut vilja at skilja,—lítt gekk skáld fyrir skjǫldu,—er matsjóðar drógu málmrógs Móða flatan inn í búð at trúðar; slíkt er allt af æðru."

102. That is Skapti, who is said to have been a poet in the court of the Norwegian king, Hákon Sigurðsson (c. 937 – 995), was not seen in the thick of battle. Some take "lítt" to qualify "þrjóta" (lack) rather than "ganga" (go), and then interpret the "skáld" (poet) as Kári himself.

103. That is Skapti.

104. The reference here is obscure. Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum Antiquæ Linguæ Septentrionalis*, 2nd ed., edited by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Det Kongelige

20 Hǫfðu Gríms at gamni
grœðis elgs ok Helga,
rétt unnut þá runnar,
rennendr Níals brennu;
nú mun bǫrgs í bjǫrgum
baugs hnykkjǫndum[105]
þykkja
lyngs at loknu þingi
ljóts annan veg þjóta.[106]

The runners of the 'elk of the sea'" [SHIP > MEN][107]
had for amusement
the burning of Grímur, Njáll, and Helgi
the "bushes" [MEN] really did this;[108]
now there will seem to the "snatchers of the 'rock
of the ‹ugly ring of the heather›'" [SNAKE > GOLD > MEN][109]
the wind to howl another way in the crags[110]
at the close of the Althing.[111]

While these stanzas also seem to proceed from Kári's emotional distress, there is more at play within them than expression. These poems show how Kári's cognitive categories can be altered through

nordiske oldskrift-selskab, 1931), 573 suggests it means a despicable human being in general. Might it then refer to the man with the red beard in the previous stanza?

105. The other major textual tradition reads "baughnykkjǫndum."

106. *Njáls saga*, 410–11.

107. The "runners of the 'elk of the sea'" are the sailors of the ship, who now joke about the burning of Njáll and his family.

108. That is "they really did (*rétt unnit*) this and that was a bad thing to do." This is the reading accepted by the editors of the Íslenzk fornrit edition. The other major textual tradition reads "rangt unnit" (did wrong). "Runnar" "bushes" [men], is a half-kenning, i.e. a kenning whose genitive compliment is omitted. In his edition of *Brennu-Njáls saga*, Finnur Jónsson accepts the emendation of "rétt" to "rógs" reading "rógs runnar" ("the bushes of strife" [men]) (375).

109. The "rock of the ugly 'ring of the heather'" is the rock or home of the (coiled) snake, which is gold. The snatchers of gold are the generous men who distribute it.

110. According to Fulk, the expression "the wind to howl another way" is a gnomic colloquialism roughly equivalent to "they will be dancing to a different tune."

111. One possible way to read this second half of the stanza is without emendation in the order: "nú mun þykkja baug-hnykkjǫndum at loknu þingi annan veg þjóta í ljóts bǫrgs lyngs bjǫrgum." (Now it will seem to "ring-snatchers" [MEN] at the end of the Althing the wind to howl in a different way in the "heather-covered crags of the ugly boar" [SVÍNAFELL]). Svínafell was Flosi's home farm. However, if "börgur" (boar) is emended to "berg" (mountain) the sentence would read: "nú mun þykkja ljóts lyngs baugs bergs hnykkjǫndum at loknu þingi annan veg þjóta í bjǫrgum" (Now it will seem to "snatchers of the 'rock of the ugly ‹ring of the heather›'" [SNAKE > GOLD > MEN] at the end of the Althing the wind to howl in a different way in the crags). This is the reading adopted here.

his poetry. The occasions that prompt Kári's last four stanzas have to do with reconfiguring or retelling events in order to frame them in a way that is closer to Kári's own lived experience. These diverging accounts may be no more than the opposing perspectives of two warring groups, but Kári's version of events is presented without rebuttal within the saga narrative. It seems, then, that Kári gets the final poetic word, and his version of events is the one accepted by the saga writer. These stanzas enter into a discourse about the burning and its aftermath and, therefore, have the ostensible purpose of revealing and reconfiguring. They show Kári's attempts to rectify these mistaken narratives through the oblique poetic phrases he employs.

In stanza 18, Kári aims to correct the narrative that suggests his flight from Njáll's home was a cowardly act. While the fact that Kári fled is indisputable, it is the interpretation of this act that is contested here. Kári begins by demanding "Hvat skaltú . . . oss at frýja . . . þótt rynnim" (Why should you taunt me if I ran?)—a rhetorical question designed not to negate the facts of the story but to suggest an alternative conceptualization of them. He then appeals to his role in the battle at the Alþingi, saying that by his hand "skarpt hagl" (sharp hail) rained down upon the shields of his enemies. Kári uses this metaphorical battle-storm to assert himself as the aggressor. The second half of the stanza underscores Skapti's passive role in the battle. The warrior-kenning used to refer to Skapti is ironic in that while he is a "brynju meiðr"—a "pole of the mail coat" [MAN], someone who wears a byrnie—he is further qualified as "blauðr," that is effeminate. This kenning along with the previous characterization makes Skapti both passive and penetrable—the conventional Old Norse coward.[112] Kári then says that Skapti was carried to the booths, reinforcing his passivity. Being taken to the booths may also suggest a preference for settling

112. For more on the connotations of the Old Norse *ergi*, see Paul Beekman Taylor's discussion of *ergi* and its implications in *Sharing Story: Medieval Norse-English Literary Relationships* (New York: AMS Press, 1998), 2–5. For a fuller discussion, Folke Strom, *Nid, ergi, and Old Norse Moral Attitudes*, Dorothea Coke Memorial Lecture in Northern Studies (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1974) and Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *The Unmanly Man: Concepts of Sexual Defamation in Early Northern Society*, translated by Joan Turville-Petre, The Viking Collection 1 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1983).

matters through legal action rather than battle.[113] These images allow Kári to recast the dominant narrative concerning his flight from the burning by giving him the ability to speak of this event in ways that reconfigure how they ought to be interpreted. Indeed, recasting this event in poetry appears to persuade his hearers of his own worthiness and Skapti's comparative worthlessness.

Stanza 19 extends Kári's alternate reading of the events by further discrediting his enemies. Skapti has no interest in testing his strength against that of others. In this stanza, Kári associates him not with "víga Nirðir" (the war-gods) but with the "matsjóðar" (cooks) and the "trúðar" (jugglers). In doing so, Kári contrasts him with the more warlike men present at the Alþingi. The implication of the first half of this stanza is that Skapti lacked the will to fight, preferring instead to hide in his booth. Ostensibly, this can simply mean that he is not "battle-eager" as would befit a man in medieval Scandinavian culture. Yet the way this verse is presented places the quality of "battle-eagerness" within a framework that is strangely cognitive. The phrase "þraut vilja at skilja" (lacked the will to separate) hinges on a single turn of phrase generated by the term "skilja," which can mean "to understand" in the sense of "divide" or "separate."[114] The *Lexicon Poeticum* confirms this secondary meaning by noting first that "skilja" means *adskille* "to divide" and *kløver* "to cleave" and secondarily *forstå* "to understand."[115] The situation that prompts Kári's verse is a crisis of understanding. Kári and his supporters are warring over the deaths of their friends and loved ones, but in these verses Kári is warring over the proper way to understand their deaths and the character of the people who caused them. When he belittles Skapti, Kári not only impugns his courage but his credibility as one willing or able to discern—as one who can rightly divide the truth from the lie. It is significant that such a corrective comes in the form of poetry, which possesses a mythic

113. Relying upon the law rather than violent action is an accusation redolent of Þórarinn's characterization in *Eyrbyggja saga*. He is described similarly as being unfit for truly masculine behavior such as combat.

114. Richard Cleasby and Guðbrandur Vigfússon, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., edited by William Craigie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 546–47.

115. Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum*, 506.

relationship to knowledge. Here Kári uses poetry to overturn what he deems to be a false narrative. For Kári, then, compensation for Njáll's burning has as much to do with what his poetry achieves as whatever physical vengeance he can wreak. Both his poetry and his heroic acts serve to bring the scales of justice back into balance, and it is in this way that he uses skaldic poetry to make sense of the burning and its aftermath.

Kári's final stanza likewise illustrates the way his poetry functions to assimilate troubling experiences. Nearly a year after the foregoing scene, Kári has continued to hunt Flosi and those responsible for the burning when he comes upon Gunnar Lambason, who has been chosen to tell the story of Njáll's burning while spending Yule with King Sigtryggur. The king asks Gunnar: "Hversu þolði Skarpheðinn í brennunni?" (How did Skarpheðinn bear the burning?).[116] Gunnar replies, "Vel fyrst, . . . en þó lauk svá, at hann grét" (Well at first, ... but in the end, he wept).[117] The saga then tells us that "Kári stózk þetta eigi" (Kári could not stand that), and he charges into the hall to speak this verse:

22 Hrósa hildar fúsir,—	Those eager of battle boast—
hvat hafa til fregit skatnar,	what have the men[119] learned
hvé ráfáka rákum	of how we pursued
rennendr?—Níals brennu;	the "runners of the "sail-yard
varðat veiti-Njǫrðum	steed [SHIP > MEN]?—
víðeims at þat síðan,	of Njáll's burning;
hrátt gat hrafn at slíta	the "giving-Njörðurs <god> of
hold, slæliga goldit.[118]	the 'sea fire' [GOLD > MEN]
	were not repaid slowly after that:
	the ravens got raw flesh to tear.

Like the three poems before it, this stanza centers on the disjunction between what Kári believes to be the truth about the burning and the account of the burning his enemies have been propagating. The first narrative Kári rejects in stanza 18 is that he fled from

116. *Njáls saga*, 443.

117. *Njáls saga*, 443.

118. *Njáls saga*, 443.

119. That is, King Sigtryggur and his retinue have not learned anything about this.

the burning out of cowardice. The second narrative he attempts to rectify is that those who represent the burners at the Alþingi acted bravely when confronted by Kári and his supporters. Of course, Kári's cowardice and the burners' bravery are two sides of the same coin, and Kári feels compelled to correct the record. The third narrative Kári must correct is that Njáll's burning is a matter over which it is appropriate to brag and a story one may tell for amusement. Needless to say, this account does not align with Kári's inner feeling about the burning. Specifically, Kári is moved to speak this final stanza because of Gunnar's characterization of Skarpheðinn's final moments. This final stanza is prompted by outrage as he hears the burning described in a way he believes to be so deeply false. Here Kári uses this poem to reconfigure the terms of an event in order to make sense of cognitive incongruities.

Kári is concerned with the physical battlefield, but stanza 20 reinforces the fact that he is equally interested in the battlefield of the mind. As the stanza opens, Kári introduces an initial contrast between what the burners mistakenly think and what everyone else will think at the close of the Alþingi. His aim is to disabuse people of the idea that Njáll's burning is amusing, and in this stanza, he has his say. He is fairly explicit here, stating that "rétt unnut þá runnar" (the "bushes" [MEN] really did this) with the meaning this was not something right and that "þjóta annan veg" (there will be howling another way) about how they are treating this case. Stanza 22 is likewise concerned with thought. Here his goal is to silence the boasting of Gunnar, whose claims about Skarpheðinn recall their exchange at the end of the burning. During that encounter, Gunnar had identified the tears Skarpheðinn shed from the smoke as tears of fear and pain. Gunnar asks, "Hvárt grætr þú nú, Skarpheðinn?" (Are you weeping now, Skarpheðinn?), to which Skarpheðinn replies, "Eigi er þat . . . en hitt er satt, at súrnar í augunum" (No, I am not . . . but it is true, my eyes smart from the smoke).[120] Gunnar's boasts are an outrage to Kári because they are incongruent with Kári's experience of Skarpheðinn and, as such, constitute a cognitive crisis. In the first half of the stanza, Kári calls Gunnar's boast into question. Men boast, but what have the

120. *Njáls saga*, 333.

king and his retinue heard about how Gunnar and those involved in the burning have been pursued relentlessly? Kári's question insists on the deficiency of Gunnar's account, which fails to make sense of the events. The second half of the stanza aims to revise this narrative through the popular skaldic trope of the beasts of battle. Here Kári says that the "giving-Njörðurs," by which he means Flosi and the burners, were soon afterward paid for their treachery. They were not able to exonerate themselves through the payment of compensation, for Kári exacted from them a much higher price: their own flesh. The line "hrátt gat hrafn at slíta / hold" (the ravens got raw flesh to tear) suggests that Kári and his men took their payment in blood. Thus, the cowardice of Kári's enemies is compounded by their desire to settle and their inability to withstand him in battle. The image of the raven eating its fill of flesh from those slain in battle takes another step towards inverting the narrative Gunnar tells King Sigtryggur and his retinue that Yule. Gunnar is the coward fleeing the coming onslaught, and Kári is the brave warrior whose battle prowess fed the ravens and who took by force the satisfaction he was denied at the Alþingi.

Stanza 22 is the last of Kári's recorded poems in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, and it serves as a marker for Kári's progress in coming to terms with the events that precipitated his first skaldic poem, uttered from grief and an inability to assimilate the troubling event he witnesses. Kári's skaldic utterances enable him to express his interiority through a medium that makes his grief known while using oblique expressions that, as Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál* shows, work to conceal. Through the oblique nature of skaldic poetry, Kári is able to keep the more intense elements of his experience at arm's length, but his poetic expressions also allow Kári to begin the long, difficult task of making such an experience comprehensible. In his first two stanzas, Kári expresses his grief, and in his last four the images and figures he employs function to reconfigure the terms of this troubling experience so that it aligns with what he feels to be true.

Judging from the family sagas, the violence inflicted upon the inhabitants of medieval Iceland must have occasioned a number of tragic experiences. Kári's poetry after Njáll's burning offers readers a sense of how those emotionally troubling experiences were

negotiated by family saga authors. His poetic utterances enrich our understanding of the aesthetic range of skaldic verse. In the story of Kári, we see the great difficulty men of action sometimes have processing emotional distress, even when most outward signs show them to be focused on their duty to seek vengeance. Kári's case also offers readers a clue about the nature of troubling experiences in the family sagas. These experiences can be so violent and so abrupt that they cannot immediately be assimilated. When this happens, we may see a character attempt to make sense of these moments by lapsing into verse. These utterances may be enigmatic to those who hear them, and they may also represent an effort to distance a perceiving subject from a distressing object. Through the alchemy of skaldic verse, however, these attempts allow for fluid categorizations, malleable conceptions as changeable as the mythic mead at its source. By imbibing and pouring out again that liquid, one's inner landscape may be changed. When characters such as Kári express their interiority in such a way, the external world and others' perceptions of it may be changed as well. In discussing Kári's poetry, Nordal has observed a causal relationship between his verses and his heroic acts of vengeance. For Kári, "remembering past events" through his poetry "spurs his actions."[121] It is worth noting, however, that the most remarkable act at the end of Kári's part in the saga is not vengeance but reconciliation. When Kári is finally in a position to take vengeance on Flosi, chief of the burners, the two men embrace and broker a mutually satisfactory end to their enmity. Lars Lönnroth is right to point out that the reconciliation comes on the heels of their Christian conversions and their absolution in Rome,[122] but perhaps Kári's ability to assimilate his troubling experiences plays some role in his character's ability to end the cycle of violence. If Kári's poetry achieves a mental and emotional reconciliation, then why not a political one? Whatever the case, Kári's poetry demands an attentive audience—from his fellow saga characters as well as from us. Only then can we satisfy Kári's demand that we listen as he speaks of his grief.

121. Guðrún Nordal, "Attraction of Opposites," 230.

122. Lars Lönnroth, Njáls Saga: *A Critical Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 98.

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New Editions

Jóns saga leiksveins

A Text and Translation

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1. Introduction to the Saga

Within the rich corpus of extant medieval Icelandic sagas, *Jóns saga leiksveins* (The Saga of Jón the Player) ranks as one of the least known and least accessible. Also known as *Jóns saga leikara*—the name given to it by seventeenth-century antiquarian and scholar Árni Magnússon[2]—the short tale is usually classified as a *riddarasaga* (literally "saga of knights," or chivalric saga); although, as with many sagas within this category, it contains elements from more genres than just romance. The saga is an entertaining tale that freely adapts and combines disparate elements from a wide range of source material, but to date it has received very little attention from scholars within the field of medieval Icelandic studies. One of the reasons for this is a lack of accessibility: no edition of *Jóns saga* has previously been published, nor a translation into any language produced. There currently exists only one, unpublished, edition of *Jóns saga*; this is the semi-diplomatic edition in Martin Soderback's 1949 doctoral dissertation, which also represents the fullest study of the saga to date. The text and translation accompanying this article seek to redress this fundamental issue of accessibility by making the saga available to a wider audience than before. It is our hope that, amid the increasing

1. This edition and translation are the products of a collaboration among Ph.D. candidates in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic at the University of Cambridge.

2. See Kirsten Wolf, "Jóns saga leiksveins," in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf (New York: Garland, 1993), 345–46.

scholarly interest in the late medieval Icelandic romances, and the production of English translations of them,[3] *Jóns saga* may be evaluated in light of current and future analytical trends, be they stemmatic, generic, literary, folkloric, gender studies, or others.

Part of the reason for *Jóns saga*'s relative obscurity and lack of scholarly treatment is that the saga does not survive in any extant medieval manuscripts, although this textual situation is also true of some better-known sagas, such as *Hrólfs saga kraka*.[4] As will be discussed in this essay, the earliest two manuscripts of *Jóns saga* are dated to the middle of the seventeenth century. However, there seems to be little doubt that the story itself, in some form, was composed sometime in the late Middle Ages because it survives in a set of medieval *rímur* (a rhymed metrical ballad), although the earliest extant manuscript of *Jóns rímur leiksveins* is dated to the sixteenth century.[5] *Jóns rímur* tells the same story as the surviving *Jóns saga* but with several minor differences,[6] which led Martin Soderback to suggest, quite reasonably, that the story of Jón leiksveinn might

3. See Alaric Hall, "Translating the Medieval Icelandic Romance-Sagas," *The Retrospective Methods Network Newsletter* 8 (2014): 65–67. Since the publication of Hall's article, scholarly English translations have been produced (or are forthcoming) of several other late medieval Icelandic romances, including *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra*, *Vilmundar saga viðutan*, and *Ála flekks saga*. See *The Saga of Illugi, Gríður's Foster-Son*, edited by and trans. Philip Lavender (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2015), *The Saga of Vilmundur the Outsider*, edited by and trans. Jonathan Y. H. Hui (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2021), and "*Ála flekks saga*: An Introduction, Text and Translation," edited and translated by Jonathan Y. H. Hui, Caitlin Ellis, James McIntosh, Katherine M. Olley, William Norman and Kimberly Anderson, *Leeds Studies in English* 49 (2018): 1–43.

4. For an extensive discussion of the textual situation of *Hrólfs saga kraka*, see Tereza Lansing, "Post-medieval Production, Dissemination and Reception of *Hrólfs saga kraka*" (PhD diss., University of Copenhagen, 2011).

5. These *rímur* are preserved in Lbs 861 4to, which is dated to 1695 and was probably once part of the *rímur* manuscript now known as AM Acc. 22, but the first two stanzas are also found in Perg. 4to nr 22 (also known as Krossnessbók), which is dated to around a century earlier. See Björn K. Þórólfsson, *Rímur fyrir 1600,* Safn fræðafjelagsins um Ísland og Íslendinga 9 (Copenhagen: Hið íslenzka fræðafjelag, 1934), 329. No thorough study of *Jóns rímur* has been conducted, and its approximate date of composition remains an open question. Finnur Jónsson confidently asserted that the poem "er uden tvivl fra tiden omkr. 1400" (is without a doubt composed around 1400). Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Copenhagen: Gad, 1924), 3:58. Kirsten Wolf, however, places its composition within the first half of the sixteenth century. See Wolf, "Jóns saga leiksveins," 345.

6. Soderback enumerates these differences: "the rímur end with the wedding, the warning inscription above the gate is lacking, the one-eyed twins, not two other men, carry the head into the hall." Martin Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1949), l note 1. For an edition of *Jóns rímur leiksveins*, see Finnur

have existed in a slightly earlier prose form that has now been lost.[7] The chronological relationship between the *rímur* and the extant saga is unclear because both versions of the story could have existed concurrently. But the fact that the primary differences between them are minor matters of narrative expansion suggests that the surviving *Jóns saga* at least represents a later point of the story's development than the *rímur*, and that it could well have been written after the composition of the *rímur*. Combining this with the evidence of scribal errors in one of the saga's two oldest extant manuscripts—the mid-seventeenth-century Stockholm Papp. 8vo nr. 17, which Soderback suggested was copied from an older manuscript that was worn and hard to read in places—Soderback concluded that "the preserved version of *Jóns saga* was written sometime during the fifteenth century."[8]

2. Notable Motifs

The saga itself is short, straightforward, and entertaining. It freely combines distinct elements and motifs from a number of sources, which are themselves of varying genres and from different literary cultures. As Soderback observes, what little scholarly interest there has been in the saga has focused almost exclusively on these motifs.[9]

The first such motif is Jón's slaying of the serpent, a deed reminiscent of other dragon fights in medieval European romance. There are two particularly distinctive elements within this episode. First, the written notice above the gates leading to the serpent's

Jónsson, *Rímnasafn: Samling af de ældste islandske rimer*, 2 vols., Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 35 (Copenhagen: Møller, 1905–12), 2:825–42.

7. See Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara," l.

8. Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara," l–li. Other scholars have variously dated *Jóns saga* to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century on stylistic grounds. Stefán Einarsson considered *Ála flekks saga*, *Sigurgarðs saga frækna*, *Valdimars saga* and *Jóns saga leiksveins* to have constituted a late wave of legendary romances written between 1400 and 1500; see Stefán Einarsson, *A History of Icelandic Literature* (New York: Johns Hopkins Press for the American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1957), 164; Stefán Einarsson, *Íslensk bókmennta saga 874–1960* (Reykjavík: Snæbjörn Jónsson, 1961), 204. However, cf. Marianne Kalinke and P. M. Mitchell, *Bibliography of Old Norse-Icelandic Romances*, Islandica 44 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 60, who suggested the fourteenth century as a composition date, as did Kirsten Wolf (see Wolf, "Jóns saga leiksveins," 345).

9. See Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara," v. The most prominent sources and analogues that have so far been identified will be outlined here, but a more detailed discussion can be found in Soderback's dissertation.

lair, which reads, "Hver sá maður, er innan þessa hliðs ríður, viti fyrir víst að hann kemst ei með lífi í burt" (Whichever man rides through these gates should know for certain that he will not get away alive), has been suggested by Soderback to derive from the famous inscription above the gates of Hell in the *Inferno* of Dante's early fourteenth-century *Divina Commedia*, The inscription from Dante reads, *Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate* (Abandon every hope, you who enter).[10] Second, one of the two specific tokens by which Jón proves his deed was probably borrowed from *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*:[11] Jón's spearhead remains embedded in the dead serpent, and he later presents the matching spear-shaft as proof he is the one who had slain the beast. Ragnar loðbrók uses the same token of proof in *Ragnars saga*,[12] although Jón does not arrange or intend for his spearhead to become detached, as Ragnar does,[13] nor does he go into his fight against the serpent with the specific intention of marrying a princess by defeating it, even though he does ultimately achieve this outcome.

Jón's evening in the royal court is marked by two curious events: the entry of two one-eyed boys who serve the queen and the display of the embalmed head, which is presented before the queen in particular. At the end of the saga, the king reveals that the head was that of the queen's lover, with whom the queen had two sons. Upon discovering this, he had ordered that her lover be killed, his head preserved and regularly displayed to the queen as punishment, and that their two illegitimate sons have their left eyes cut out. The embalmed head of the rival lover is a motif found elsewhere in medieval European literature,[14] but,

10. See Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara," xxxvii–xxxix; cf. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*, edited by Giorgio Petrocchi and trans. Charles S. Singleton, 2 vols., Bollingen Series 80 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 1:24–25 (Inf. 3.9). For a study of such inscriptions or tituli in the Middle Ages, see Arwed Arnulf, *Versus ad picturas: Studien zur Titulusdichtung als Quellengattug der Kunstgeschichte von der Antike bis zum Hochmittelalter*, Kunstwissenschaftliche Studien 72 (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1997).

11. See Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara," xxxv–xxxvi.

12. See *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, in *Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda*, edited by Guðni Jónsson, 4 vols. (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1954), 1:227–31.

13. See *Ragnars saga*, 1:228.

14. See, e.g., tale 56, "De memoria mortis" (Of the Remembrance of Death) of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth-century Continental *Gesta Romanorum*: *Gesta*

as several scholars have noted, the motif in *Jóns saga* finds a particularly close analogue in the twelfth-century Cambro-Latin romance *Arthur and Gorlagon*.[15] The substance of that tale involves Gorlagon telling King Arthur a story of a king transformed into a (fully sentient) wolf by his treacherous queen, who then married her lover. Having fled to another country, this wolf was initially hunted by the king of that country, although the king soon adopted it after detecting human sentience in its deliberate display of gentleness towards him. The king's trust in the wolf, and his understanding of its sentience, grew over time, such that he eventually realized that it must be a man transformed into wolf-form by a spell. Seeking to have the wolf released from the transformative spell, the king allowed it to lead him to its former country, and, upon learning of the queen's actions and culpability in transforming her first husband into a wolf, he promptly invaded the kingdom and forced the queen to release the wolf from the spell.[16] Once restored to human form, this man formally divorced

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Romanorum, edited by Hermann Oesterley (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1872; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1963), 355–56; *Gesta Romanorum: A New Translation*, trans. Christopher Stace (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 138–40. See further Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 3:119, note 1.

15. The first scholar to note this parallel was Henry G. Leach, *Angevin Britain and Scandinavia*, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature 6 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921; repr. Millwood, NY: Kraus Reprint, 1975), 213–15. Brief discussion of this parallel can also be found in Margaret Schlauch, *Romance in Iceland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1934; repr. New York: Russell & Russell, 1973), 82–85; it should be noted that Schlauch refers to Jóns saga as "*Wilkins saga ok Jóns*," as some manuscripts name Jón's father as "Wilkin" and include him in the title even though he is a minor character (see Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara," liii). See further Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara," xviii–xxiii. For an edition of Arthur and Gorlagon, see George L. Kittredge, "Arthur and Gorlagon," Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature 8 (1903): 150–62; repr. in *Arthur and Gorlagon: Versions of the Werewolf's Tale* (New York: Haskell House, 1966). For translations see: "Arthur and Gorlagon," trans. F. A. Milne, with notes by A. Nutt, *Folk-Lore* 15 (1904): 40–67 and "Arthur and Gorlagon the Werewolf," edited and trans. Mildred Leake Day, *Latin Arthurian Literature*, edited by Mildred Leake Day, Arthurian Archives (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), 208–35.

16. These narrative elements which owe something to Marie de France's twelfth-century Breton Lay, "Bisclavret," translated into Old Norse in the thirteenth century as "Bisklarets ljóð," in *Strengleikar: An Old Norse Translation of Twenty-one Old French Lais*, edited by and translated by Robert Cook and Mattias Tveitane, Norrøne tekster 3 (Oslo: Norsk historisk kjeldeskrift-institutt Oslo, 1979), 85–99. The story reappeared in the second half of the sixteenth century as *Tíodels saga*. See *Tiodielis saga*, edited by Tove Hovn Ohlsson, Rit 72 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, 2009).

his former queen and had her lover killed. Having heard this story, Arthur asks Gorlagon who the sorrowful woman sitting opposite him and holding a plate with a bloodied and decapitated head might be, and Gorlagon replies that she is the treacherous queen from the story. The decapitated head is that of her former lover and Gorlagon himself is the former wolf.

Jóns saga and *Arthur and Gorlagon* share the same basic backstory behind the embalmed head, as well as certain minor elements within the presentation of this motif. Both contain a reference to the redness of the head, although, curiously, the cause is different in each: the head is reddened by blood in *Arthur and Gorlagon* while in *Jóns saga* the color comes from ruddiness rather than bloodiness, such that the head itself is said to retain a lifelike complexion. In both stories the eventual explanation of the embalmed head is immediately followed by the visitor's formal acceptance of the king's hospitality. Jón audaciously responds to the king's story by requesting his daughter's hand in marriage while Arthur, who, in the frame-story of *Arthur and Gorlagon*, had forsworn all food until he was able to learn the nature of women, repeatedly refuses Gorlagon's offer of food until the story is complete, after which he breaks his fast and departs. Furthermore, both stories also contain a wolf transformation, and although it is far less central to *Jóns saga* than to *Arthur and Gorlagon*, this may well have been the result of adaptation on the part of the saga's author. Certainly, the king's jarring acknowledgement of Jón's release of the wolf as a sign of nobility—despite his fury at the wolf's release and ignorance of its true nature—is reminiscent of the king's special recognition of the wolf's sentience in *Arthur and Gorlagon*. However, while it is clear that *Jóns saga* bears a close relationship to the literary tradition of *Arthur and Gorlagon*, Soderback argues that the saga might not have drawn on this specific romance, but on a closely related tale. His argument is based on an Urdu analogue of Persian origin called *Gül o Sanaubar* (Rose and Cypress). Kemp Malone used this narrative as a key piece of evidence for the ultimate Asian origin of the "fairy mistress" story found in *Arthur and Gorlagon* (that is, the part of the story involving the romancing by the hero of a young woman who will later turn out to be an unfaithful wife, and the eventual

disposal of her lover by the hero).[17] *Gül o Sanaubar* contains a number of elements found in *Jóns saga* but not in *Arthur and Gorlagon*. The most notable of these elements are: a warning inscription above a minaret (in *Jóns saga*, a gate); a fight against a venomous dragon; the presence of two characters blinded by the king; an amorous adventure with a king's daughter, which lands the hero in trouble; and the rescuing of the hero by a dog (in *Jóns saga* a wolf).[18] The third and fourth elements in particular are extremely prominent features of the narrative of *Jóns saga*, which draws even more attention to their absence in *Arthur and Gorlagon*. Based on this evidence, Soderback suggested, "the saga drew not from *Arthur and Gorlagon* as it is preserved to us, but from another version, now lost, which contained more of the Hindu[19] story than does the Welsh story."[20]

Following the presentation of the embalmed head, the narrator of *Jóns saga* makes a point of commenting on Jón's failure to inquire about this, despite his curiosity. This moment of taciturnity is probably based on Perceval's similar failure during his first encounter with the Fisher King in Chrétien de Troyes' late twelfth-century verse romance, *Perceval, le Conte du Graal*.[21] In that tale, Perceval, having been invited to the castle of the crippled Fisher King, observes a procession involving a number of objects being borne into a room, the penultimate of which is a "Grail," but he remains silent, having been taught to remain taciturn.[22] It is later revealed that simply

17. See Kemp Malone, "Rose and Cypress," *PMLA* 43 (1928): 397–446. For a discussion of the eastern origins of the Arthur and Gorlagon tale involving more sources, see A. Haggerty Krappe, "Arthur and Gorlagon," *Speculum* 8 (1933): 209–22. Although she does not discuss these narratives, Marina Mundt, *Zur Adaptation orientalischen Bilder in den Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda: Materialien zu einer neuen Dimension altnordischer Belletristik* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993) also argues that motifs from Persian and other oriental narratives can be found in the *Fornaldarsögur*. She sees Byzantium as the gateway for the entrance of these materials into the Scandinavian North (257–58) even though Frederic Armory, "Things Greek and the *Riddarasögur,*" *Speculum* 59 (1984): 509–23, argued against the existence of motifs drawn from Byzantine sources in the *riddarasögur*.

18. See Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara," xxvii–xxviii.

19. This should read "Hindustani," the majority dialect in the North of British India, now Hindi in India and Urdu in Pakistan.

20. Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara," xxviii.

21. See Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara," xlvi–xlvii.

22. See Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Roman de Perceval ou Le Conte du Graal*, edited by

asking whom the Grail served would have healed the Fisher King's wounds, and that much good would have come about as a result of this.[23] In *Jóns saga*, however, there is no negative consequence to Jón's initial silence and unsatisfied curiosity, and the only narrative function of the delaying of the explanation is the generation of suspense. Chrétien's *Perceval* was translated into the Old Norse language in Norway in the thirteenth century, as *Parcevals saga*,[24] and this translation could well have been the version of the Perceval story on which *Jóns saga* drew.

As the narrative moves from night to morning, the saga transitions from romance to fabliau. The farcical episode in which Jón thrice claims to be rendered immobile by the concealed and frightened princess seizing a different body part in turn seems likely to have been derived from a single fabliau.[25] However, no direct analogue has so far been identified, and it is unclear if the source tale is extant.[26] Regardless, the saga appears to have adapted its

Keith Busby (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993), 136–38, lines 3190–253.

23. See Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Roman de Perceval*, 150–54, lines 3507–611.

24. For a summary of some of the notable stylistic aspects of the Norse translation of the Perceval legend in comparison to the Old French, see Claudia Bornholdt, "The Old Norse-Icelandic Transmission of Chrétien de Troyes's Romances: *Ívens saga, Erex saga, Parcevals saga* with *Valvens þáttr*," in *The Arthur of the North: The Arthurian Legend in the Norse and Rus' Realms*, edited by Marianne E. Kalinke, Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages 5 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), 101–7. For an edition of *Parcevals saga,* see "'Parcevals saga' with '*Valvens þáttr*,'" edited by Kirsten Wolf, trans. Helen Maclean, in *Norse Romance*, edited by Marianne E. Kalinke, vol. 2, *The Knights of the Round Table*, Arthurian Archives 3–5 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), 103–216.

25. *Jóns saga* represents one of the clearest examples of fabliau influence on medieval Icelandic saga literature alongside *Möttuls saga*, the Old Norse translation of the Old French fabliau "Le Mantel mautaille" (The Ill-Fitting Mantel), *Sigurðar saga turnara* and the erotic scenes in *Grettis saga* and *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*—on which see, respectively, Robert J. Glendinning, "Grettis Saga and European Literature in the Late Middle Ages," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 4.2 (1970), 49–61; Jean Renaud, "Eroticism in the *Saga of Bósi and Herrauðr*," in *Litteratur og kjønn i Norden*, edited by Helga Kress (Reykjavik: Háskólaútgáfan, 1996), 67–74, and Lucy Anne Keens, "Scenes of a Sexual Nature: Theorising Representations of Sex and the Sexual Body in the Sagas of the Icelanders" (PhD diss., University College London, 2016).

26. An Old French fabliau, Jean de Condé's "Le Pliçon," has some limited resonance with this *Jóns saga* episode. In this fabliau, an adulteress is forced to hide her lover under the blankets when her husband returns home unexpectedly; she throws a petticoat over her husband's head and pretends to be playing a game with him, thus allowing her lover to escape. See Jean de Condé, "Le Pliçon," in *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux*, edited by Willem Noomen and Nico van den Boogaard, 10 vols. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1983–98), 10:29–32; Jean de Condé, "The Petticoat," in *Fabliaux: Ribald Tales from the Old French*, trans. Robert Hellman and Richard O'Gorman (New York: Thomas Y.

source in such a way that it deviates from standard fabliau tropes in certain notable ways. Most obviously, the stock fabliau figure of the adulteress, in whose bedroom the illicit affair takes place, and whose quick thinking saves herself and her lover from being discovered by her unwitting husband, is played by the male Jón; accordingly, the secret lover, usually male in the fabliaux, is played by the princess. Furthermore, Jón later freely and fully admits the whole affair to the king—such an action would be highly unusual in a fabliau context, but it has been shaped to make narrative sense in the saga, in that it allows Jón to exchange this information for the king's explanation regarding the embalmed head. Although this risqué episode might seem tonally jarring within the saga, the extent to which this episode has already been adapted from its possible fabliau source for the purpose of narrative cohesion cannot be overstated, especially given the prominence of the episode within the dramatic trajectory of the saga. Indeed, as Soderback notes, Jón's titular cognomen, *leiksveinn* or *leikari* (the Player), can only refer to this episode,[27] as the associations of the nickname are entirely irrelevant beyond the lascivious games that Jón and the princess "hafa leikið" (played). In other words, this humorous episode was central to the reception as well as to the composition of the saga.

The farcical bedroom episode ends with sudden news of the capture of a particularly troublesome wolf, whom Jón later frees. The end of the saga provides something of an afterthought of a backstory for the wolf, who is revealed to be a certain Prince Sigurður

Crowell, 1965), 67–70. This fabliau is classified under the folklore tale-type ATU 1419C, "The One-eyed Husband"; see Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography; Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, 3 vols., FF Communications 284–86 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2004), 2, pt. 2: "Tales of the Stupid Ogre, Anecdotes and Jokes, and Formula Tales," 209. It has a number of medieval analogues, such as tale 122 of the *Gesta Romanorum*, "De adulteris mulieribus et excecacione quorundam prelatorum" (Of adulterous women and the blindness of prelates) (see *Gesta Romanorum*, edited by Oesterley, 472; trans. Stace, 314–15). Most of these analogues do not center the deception around figurative blindness in the form of a petticoat, but rather around the wife "pretending to treat an injured eye of her husband" (*Fabliaux*, trans. Hellman and O'Gorman, 70). In addition to the obvious and general fact that *Jóns saga* and this folktale are concerned with the use of deception to conceal an illicit affair, we might also note another intriguing thematic parallel, namely that both tales involve the deception of a figure with only one functional eye—in *Jóns saga*, the first two characters to be fooled by Jón's ruse are the two one-eyed boys.

27. See Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara," xiv.

of Flanders and who, we are told, had been cursed into wolf-form by his wicked stepmother. This backstory represents another clear and interesting case of fusion between native Icelandic and foreign elements, in addition to the serpent fight discussed earlier. The presence of a wolf transformation episode in the saga probably results from influence from the *Arthur and Gorlagon* tradition, in which, as has been mentioned, the wolf transformation is the driving force behind much of Gorlagon's story. However, the way in which the transformation manifests in *Jóns saga* is very much situated within the Icelandic tradition, with two sagas offering particularly close parallels.[28] The arrangement of the curse, namely having it laid by a wicked stepmother and formalized by a slap with a wolf-skin glove, closely mirrors the episode in *Hrólfs saga kraka* in which Prince Björn, having rejected the lustful advances of his stepmother, is cursed by her (with a slap of her wolf-skin glove) to transform into a bear and ravage the livestock in his father's kingdom.[29] The condition of Sigurður's release from his lupine form finds a parallel in *Ála flekks saga*, another late medieval Icelandic romance roughly contemporary with *Jóns saga*. In this saga, the protagonist Áli is also placed under a curse transforming him into a ravaging wolf and can only be released if someone asks for quarter on his behalf, just as it is strongly implied that Sigurður is to be released by Jón granting him mercy.[30] The fact that Sigurður's curse is treated in

28. On wolf-transformations in medieval Icelandic literature, see Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, "The Werewolf in Medieval Icelandic Literature," *JEGP* 106 (2007): 277–303; Christa Agnes Tuczay, "Into the Wild—Old Norse Stories of Animal Men," in *Werewolf Histories*, edited by William de Blécourt, Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 61–81; Gwendolyne Knight, "Categorizing the Werewolf: or, The Peopleness of Shapeshifters," in *Margins, Monsters, Deviants: Alterities in Old Norse Literature and Culture*, edited by Rebecca Merkelbach and Gwendolyne Knight, The North Atlantic World 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 28–44; and Minjie Su, *Werewolves in Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: Between the Monster and the Man*, Borders, Boundaries, Landscapes 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2023). For a survey of the main instances of the *álög* (curse) motif in extant medieval Icelandic contexts, see Rosemary Power, "*Geasa* and *Álög*: Magic Formulae and Perilous Quests in Gaelic and Norse," *Scottish Studies* 28 (1987): 76–83.

29. See Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara," xxxix–xli. The episode in *Hrólfs saga* can be found in *Hrólfs saga kraka*, in *Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda,* edited by Guðni Jónsson, 4 vols. (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1954), 1:1–105 at 44–50.

30. See *Ála flekks saga*, in *Drei lygisǫgur: Egils saga Einhenda ok Ásmundar Berserkjabana / Ála Flekks saga / Flóres saga konungs ok sona hans*, edited by Åke Lagerholm, Altnordishe Saga-Bibliothek 17 (Halle [Saale]: Niemeyer, 1927), 84–120 at 99–104. On the calculated use of the *álög* motif in *Ála flekks saga*, see Jonathan Y. H. Hui, Caitlin

such a cursory manner, such that no reason or motivation is even supplied on the stepmother's part, serves to emphasize how firmly this curse fits into the Icelandic tradition; it implies that the saga author considered the shell of the motif to be sufficient, because the usual circumstances and associations surrounding the implementation of a curse in a late medieval Icelandic romance would be implicitly understood by the audience or reader.[31]

Although *Jóns saga* is rather short, it is clear that it not only contains, but is in fact constructed around, a number of motifs from a variety of different sources. Indeed, just as interesting as identifying sources and analogues of these motifs is exploring the way in which they have been adapted and fused together. Perhaps the most successful example of this fusion is the combination of the embalmed head motif and Jón's Perceval-inspired failure to inquire about this marvelous sight, a failure he is later able to remedy through exchanging the truth about his fabliau-inspired affair with the princess. At times, though, the eagerness to incorporate a particular motif gets the better of narrative logic, as can be seen in the lack of explanation behind Jón's apparently being aware of the wolf's true nature before he has met it, or in the belated introduction of a backstory for the wolf. The presence of such quirks in such a short story inevitably characterizes the saga as more gallimaufry than literary masterpiece, but that is not to say that the saga does not ultimately achieve its goal of being interesting and entertaining.

3. Manuscripts and Normalization

Jóns saga leiksveins survives in some form in twelve known manuscripts, all of which were produced after the Middle Ages. These are listed below, with dates listed as found in Marianne Kalinke and P. M. Mitchell's *Bibliography of Old Norse-Icelandic Romances*,

Ellis, James McIntosh, and Katherine M. Olley, "*Ála flekks saga*: A Snow White Variant from Late Medieval Iceland," *Leeds Studies in English* 49 (2018): 45–64.

31. One possible motivation for Sigurður's stepmother laying the curse on him could be the rejection of her sexual advances, which is, in addition to *Hrólfs saga kraka*, also the motivation behind a (non-transformative) curse in the late medieval romance *Hjálmþés saga ok Ölvis*, in *Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda*, edited by Guðni Jónsson, 4 vols. (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1954), 4:177–243. For a brief discussion of wicked stepmothers (amorous or otherwise) in Icelandic romance, see Schlauch, *Romance in Iceland*, 99–102 and Werner Lincke, *Das Stiefmuttermotiv im Märchen der germanischen Völker,* Germanische Studien 142 (Berlin: Emil Ebering, 1933), 90–162.

except where a more specific date is provided by *Handrit.is* (denoted with superscript "H") or the *Stories for All Time* database (denoted with superscript "S"):[32]

Institute	Shelfmark	Date
Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen	AM 174 fol.	1644
Royal Library, Stockholm	Papp. 8vo nr 17, part II	*ca.* 1650
National Library, Reykjavik	JS 641 4to, part I	1693–1799[H]
Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen	AM 588f 4to	*ca.* 1700
Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen	AM 553e 4to	1700–1725[H]
Royal Library, Copenhagen	NKS 1144 fol.	1700–1749[S]
National Library, Reykjavik	Lbs 1172 4to	1700–1799
National Library, Reykjavik	Lbs 840 4to	1737
National Library, Reykjavik	ÍB 260 8vo	*ca.* 1824–27
National Library, Reykjavik	Lbs 1144 8vo	*ca.* 1850[33]
National Library, Reykjavik	Lbs 678 4to	1852–54
National Library, Reykjavik	Lbs 3128 4to	1884

Twelve is a relatively low number of extant manuscript witnesses compared to most other *riddarasögur*; Matthew Driscoll notes, "of the original *riddarasögur* which have survived from the medieval period over half are preserved in 40 manuscripts or more, and two, *Mágus saga* and *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns*, in nearly twice that many."[34] The textual evidence therefore offers little to suggest that

32. See Kalinke and Mitchell, *Bibliography of Old Norse-Icelandic Romances*, 60; cf. https://handrit.is and "Stories for all time: The Icelandic fornaldarsögur," http://fasnl.ku.dk.

33. Kalinke and Mitchell do not provide a date for this manuscript, but the scribal hand has been identified as Páll "factor" Hjaltalín. See Páll Eggert Ólason, *Skrá um handritasöfn Landsbókasafnsins*, vol. 2 (Reykjavik: Landsbókasafn Íslands, 1927), 219. Páll Hjaltalín was born in 1806 and died in 1876.

34. Matthew Driscoll, "Late Prose Fiction (*lygisögur*)," in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, edited by Rory McTurk (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 194.

the story of Jón leiksveinn was particularly popular in postmedieval Iceland relative to many other *riddarasögur*, but the narrative tradition was certainly prominent enough in the late Middle Ages to have a set of *rímur* composed about it.

As shown in the table above, the earliest two manuscript witnesses of the saga are AM 174 fol., whose colophon on f. 10v dates it to 1644,[35] and Stockholm Papp. 8vo nr 17 part II, which is dated to around 1650.[36] Soderback's edition of the saga used Papp. 8vo nr 17 as its base text, with selected variants from AM 174 fol., AM 588f 4to, and AM 553e 4to.[37] These witnesses of *Jóns saga* vary in terms of phrasing rather than narrative substance, although there are enough instances of this variation to argue that the latter two manuscripts belong to the stemmatic branch of AM 174 fol. rather than that of Papp. 8vo nr 17. Soderback's decision to use Papp. 8vo nr 17 as his base manuscript stemmed from his opinion that its text was older than that of AM 174 fol., an opinion based on a combination of his paleographical observation that the script of Papp. 8vo nr 17 was similar to some specimens dated to the sixteenth century, as well as his linguistic identification of a greater frequency of unstressed syllables ending in the older *-t* or *-k* rather than the younger *-ð* or *-g* respectively, in this manuscript compared to AM 174 fol.[38]

The text provided here is also that of Papp. 8vo nr 17, and is the first text of *Jóns saga* in normalized orthography. The normalization has been carried out according to the orthographic principles of modern Icelandic, since the language of the manuscript is closer to that standard than to the one used, for example, by the editors of Íslenzk fornrit, which is based on early thirteenth-century Icelandic. Although no normalization is ever purely orthographical, we have tried as far as reasonably possible to restrict the changes to orthography and phonology, so as to present a normalized version of the manuscript text rather than a modern Icelandic translation of it.

35. See Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara," lii.

36. See Vilhelm Gödel, *Katalog öfver Kongl. bibliotekets fornisländska och fornnorska handskrifter* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1897–1900), 379. This part of the manuscript also contains a fragment of *Bærings saga*, another *riddarasaga*, and part of a poem about legendary heroes.

37. See Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara," lii.

38. See Soderback, "Jóns saga leikara," lii–liii.

As far as the morphology is concerned, nominal and adjectival endings have not been modernized; forms such as MS *lijtillrar* and *mikillre* have been turned respectively into *lítillar* and *mikilli*, with assimilation of the *r* to the stem-final *l* as is the norm in modern Icelandic and which was already common in Old Icelandic. Verbal endings have also been kept as they are featured in the manuscript, without modernizing them: the first-person singular past indicative *sagða* (MS *sagda*) and the third-person plural past subjunctive *væri* (MS *værj*) have not been substituted with their modern equivalents *sagði* and *væru*. Similarly to the case of MS *lijtillrar* and *mikillre*, MS *vóx* has been represented as *óx*, the standard form in modern Icelandic and the prevalent one in Old Icelandic. The verb *gjöra* has not been modernized into *gera*.

Modern orthography and phonology have been applied to personal and possessive pronouns, although without substituting modern forms to the old ones where usage has changed. Thus, for example, *við* (normalized form of MS *vit*) appears as the first-person dual (rather than plural, as in Modern Icelandic) personal pronoun. The inflected forms of the possessive *yð(v) ar(r)* (MS *ydar*) have been maintained, normalizing them to the paradigm without *v* (so MS *yduarz*, the only form featuring *v*, has been represented as *yðars*, and MS *ydrar* as the more standard unsyncopated *yðarrar*). In accordance with the manuscript, the alternation between the two stem variants of the indefinite pronoun *enginn* (MS *einginn*) has been retained, with all forms except for the nominative singular featuring the stem *öng(v)-*.

The syntax has been left unchanged, although we have supplied all of the punctuation and most of the paragraph breaks. And in instances where words are obviously missing, we have supplied these from AM 174 fol. and put them in square brackets. Implied subjects, which are numerous in this text, have not been made explicit by adding pronouns or nouns that are absent from the manuscript, and this was a factor in the punctuation we chose to supply. In the few instances in which a strong adjective appears where modern Icelandic would prefer or require the weak form (*sitt gullsaumað merki*, *þessi fáheyrður atburður*, *í hæsta þjónustu sína*), the manuscript forms have been retained, although in two out of three cases (the latter two), AM 174 fol. does present the weak form.

Jóns saga leiksveins

Hér byrjar söguna af Jóni leiksvein.

Það er upphaf lítillar frásagnar, að einn ríkur ágætur burgeis hefur ráðið fyrir einum ágætum kastala í Frakklandi. Hann átti sér frú, komna af bestum ættum sem til voru í landinu næst drottningunni Löðvis kóngs, er þá ríkti í Frakklandi með mikilli makt og kurteisi. Þessir menn gátu einn son sín á milli, þann er þau fæddu upp með allri virðingu og mikilli heimsins prýði. Sá hinn ungi maður er nefndur Jón. Hann óx upp með föður sínum og móður, og unnu honum allir frændur, og ei síður var hann prísaður af öllum þeim sem honum voru nálægir. Hann vandist snemma við skot og skylmingar og allra handa íþróttir sem manninn mátti prýða og einum fríðum riddara hæfði. Og sem hann var orðinn fimmtán ára gamall var hann svo fríður í ásjónu og fullkomnum þroska að enginn jafn gamall var svo fríður eður fullkominn eður vel menntur, og þó eldri væri, í öllu Frakklandi.

Og einn tíma er þessi maður hafði veislu margmenna og bauð vinum og frændum, og [að][1] þeirri veislu tjáir hinn ríki maður þar sitjandi hversu ágætt mannsefni Jón son hans var orðinn, til þess að hver er tungu hefði[2] á og mætti tala, skildi lofa hans fegurð og fríðleik. Og svo hneigðust nokkur vegsemdar orð af þeim sem þar inni sitja.

Burgeisinn mælti: "Kom til mín, minn son, og vil ég dubba þig til riddara, því ei byrjar annað." Það sama fer fram, að með hinu ágætasta herskrúði dubbar hann sinn son og þar talar hann með því: "Son minn, það er allra manna tal þeirra er þína atgjörvi vita að ei mun jafn ágætur maður hafa verið fæddur á þessari jörðu sem þú ert að þroska og riddaraskap og öðrum afbragðlegum íþróttum. Þá vil ég gefa þér, með riddara nafni, svo fríðan hest að enginn fæst hans jafni eður annar þvílíkur í öllu Frakklandi. Þykir oss það saman bera og kom svo sem þú ber af öðrum mönnum, svo beri hesturinn af öðrum hestum."

Og sem hinn ríki maður hefur endað sitt mál svarar hinn ungi maður þessum orðum: "Guð þakki yður, herra minn," segir hann, "hversu

1. Preposition supplied from AM 174 fol.
2. "Er tungu hefði"emended from MS "ed tungunnst hefdin."

Here begins the saga of Jón the Player.

This is the beginning of a little tale: there was a powerful and noble burgess who ruled over a splendid castle in France. He married a woman who came from the best lineage in the land besides that of the queen of King Löðvir, who then ruled in France with much might and courtesy. These people had a son between them, whom they raised with all honor and much worldly splendor. This young man is named Jón. He grew up with his father and mother, and all of his kinsmen loved him, and no less was he praised by all those who were near him. From an early age, he was practiced in archery and fencing and all types of feats that ennobled a person and that befitted a fine knight. And when he had turned fifteen years old, he was so fair in countenance and fully grown into manhood that no one of the same age was so fair or mature or courteous, nor anyone in all France, though they might be older.

One time, this man held a well-attended banquet and invited friends and kinsmen. Sitting at this feast, the powerful man proclaimed what an excellent and promising man his son Jón had become, so that whoever would and could speak about it should praise his beauty and handsomeness. And so those sitting inside there paid homage to him with some words of honor.

The burgess said: "Come to me, my son; I wish to dub you as a knight, because nothing else is befitting." And so, it happens that he dubs his son with the most excellent suit of armor, and as he does so, he says this: "My son, it is the talk of all men who know of your abilities that no man has been born on this earth who is equally splendid as you in maturity and knightliness and other surpassing skills. I therefore wish to give to you, along with the title of knight, a horse so fair that none equal or similar can be found in all of France. We consider it equally fitting that just as you surpass other men, this horse surpasses other horses."

And when the powerful man has ended his speech, the young man replies with these words: "May God thank you, my lord," he says,

ástsamlega þér hafið alla hluti við mig gjört og nú einkanlega best með föðurlegum orðum og dýrum gjörðum. Vil ég nú gjöra yður öllum, ásamt vinum og frændum, kunnuga mína ráðagjörð: að svo sem þér hafið allir samþykkt að ég er ágætari hverjum manni í þessu landi, skil ég fullkomlega að allt það Guðs lán sem ég hefi öðlast eyðist, og að öngu verður, ef ég skal æ vera á míns föður garði og öngra ævintýra leita mér í veröldinni. Og fyrir þá sök skal ég skjótt fara af minni föðurleifð, ei síðar en á morgun, ríðandi þeim fríða hesti sem minn faðir gaf mér." Og að svo töluðu verður faðir hans og móðir og allir vinir og frændur óttafullir og báðu honum virkta af Guði, að hann styrkti hann í öllum mannraunum.

Og að morgni komandi stendur Jón upp harla snemma og klæðir sig rösklega, stígur á bak sínum hesti vel búnum. Hann hafði og annan hest lausan er hann hafði sér til burtreiðar tamið. Er nú faðir hans og allir vinir með ugg og ótta hversu mikla heill að hann mundi bera veraldarinnar, svo fyrirlitlega sem hann gjörði ferð sína og öngvan vildi hann svein með sér hafa. Og áður en hann reið út af borginni þá mælti hann: "Nú er ég kominn á þann fríðasta hest er minn kæri faðir gaf mér fyrir þá grein að ég er vel af garði gjör og ég þykist mikið eiga undir mínum frækleika. Strengi ég þess heit að þar sem ég ætla fram að ríða mínum hesti að mér skal enginn hlutur tálma." Þessi heitstrenging virðist mörgum mikil.

Að svo töluðu setur hann upp sitt gullsaumað merki, heilsandi föður sínum og móður, frændum og vinum; ríður síðan í burt svo vítt sem vegar lágu, allt þar til einn dag sem hann kemur fram að einu borgarhliði. Hann kannast við og skilur fullkomlega að þetta mun ei mjög fjarri þeirri heitstrengingu sem festi hann á sinni fósturjörðu; markar þar af að hann muni lengri veg farið hafa en hann varði; litast nú um og sér upp yfir hliðinu skrifað á einu blaði, hvert svo mælti: "Hver sá maður er innan þessa hliðs ríður viti fyrir víst að hann kemst ei með lífi í burt." Nú sýnist honum þessi orð ógurleg og ei til ráðandi fram að ríða hvar sem hann kæmi.

Hann gjörir sig nú öruggan, lætur eftir hest sinn með pokum þeim er á voru, en lýkur upp borgarhliðinu; slær hest sporunum og ríður

"for how lovingly you have treated me in every way, and now, best of all, with fatherly words and worthy deeds. I now wish to make my plan known to you, along with friends and kinsmen: as you have all agreed that I am more noble than any man in this land, I understand perfectly that all of God's good fortune that I have gained will diminish, and that it will come to nothing if I always stay in my father's court and seek no adventures for myself in the world. And on account of this, I shall quickly go away from my patrimony, no later than tomorrow, riding the fair horse that my father gave me." After he had spoken, his father and mother and all his friends and kinsmen become full of dread and commended him to God, that He might strengthen him in all trials.

When morning came, Jón gets up very early and dresses himself briskly, and mounts his well-equipped horse. He also had another untethered horse, which he had tamed for jousting. His father and all his friends are now filled with fear and apprehension over how much worldly fortune he would enjoy, since his journey was so ill-conceived and he did not want to have any squire with him. And before he rode out from the city, he said: "I am now on the most beautiful horse, which my dear father gave me because I have great talent, and I believe I can rely on my prowess. I swear this oath: that nothing will hinder me wherever I intend to ride my horse." This oath-swearing seems great to many people.

Having spoken thus, he raises his gold-embroidered standard, saluting his father and mother, kinsmen and friends. Then he rides away as far as paths led, until he arrives one day at city-gates. He recognizes and understands perfectly that he must not be very far from testing the oath that he had sworn in his homeland. He realizes from this that he must have travelled a longer way than he had thought. He looks around and sees a written notice over the gates, which said this: "Whichever man rides through these gates should know for certain that he will not get away alive." These words seem terrible to him and do not encourage him to ride forward wherever he might arrive.

He steels his resolve, leaves his horse behind along with the bags upon it, and opens the city-gates. He spurs his horse on and rides

fram sinn veg, allt þar til sem hann sér mikla sýn: að hræðilegur ormur liggur um þveran veginn, blásinn og þrútinn, [bannsettlegum] og skírlegum eitursins ófagnaði [spýjandi],[3] svo að hvergi mátti fram komast utan hann yrði var við. Hann var þá í svefni. Jón segir þá í hjarta sínu: "Þetta er ógurlegt kvikindi," segir hann, "allmikill sigur mun það þykja hér landsmönnum ef nokkur maður ynni þennan ófagnað"—herðir huginn, setur fram merki sitt undir merki heilags kross, rennur fram að orminum og leggur svo ógurlega undir hans vinstra bægsl er upp horfði að spjótið stóð í hjarta. Ormurinn kipptist við hræðilega er hann fékk svo stórt sár, tekur til þeirra tóla er honum voru tömust og blés hræðilegu eitri, svo megnu að skjöldur riddarans bráðnaði í sundur sem snjór fyrir eldi, og var hann þó þrírenndur af stáli og ei síður klæði hans stikna í sundur, svo og hestur hans brennur til dauðs. En eftir langan eiturblástur snérist ormurinn, en fyrir heilags anda var hinn ungi maður heill og óskaddaður að öllum líkama; gengur nú fram að orminum og sníður hinn fremsta[4] hlut af tungunni og hefur með sér. Þar lét hann eftir spjótið í sárinu en hefur með sér skaftið; gengur nú þá leið aftur og tekur hest sinn og stígur á bak og klæðir sig öllum herfötum, ríður nú fram þann sama veg sem brautin lá allt þar til að mikil borg hefst upp fyrir honum, ágætlega smíðuð með sterkum múrum.

Hann reið innan borgar, setur upp sitt glaðél[5] og rennir kurteislega inn í staðinn. Og sem borgarmenn sjá og undirstanda að þessi hinn fagri riddari ríður inn í borgina sem enginn maður fyrr á þrem tugum ára hafði fyrr með lífi komist, fara nú og segja kónginum sem ríkti yfir þessu landi það sem þeir hafa séð. Og sem hann heyrði þessi tíðindi stendur hann upp af sínu sæti og gengur út til móts við þann er að reið. Og er hann sér hvar sá hinn ungi maður ríður

3. In accordance with AM 174 fol., "bannsettlegum" has been emended from MS "bannsettlegan," and "spýjandi" has been supplied.

4. "Fremsta" supplied from AM 174 fol., emended from MS "finnstra."

5. Glaðél is derived from Latin *gladiolus*, which is a diminutive form of *gladius* (sword). However, the Icelandic word can refer either to a lance (or spear) or to a short sword. In this case, it might refer to Jón's spear-shaft, which, without its spear-head, might look something like a lance. However, it might also refer to the pole on which his standard is set. See Hjalmar Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, Skrifter og afhandlinger der Norske Videnskaps Akademi 2, Historisk-filosofisk klasse 6 (Kristiania [Oslo]: Dybwad, 1914), 73.

forth on his path, until he sees a great sight: that a dreadful serpent lies across the way, bloated and swollen, spewing a wicked and undiluted pestilence of poison, so that no one could advance anywhere without it becoming aware. It was asleep. Jón then says in his heart: "This is a terrible creature," he says. "It would be considered a very great victory by the citizens of this place if any man could overcome this pestilence." He steels his mind, sets forth his standard under the sign of the Holy Cross, rushes up to the serpent, and strikes so fiercely under its left shoulder, which was raised, that the spear stood in its heart. The serpent lurched terribly when it received such a great wound, and it took to the tools most familiar to it and breathed terrible poison, so bitter that the knight's shield melted asunder as snow before fire, even though it was made of thrice-tempered steel, and no later are his clothes scorched apart, and his horse also burned to death. After breathing poison for a long time, the serpent rolled over dead, but on account of the Holy Spirit, the young man was unharmed and unscathed across his whole body. Now he approaches the serpent and slices off the foremost part of the tongue and takes it with him. He left the spear-head behind in the wound, but took the shaft with him. He goes back and takes his horse and mounts it and dresses himself in all his armor. Now he rides forth the same way that the road lay, until a great city rises up before him, excellently built with strong walls.

He rode into the city, sets up his spear and races gallantly into the place. And when the citizens see and perceive that this fair knight rides into the city as no man in the last three decades had managed to do while keeping his life, they now go and tell the king who ruled over this land what they had seen. And when he heard these tidings, he gets up from his seat and goes out to meet the rider. When he sees the young man riding to the hall, the king takes the horse's bridle

að höllinni tekur kóngur í hesttauminn og býður honum af baki að stíga. Hann gjörir svo. Kóngurinn styður hann á meðan hann stígur til jarðar, minntist til hans blíðlega og spyr að nafni hans og ætt eða hvaðan hann kom eður hvernin hann sigraði þann veg er hann hugði að enginn mundi fram komast. Riddarinn svarar kóngsins máli, spurða hluti segir hann, og sýnir ormstunguna til jarteikna að hafði drepið hann, og sagði að spjótið stæði í honum. Kóngur sendir nú menn að forvitnast um þessa hluti og birtist allt sem riddarinn hafði sagt; taka spjótið og færa heim og hæfir það maklega skaftinu sem riddarinn hélt á. Undrar allt fólk mikillega þennan unga riddara er svo mikil þrekvirki hafði unnið.

Tekur nú kóngur í hönd honum, leiðir hann í höllina með ágætu föruneyti, setur hann upp á aðra hönd sér og lét gjöra ágæta veislu um alla höllina. Og millum annarra hluta spyr kóngurinn Jón: "Hví góði riddari," sagði hann, "ertu einn á stigum af þinni fósturjörð, svo dýrrar ættar sem vér skiljum þig vera?"

Riddarinn svarar: "Það veldur því, herra, að mér þótti það afla mér mest frægðar hjá annarlegum höfðingjum í ókunnu landi að ég hafði ekki annarra styrk, og minntist ég þess við þetta hlið að ég hafði þess heit strengt að skildi þar fram ríða sem ég hafði ætlað, hver tregi sem á væri."

Kóngi fannst mikið til orða hans og sagði: "Svo mikinn sigur hefur þú unnið oss að þar fyrir ertu mikilla sæmda verður, og munum vér ei fá svo til þín gjört sem þú ert maklegur. En svo lengi bjóðum vér þér með oss að vera sem þú vilt og það af voru ríki að hafa sem þú vilt."

Nú sem þeir töluðust við gengur inn í höllina með fríðu föruneyti drottningin sjálf og skipar kóngur henni á aðra hönd sér í hásæti. Leið ei langt áður en inn komu í höllina tveir kollóttir piltar svo hvorugan mátti kenna frá öðrum, báðir einsýnir. Þeir ganga og þjóna báðir fyrir hnjám drottningar. Sér hann fullkomlega að drottningin verður föl og bleik við er þeir gengu með borðinu. Undrar hann þetta allt saman. Eftir þetta komu inn tveir menn og bera á milli sín

and asks him to dismount. He does so. The king supports him while he steps to the ground, kisses him tenderly, and asks for his name and lineage, or where he came from, or how he had overcome the trial that he had thought no one would be able to pass through. The knight answers the king's words, tells him the things that were asked, shows him the serpent's tongue as proof that he had killed it, and said that the spear stood in it. The king then sends men to look into these things, and everything appeared as the knight had said. They take the spear and bring it back, and it perfectly fit the shaft that the knight wielded. Everyone wondered greatly at the young knight who had achieved such a great feat.

The king now takes him by the hand, leads him into the hall with his noble retinue, seats him beside himself, and orders an excellent feast to be held throughout the hall. And among other things, the king asks Jón: "Why, good knight," he said, "are you alone on your paths away from your homeland, from as noble a lineage as we understand you to be?"

The knight answers: "The reason for this, lord, is that it seemed to me that I would gain most renown from foreign chieftains in an unknown land if I did not have the support of others. I remembered at these gates that I had sworn an oath that I should ride forth as I had intended, whatever difficulty there might be."

The king admired his words greatly and said: "You have won us so great a victory that, because of this, you are worthy of great honor, and we will never be able to treat you as honorably as you deserve. But we invite you to stay with us for as long as you wish, and to have from our kingdom whatever you desire."

As they conversed, the queen herself walks into the hall with a fair retinue, and the king seats her beside him on the high-seat. It was not long before two shaven-headed boys, both one-eyed, came into the hall—no one could recognize one from the other. They both go and serve the queen. The knight sees that the queen becomes pale and wan when they walk alongside the table. He wonders at all of this. After that, two men came in, carrying a man's head

mannshöfuð, svo frítt og rjótt sem það væri kvikt á búknum. Þeir halda með einum fríðum dúk höfðinu fyrir drottningunni og sýna henni framar en öðrum sem inni sátu. En er hún sér höfuðið fellur að henni sárlegur grátur. Síðan bera þeir fram höfuðið af höllinni. Undrar Jón þetta en lætur þó vera kyrrt og spyr ei eftir.

Nú sem menn hafa drukkið nokkra stund heyrist pípnagangur með strengleikum og margskonar söngfærum fara að höllinni. Og sem það hafði lengi gengið með mikilli íþrótt sér hann fram koma kurteisa þjónustumenn og því næst sér hann meyjar með miklu föruneyti og fríðu. Og í þeim flokk gengur ein mær öllum þeim fríðari og kurteisari. Hann undirstendur að þessi hin fríða frú muni vera dóttir kóngsins og er hún kemur fyrir kónginn talar hann til hennar: "Þú, mín kæra dóttir, skalt frammi standa í dag, því að vér eigum þessum unga manni meiri virðingu að veita en nokkrum öðrum manni, því hann er hverjum þeim framar sem ég veit grein á. Því skaltu nú þjóna þessum riddara til sæmda."

Hún mælti: "Hvað hefur þessi maður til þess að hann skal meir virða í þinni höll en nokkurn annan svo sem í minni þjónustu?" Kóngur segir þá henni atburð um hans þar komu og hvað hann hefur unnið og hverju landi hann sagðist vera. En hún lést sem henni fyndist þar fátt um, og þó allt að einu gjörir boð föður síns, stendur frammi kurteislega fyrir kónginum og riddaranum og skenkir þeim, en ei fleirum mönnum.

Nú líður á kvöldið og hirðin gleðst mikillega af ágætum drykk og eigi síður kóngurinn en aðrir menn, því allir þóttust gjöra riddaranum heiður í því að drekka sem mest. Þá lítast þau til nokkuð, jómfrúin og riddarinn, og svo segist að mærin setti mikillega augu til hans, en hafði orð til þau er hún talaði fyrir föður sínum. Hann kennir að glaumur gjörist mikill um höllina að eigi verður gáð þó að þau talist nokkuð við.

between them, so handsome and ruddy that it seemed as though it were alive and on his body. They hold the head with a fair cloth before the queen, and show it to her more than to the others who sat within. And when she sees the head, she begins to weep bitterly. They then carry the head out of the hall. Jón wonders at this, but he keeps quiet, and does not ask about it.

When people had drunk for some time, pipe-playing, strings, and many kinds of musical instruments could be heard approaching the hall. And when this had gone on for a long time with great skill, Jón sees courteous servants come forth, and after that he sees maidens with a large and fair retinue. Among that group walks a maiden fairer and more courteous than all the others. He perceives that this fair woman must be the daughter of the king, and when she arrives before the king, the king says to her: "You, my dear daughter, shall stand further out today, because we should grant more honor to this young man than to any other, since he is of greater distinction than any of those whom I have knowledge of. Therefore, you shall serve this knight with honor."

She said: "What does this man have about him that he must be valued more highly in your hall than any other in my service?" The king then tells her of the events of his arrival, and of what he had accomplished, and of which land he said he was from. She behaved as if she thought little of this, but she nevertheless does as her father ordered, and courteously stands before the king and the knight and serves drinks to them, but to no other men.

The evening passes, and the retinue becomes very joyous from excellent drink, and the king no less than other men, because everyone thought to do the knight honor by drinking as much as they could. Then they glanced at each other somewhat, the young lady and the knight, and it is said that the maiden set her eyes upon him intensely, but nevertheless spoke the same words as she had to her father. He recognizes that the noisy revelry has become so great throughout the hall that it would not be noticed if they conversed a little.

Hann segir svo í fyrstu, því stundin var lítil: “Það veit ég einn lifandi manna,” sagði hann, “hversu ég brenn sárlega í allan dag, kæra jómfrú, í ástarhita til yðar, sakir yðarrar ástar og vænleika fyrir hverja grein. Ég gjarnan vildi, þó að ég væri svo ríkur að ég einn ætti allt veraldar gull, yðar faðmlög með sætum hlutum einnar nætur langt feginsamlega kaupa.”

Og er hann hafði þetta talað varð mærin mjög fegin og svarar svo að enginn skildi heyra nema þau tvö ein: “Það sem þér, góði riddari,” segir hún, “hafið nú af yður talað, það er svo að skilja sem þér hafið af mér sagt nú.”

“Með því,” segir riddarinn, “að þér er jafn viljugt sem mér, þá kjörum við það ráð að yfirtaki að við fáum okkar náðir.” Hún játar þessu mjúklega og staðfestist það með þeim að þegar í stað á hinni næstu nótt skyldi hann koma í hennar sæng ef hann mætti, en hún til hans ef það mætti heldur leikast; lykta svo sitt tal og gefur enginn gaum að þessu.

Líður á kveldið og segist Jón vilja til sængur ganga. Kóngur bauð svo skyldi vera. Eru þá fram tekin borð. Gengur kóngurinn til skemmu sem hann var vanur að sofa í og með honum Jón. Jómfrúin og hennar fólk svaf í annarri skemmu þar harla nær svo að eitt þil var í milli. Riddaranum var mjög svefnþungt með öllu að hann hafði drukkið mikið en áður með mikilli mæði og svefnleysi varð honum mjög vært þótt hann hafði mikinn hug á kóngsdóttur. Þá tók svefninn hann ógurlega að hann vissi ekki til sín fyrr en um morguninn.

Er kóngur var til kirkju genginn vaknar hann. Er það mjög jafnframt og kóngsdóttir kemur þar til hans. Hann litast um og sér að öngvir menn eru í skemmunni nema þau tvö ein. Hann tekur í móti henni blíðlegra en frá megi segja, leggur hana niður í sængina og lét ei mjög á langframa ráð beggja þeirra, því að ljóst var í skemmunni, enda megi sér heyra hvað jómfrúin stefndi óráðlega og kvenslega.

He begins by speaking thus, because time was short: "Among living men," he said, "I alone know how sorely I burn throughout the whole day, dear lady, in the heat of my love for you, for the sake of your love and your qualities in every regard. Though I might be so rich that I alone had all the gold in the world, I would most eagerly and joyfully trade it for your embraces, along with sweet things, even for a single night."

And when he had said this, the maiden became very joyful and answers so that no one could hear except the two of them alone: "What you have now said about yourself, good knight," she says, "is as if you were speaking about myself right now."

"Since it is the case," the knight says, "that your will is the same as mine, let us then take the course of action that will grant us privacy." She tenderly agrees to this, and it is decided between them that the very next night he would come to her bed if he could, but she to him if that would be easier to accomplish. They end their conversation and no one pays attention to it.

The evening passes, and Jón says that he wishes to go to bed. The king grants him permission. The tables are then removed. The king goes to the bedroom in which he was accustomed to sleep, and Jón with him. The maiden and her company slept in another bedroom very close by, with only a single thin wall between them. The knight was very drowsy because he had drunk a lot; he was sleepless and troubled, but soon became very restful, even though he greatly longed for the king's daughter. Then sleep overtook him so utterly that he was dead to the world until the morning.

He woke when the king had gone to church. At the very same moment, the king's daughter comes there to his room. He glances around and sees that no one else is in the room apart from the two of them. He receives her more happily than words can say, and lays her down on the bed, and did not hesitate in carrying out their plans because it was light in the room, and anyone could hear how the lady was heading in an ill-advised and womanly direction.

Nú fæst ég eigi í því að skýra að það sem gjörðist í sænginni eða segja sem greinilegast frá þeim hlutum sem fram fóru, nema það að í samri stund lét hún sinn jómfrúrdóm með miklum fagnaði og feginleika, en í annan stað þá riddarinn. En er hann hafði gjört sinn fullan vilja með kóngsdóttur svo lýkst upp skemmuhurðin og kemur inn annar sá hinn einsýni piltur er hann hafði fyrir borðinu séð um kveldið.

Hann kallar hárri röddu svo segjandi: "Hví eru þér, góði riddari, svo vanteknir? Þér liggið og gangið ei til kirkju en kóngur og öll hans hirð bíður yðar, því að prestur er skrýddur og búinn að dýrka heilaga Guðsþjónustu. Standið nú upp, í Guðs nafni, og hindrið eigi, því að það byrjar yður að gjöra." En er kóngsdóttir heyrði þetta, að við kall sveinsins verður hún hræddari en frá megi segja og grípur um handlegginn á Jóni hinn vinstra og kreistir svo hart sem hún mátti og færist upp undir síðuna, en hann var allra manna gildastur en hún mjó. Og með þeim hætti, er þau voru mjög klókleg í sænginni, grunar öngvan mann hvað þar var um að vera.

En riddarinn svarar sveininum með andvarpi: "Guð í himinríki," sagði hann, "þakki kónginum þessa sína kurteisi sem allar aðrar—sem margar eru að telja—sem hann hefur við mig gjört, og nú einkanlega þetta, er hann bíður sjálfur mín með sinni hirð í helgri kirkju blessaða messu að heyra. Vildi ég gjarnan, sem lífið að lifa, þangað að fara ef ég mætti. En ég er, góði vin," segir hann, "harðlega haldinn um vinstri handlegginn og um vinstri síðuna að hvergi má ég mig hræra." Jón hafði það tekið sér til mannprýði, sem annað fleira, að hann skyldi ekki ljúga, þó að nú væri hvorttveggja nokkuð, lygi og sannindi, í því að hún hélt í vinstra handlegginn á honum en annari hendi spennti hún um síðuna.

En sem sveinninn heyrði þessi orð riddarans harmar hann með mörgum harmfengnum orðum að þeir skildu svo óhamingju bíða að sá hinn ungi maður skyldi þá fyrstu nótt þar[6] þann krankleika fengið hafa sem ósýnt væri nær honum bættist. Og er hann hefur veinað mörgum orðum sest hann niður hjá sænginni og horfir upp

6. Here the scribe has apparently made a dittographical error, adding "óhamingju bíða og," which we have omitted.

Now, I will not bother to explain what happened in the bed, or relate in great detail the things that went on, except that at that moment, she gave up her virginity with much joy and satisfaction and, on the other hand, so did the knight. And when he had performed his will to the fullest with the king's daughter, the bedroom door opens, and in comes one of the one-eyed boys whom he had seen at the table in the evening.

The boy calls in a loud voice, so saying: "Good knight, why are you so neglectful? You lie in and do not go to church, but the king and all his retinue await you, because the priest is dressed and ready to perform the Holy Mass. Now stand up, in God's name—and do not delay—because that is befitting for you to do." And when the king's daughter heard that, she becomes more frightened at the call of the boy than words can describe, and she seizes Jón by the left forearm and squeezes as hard as she could and moves herself up under his side, but he was the broadest of all men, and she was slender. And because they were so very crafty in the bed, no one suspected what was going on there.

The knight replies to the boy with a sigh: "May God in heaven," he said, "thank the king for this act of courtesy, and for all the others that he has done for me—which are many—and now this one in particular: that he himself invites me to hear the blessed Mass in the holy church with his retinue. I would eagerly want, just as I wish to live, to go there if I could. But, good friend," he says, "my left forearm and left side have seized up severely, so that I am unable to move at all." Jón had taken it as a point of honor, along with other things, that he would not lie. Nevertheless, in this case, there was some of both, falsehood and truth, because she was holding onto his left forearm, and she had wrapped her other arm around his side.

When the boy heard the knight's speech, he bewails with many sorrowful words that they should endure the misfortune that on his first night there, the young man had received such an affliction that it was uncertain when he might recover. And when he has wailed with many words, he sits down by the bed and looks at the knight, as if he does not want to leave him while he is sick. He notices that

á riddarann sem hann vildi ei ganga frá honum sjúkum. Sér hann að Jón er mjög litverpur, en er þeir hafa svo verið um stund lýkst upp hurðin og kemur inn hinn annar einsýni pilturinn og segir öll sömu orð sem hinn fyrri. En við þetta sveinsins kall skelfur dóttir kóngsins harla mjög og spennir hún með báðum höndum um hinn vinstra fót riddarans sem fastast.

Riddarinn þröngvast nú mjög af þessum aðköllum og svarar þó hraustlega sveininum: "Ég vildi gjarnan, góði vin," sagði hann, "ganga ef ég mætti—sem ég sagða honum félaga þínum er hér situr hjá mér—en minn máttur er nú erfiðari en þá er hann kom, að er ég haldin allt öðru megin, jafnvel niður í fótinn vinstra sem í hendinni." Sá harmar nú sem hinn fyrri og sest niður hjá riddaranum.

Og er liðin var [stund][7] lýkst upp skemmuhurðin með miklu afli. Sér Jón að þar er kominn kóngurinn með öllu sínu föruneyti; gengur að sænginni og fyrr en Jón fengi kvatt kónginn talaði hann til Jóns: "Hvað veldur, minn kæri, að þú fylgir ei þeim hofsiðum sem settir eru með höfðingjum, svo kunnugir sem ég undirstend að þeir muni þér vera? En nú er frá þeim gengið, því að heilög messa er færð þennan [dag][8] af þeim tíma er vani er til."

Riddarinn svarar kónginum heldur seinlega, svo sem bíðandi kóngsdóttur svo hún heyri orð föður síns þar sem hún var komin. Piprar hún og skelfur öll miklu meir en fyrr og þrífur fram um Jón miðjan. Eftir þetta svarar hann kónginum allmæðilega: "Framar hefi ég, herra," sagði hann, "vilja og orðsnilld í brjóstinu að þakka yður það mikla lítillæti er þér sýnið mér, útlendum manni, en þá er þér kallið—sem satt er—að ég geymi eigi hofsiða þennan morgun. Berið ei mér til óhæversku, því að við fyrsta kall yðars rennara hefði ég til kirkju gengið, ef ég hefði mátt. En minn máttur hefur þunglega skipast, svo að nú er ég haldin um allan líkamann og mest um miðjuna, svo ósýnt þykir mér nær leysist."

7. Missing noun supplied from AM 174 fol.
8. Missing noun supplied from AM 174 fol.

Jón is very pale, and when they have been like that for a while, the door opens and in comes the other one-eyed boy, and he says all the same words as the first one. The king's daughter trembles intensely at the boy's call, and wraps both her arms around the knight's left leg as tightly as she could.

The knight is now in dire straits because of this intrusion, but nevertheless answers the boy valiantly: "Good friend," he said, "I would eagerly wish to go if I could—as I said to your companion who sits here beside me—but my health is now even more troublesome than when he arrived here, in that I am seized up all along my side, just as much down in my left leg as in my arm." The boy bewails this just like the first one, and sits down by the knight.

After a moment had passed, the bedroom door opens with great force. Jón sees that the king has arrived with his entire retinue. He walks to the bed, and before Jón could greet him, he said to Jón: "What is the reason, my dear, that you do not follow the customs of the court that are established for leaders, so familiar as I expect them to be to you? But now they have been transgressed, because today the Holy Mass has been moved from its regular hour."

The knight answers the king rather slowly, as if waiting for the king's daughter to hear her father's words where she was. She trembles and shakes all over, much more than before, and grasps Jón around his middle. After that, he answers the king very wearily: "Lord," he said, "foremost in my heart, there is more will and eloquence to thank you for the great honor that you show me, a foreign man, than what you are now saying—which is true—that I have not heeded the custom of the court this morning. Do not charge me with discourtesy, because at the first call of your messenger, I would have gone to church if I had been able. But my health has taken a heavy turn, so that I am now seized up throughout my entire body, and most of all around my middle, and it is uncertain to me when it will be relieved."

Kóngurinn svarar: “Ég bið, góði riddari, að þér styggist eigi við mín orð, því ég var þess óvitugur að svo mikil ógæfa mundi oss að höndum koma!” Harmar kóngurinn nú mikillega vanmátt hans, því að hann sá hans ásjónu mjög litverpa. Sest kóngur nú niður í skemmunni og allir hans menn tala nú um þetta vandræði sín í milli. Þykir Jóni nú þunglega horfa sínum málum.

Það er nú þessu næst að þá stund er liðin hleypur inn í skemmuna hjarðarsveinn, er þar var í staðnum, með miklu kalli; biður menn í allra krafta nafni uppi verða sem skjótast hvern er ganga mætti, segir að vargur sá hinn mikli er drepið hefur hjörð kóngsins væri nú genginn inn í millum múra tveggja þar sem hann mætti hvergi undan komast. Kóngurinn og allur hans her vissu vel og gjörla hversu mikið illt þetta kvikindi hafði gjört; stendur upp sem hvatlegast og býður út öllum sínum mönnum með svo miklu ævintýri að enginn maður varð eftir. Þau verða fegnari þessum atburði en frá megi segja.

Sprettur kóngsdóttir upp úr sænginni þegar í stað með miklum flýti og skundar til skemmu sinnar og klæðist sem skjótast. Og sem hún er klædd setur hún djásn á höfuð sér, gengur til kirkju og sest í sæti sitt og lætur sem sæmilegast og sem ekki hefði að orðið fyrir henni. Jón klæðir sig og heldur seinlega, þar til sem kóngurinn með sitt föruneyti gengur inn í þá sömu skemmu sem hann fyrir skömmu hafði af gengið; sér að Jón klæðist og segir: “Sem satt er af heimi þessum, því hann er mjög hverfur, því að fyrir litlu er ég gekk héðan, varstu, góði riddari,” segir hann, “allþunglega haldinn. En nú er svo orðið, sem himna Guð hafi lof fyrir, að þú ert heill orðinn; hitt og annað að það illa kvikindi sem hér var inn gengið í borgina og er undir hörðum böndum og voru valdi, sem verðugt er. Gjörum þakkir vorum herra.” Menn róma vel mál kóngs.

Gengur nú kóngurinn og Jón með hirðinni til messu, en eftir það til hallar með miklum prís og gleði, og er Jón með kóngi sjö nætur í ágætri veislu. Hugsi það hver með sér sem það líkar hvað þau Jón og kóngsdóttir hafa leikið þann tíma.

The king answers: "Good knight, I ask that you not be offended by my words, because I was unaware that such a great misfortune would befall us!" The king now greatly bewails Jón's illness, because he saw that his face was very pale. The king sits down in the room, and all his men discuss this trouble between them. It seems to Jón that his affairs have now taken a heavy turn.

Next, when some time had passed, a shepherd-boy from the town runs into the bedroom with a great shout. Calling upon all powers, he asks every able-bodied man to rise as quickly as possible. He says that the great wolf that had killed the king's herd was now trapped between two walls without escape. The king and all his retinue knew well and truly how much evil that creature had wrought. The king rises as quickly as possible and orders all his men to go out, with such promise of adventure that no man remained behind. The pair becomes more relieved at this event than words can tell.

The king's daughter immediately springs up out of the bed with great haste, rushes to her room, and gets dressed as quickly as possible. And when she is dressed, she puts a diadem on her head, goes to church, sits in her seat, and behaves most properly, as if nothing had happened to her. Jón dresses himself as well, but rather slowly, until the king and his retinue re-enter the same bedroom that they had recently left. He sees that Jón is dressing, and says: "What is said about this world is true, that it is very changeable, because a little while ago when I left here, good knight," he says, "you were heavily seized up. But now it has so happened—may the God of heaven be praised for it—that you have become healthy! Furthermore, the evil creature that had entered the city is under firm restraints and our power, as is fitting. Let us give thanks to our Lord." The men express great approval of the king's speech.

Now the king goes to Mass, along with Jón and the retinue, and afterwards to the hall, with great pomp and joy. And Jón stays with the king for seven nights of excellent feasting. Anyone can imagine whatever they like about the games that Jón and the king's daughter played during that time.

Eftir liðnar sjö nætur spyr kóngurinn Jón hverja umbun hann vill hafa af hans ríki fyrir þann mikla sigur er hann hafði unnið. Riddarinn sagði að það væri skjótt kjörið; að hann vill öngva gjöf kjósa utan varg þann er þar [var][9] í böndum hafður og til dauða ætlaður. Og þá kóngurinn og vitrir menn heyra þessi orð undrar alla harla mjög. Tala með sér tveir og tveir hvort ei mundi hinn ungi riddari satt fól, eður fífl, eður einn afglapi. Hann hirðir ei um orð þeirra, heldur biður hann í stað að söðla sinn fríða hest og ei síður að vargurinn sé liðugur gjör honum til meðferðar. En kóngurinn vildi gjarnan halda öll sín orð sem hann hafði fyrr talað og verður Jón nú búinn skjótlega með öllum sínum tygjum. En kóngsdóttir (forðum jómfrú) grét sárlega hans burtferð, þó leynilega. Hann hefur varginn með sér.

Nú sem hann út riðinn og til skógar kominn lét kóngur herklæðast nokkra menn og stígur sjálfur á bak, ríður fram til skógarins annan veg en riddarinn hafði áður riðið; vill fyrir forvitnis sakir prófa hvað riddarinn gjörði við varginn. Og sem hann kemur fram sér hann Jón í einu rjóðri það gjörandi að hann leysir varginn og lætur lausan og liðugan fara hvert er hann vill.

Nú er kóngur sér þetta verður hann harla reiður, hleypur fram að riddaranum með miklu háreysti svo segjandi: “Fyrir hví vildir þú,” segir hann, “gjöra mínu ríki svo mikla skömm og skaða að beiðast þessa illa hrædýrs fram um alla eign þá er var í mínu valdi, til þess að gjöra oss þann skaða og skömm að aldrei biðja bætur? Veit það og sá er mig skóp að þú værir stórrar refsingar verður fyrir þetta þitt tilverk!”

Og er kóngur hafði út talað með mikilli reiði það er hann vildi, Jón svarar hóglega með þessum orðum: “Eigi er það satt, herra, að ég hefi varginn látið fyrir þá grein að[10] ég vildi yður gjöra skömm eður skaða, heldur fyrir þá grein sem leynd er fyrir yður að svo búnu, fyrr en þér heitið mér og trúlofið að þér skuluð mér öngri hefnd umbuna, þótt yður getist ei að í alla staði. Hitt og annað, ef ég segi yður þetta, skuluð þér segja mér sem ég undrast í yðrum háttum.”

9. Missing verb supplied from AM 174 fol.
10. Emended from “ed”; AM 174 fol. reads “ad.”

After seven nights had passed, the king asks Jón what reward he wishes to have from his kingdom for the great victory that he had won. The knight said that this could be quickly chosen: he wishes to choose no gift other than the wolf that was held in restraints there and sentenced to death. And when the king and the wise men hear these words, they wonder greatly. They talk between themselves in pairs about whether or not the young knight were a complete fool or a dunce or a simpleton. He does not pay attention to their words, but instead asks for his fair horse to be saddled, and for the wolf to be prepared for a journey with him as soon as it had been set free. The king eagerly wanted to hold himself to every promise he had previously made, and Jón is quickly prepared with all his gear. But the king's daughter—formerly a maiden—wept bitterly, but secretly, at his departure. He takes the wolf along with him.

When he had left, and reached a forest, the king had several men put on their armor, and he himself mounts his horse. He rides forth to the forest on a different path than the knight had previously ridden on. He wishes, for the sake of curiosity, to find out what the knight would do with the wolf. And when he comes upon him, he sees Jón in a clearing in the act of releasing the wolf and letting it go where it wishes, free and unhindered.

When the king sees this, he becomes very angry and runs forward to the knight with a great bellow, saying thus: "Why would you want," he says, "to inflict so much shame and harm on my kingdom by asking for this evil predator, rather than all other possessions in my power, and thus do us so much harm and shame that it can never be atoned for? He who created me knows that you are deserving of great punishment for your conduct!"

And when the king had said all that he wanted to with great anger, Jón replies calmly with these words: "It is not true, lord, that I have released the wolf in order to cause you shame or harm, but rather for a reason that, as things stand, is hidden from you until you promise me, and pledge your faith, that you will not repay me with vengeance, even though it will not please you in every way. Furthermore, if I tell you this, you must explain to me the things that astonish me about your customs."

Kóngur játar þessu með trú sinni. Jón hefur þá upp alla söguna frá upphafi til enda, segir kóngi sem gjörst og sannast sem farið hafði með þeim kóngsdóttur og honum.[11] Eftir það spurði Jón hvað því veldur að þeir tveir kollóttu sveinar voru báðir eineygðir, eða fyrir hverja sök höfuð dauðs manns væri svo vandlega í höll borið þá er menn væri yfir borðum.

En er kóngurinn heyrði þessa sögu verður hann svo sem vitstolinn. Og sem hann vitkaðist nokkuð, mælti hann: "Svo mikið má mönnum um finnast með hversu miklu ævintýri og Guðs hjálp þú ert frelsaður af svo miklum háska, sem þú seldir þig í fyrir mikla skammsýni og óvisku. Mættir og skilja, fyrir svo háðuglega skömm sem þú hefur játað fyrir oss, hversu harðlegrar hefndar þú værir verður af oss. En með því að ég undirstend fyrir sök hrævargsins að þú ert einn ágætur maður, viljum vér þessa þína misgjörð við oss upp gefa, haldandi það sem vér höfum áður talað, að þú kjósir þann grip af voru ríki sem þú vilt og ei síður leysandi þínar spurningar sem sannindi bjóða.

"Svo bar til að vér höfðum hér fóvita einn. Vér ferðuðumst til annarra landa ei skjótt aftur hverfandi. En drottningin var eftir heima til ríkisstjórnar og þessi einn riddari hjá henni sem ég setti að stjórna með henni. Hún tekur hann í sæng til sín og getur með honum tvo sonu, þá sem þú sást þjóna. Og sem vér komum heim til ríkisins, þá tókum vér þann drottinssvikara og létum drepa, en sveinana báða létum vér missa síns vinstra auga. Smurðum vér höfuðið svikarans svo ei mætti fúna, dæmandi drottningunni þá skrift að hvern dag síns lífs skal hún það sjá með sínum augum og iðrast svo síns glæps."

11. It is not made explicitly clear whether Jón's explanation to the king includes the reason why he released the wolf, whose true nature is not revealed until later in the saga. However, this seems to be implied in two ways: firstly, in his response, the king suddenly accepts and recognises that Jón's treatment of the wolf is a sign of his nobility; and secondly, after the king's own story, Jón apparently gets to re-choose his reward for killing the serpent—having initially chosen the wolf, he chooses the princess this time.

The king agrees to this with a pledge of faith. Jón then recounts the whole story from beginning to end, and tells the king most fully and truthfully how things had gone between him and the king's daughter. After that, Jón asked what was the reason that the two shaven-headed boys were both one-eyed, and for what cause the head of a dead man was so carefully carried into the hall when men were at the table.

When the king heard this story, he appears to go out of his wits. And when he had recovered his senses somewhat, he said: "People might think much of how absurdly, and with how much of God's help, you have been freed from the grave danger you put yourself in because of your great short-sightedness and lack of wisdom. You should also realize how severe a vengeance you would deserve from us, due to the disgraceful shame that you have admitted before us. But because I understand, on account of the carrion-wolf, that you are a noble man, we wish to remit this misdeed, holding to what we have previously discussed—that you may choose the treasure that you want from our kingdom—and not least that your questions will be answered truthfully.

"It so happened that we had a sheriff here. I travelled to other lands and did not return for a while. But the queen stayed back home to rule the kingdom, and this knight beside her, whom I appointed to govern with her. She takes him to her bed and has two sons with him, whom you saw serving. And when I came home to the kingdom, I took that traitor and had him killed, and I ordered that both of the boys should lose their left eye. I embalmed the head of the traitor so that it could not rot, sentencing the queen to this punishment: that on each day of her life, she must see it with her eyes and thus repent of her crime."

Og að svo töluðu svarar Jón: “Guð signi yður, herra,” sagði hann, “fyrir svo mikla þolinmæði sem þér fram látið við mig óverðugan. En nú vil ég njóta yðar góðvildar. Skal ég í stað kjósa hinn besta gripinn: Dóttur yðra mér til eignar [með svo][12] miklu góssi sem hún á.” Og með þessu stígur Jón af hesti sínum og biður með lítillæti uppgjafar. Og það veitir kóngurinn og þar með fastnar hann Jóni sína dóttur. Eftir það ríða þeir heim til borgarinnar.

Fer nú um borgina þessi fáheyrður atburður, og sem kóngsdóttir fréttir þetta verður hún fegnari en frosinn fugl heitu sumri, klæðir sig og gengur til móts við föður sinn og fagnar honum. Og sem skjótast hún má við koma þá gefur hún sínum unnusta mjúka kossa með fríðu faðmlagi, og er Jón nú með kóngi aðrar sjö nætur í ágætri veislu.

Og eftir það liðið, tók hann sér með kóngs orlofi fimmtán sveina, vel búna með vopnum og klæðum. Fer síðan í burt og léttir ei fyrr en hann kemur heim til Frakklands og segir allt frá ferðum sínum; segist hafa fengið dóttur kóngsins og skuli hann sækja þangað brúðkaupið með svo miklum her sem hann vildi, og það sama veitir faðir hans honum. Ríða þeir nú allir til þeirrar veislu og verður hún allágæt. Þiggur Jón það af kóngi að höfuðið skyldi aldrei bera fyrir drottningu þaðan af, en hann[13] setti sveinana í hæsta þjónustu sína, þar til sem hann fékk þeim göfuga gifting. Jón situr nú eftir, en faðir hans ferðaðist heim, og tók jarldóm meðan kóngurinn lifði. En eftir hans líflát tók hann ríkið allt og stýrði því langa tíma vel og ágætlega og varð hinn vinsælasti kóngur.

Vargur sá, er herra Jón gaf líf, var einn kóngsson af Flæmingjalandi og hafði orðið fyrir hörðum álögum af sinni stjúpmóður. Hafði hún lostið hann með úlfhanska og sýndist hann af því vargur vera. En hann var þó ágætur maður og hét Sigurður. Hafði hún svo fyrir mælt að hann í þeim álögum skyldi vera þar til að nokkur væri svo heimskur að hann kysi heldur varginn en mikið veraldar gull

12. Missing words supplied from AM 174 fol.
13. Whether this refers to Jón or to the king is ambiguous.

After he had spoken, Jón replies: "God bless you, lord," he said, "for such great forbearance that you have shown towards me, although I am unworthy of it. And now I wish to benefit from your good will. I shall immediately choose the best treasure: your daughter in marriage, with all the property that she owns." And with that, Jón dismounts his horse and awaits forgiveness with humility. The king grants this, and in addition, betroths his daughter to Jón. After that, they ride home to the city.

Word of this unheard-of event now travels throughout the city, and when the king's daughter receives the news, she becomes happier than a frozen bird in a hot summer. She gets dressed, goes to meet her father and greets him warmly. And as quickly as she possibly can, she bestows soft kisses on her lover with a fair embrace. Jón now stays with the king for another seven nights of excellent feasting.

When it was over, with the king's permission he takes fifteen boys, well-equipped with weapons and clothes. He then departs and does not stop until he arrives home in France and recounts everything about his journey. He announces that he has been betrothed to the king's daughter, and that he should attend the bridal feast with as large a company as he wanted, and his father grants this to him. They all ride to this feast, and it is held most excellently. Jón receives this favor from the king: that the head would never be carried before the queen thereafter, and he set the boys highest in his service, until he arranged noble marriages for them. Jón's father travelled home, but Jón stays behind and took an earldom while the king still lived. But after the king's death, he took the whole kingdom and ruled it well and nobly for a long time and became the most popular king.

The wolf to whom Lord Jón gave its life was a king's son from Flanders. He had been put under a harsh curse by his stepmother. She had struck him with a wolfskin-glove, and so he took the appearance of a wolf. But he was nevertheless a noble man, and was called Sigurður. His stepmother had said that he would lie under the curse until somebody would be so foolish to choose the wolf over

eða sæmdir. En þessi sami Sigurður fór á fund herra Jóns, þá hann hafði tekið kóngdóminn, og sagði honum þennan atburð, gjörandi honum miklar þakkir fyrir sína lífgjöf. Herra Jón tók honum með fremstum fagnaði og fögnuðu báðir framar en orðum megi skýra að hvor hafði öðrum líf gefið, sem réttlega mátti segja. Tóku síðan það ráð að sórust í fóstbræðralag. Fór Jón þegar heim með Sigurði til Flæmingjalands og tóku stjúpmóður hans og drógu belg á höfuð henni og börðu með grjóti til bana, brennandi síðan á báli hennar herfilega hræ og köstuðu öskunni í sjávardjúp.

Fór Jón kóngur ei fyrr aftur í sitt ríki, prýddur ágætum gjöfum, en hann hafði fengið fóstbróður sínum ágætt kvonfang. Lifðu síðan langan tíma með mikilli gleði, hvor í sínu ríki, og áttu mörg börn eftir sig með sínum frúm, haldandi sæmilega sitt fóstbræðralag. Sendi og hvor öðrum oftsinnis ágætar gjafir allt til dauðadags. Og lúkum þar þessari frásögn.

Hér endir af Jóni leiksvein.

abundant gold or honor of the world. This same Sigurður went to meet Lord Jón when he had taken the kingdom, and he told him about these events, giving him many thanks for the gift of his life. Lord Jón received him with the highest welcome, and both rejoiced more than words can say, that each had given the other life, as could truly be said. Afterwards, they made the decision to swear foster-brotherhood. Jón immediately went back to Flanders with Sigurður, and they grabbed the stepmother, pulled a skin-bag over her head and stoned her to death. Then they burned her wretched corpse on a pyre and cast the ashes into the depths of the sea.

King Jón did not go back to his kingdom, adorned with excellent gifts, before he had arranged a noble marriage for his foster-brother. Afterwards, they lived for a long time with great joy, each in his own kingdom, and they had many children with their wives to succeed them, all the while honorably maintaining their foster-brotherhood. Each also frequently sent the other excellent gifts, until their dying day. And with that, we end this tale.

Here is the ending of Jón the Player.

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Depicting Friendship in Early Modern Iceland

Apellis ríma *by Eiríkur Hallsson*

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The Icelandic *rímur* (sg. *ríma*), for the most part long narrative poems divided into fitts, are extant in hundreds if not thousands of manuscripts dating from the fourteenth up to the twentieth centuries. This extensive source of information on Icelandic literary sensibilities, despite also telling us a great deal about broader areas of human experience (humor, romance, learning, religion etc.), has not received the same level of attention as that devoted to the prose literature of medieval Iceland, principally the sagas. For example, it seems that only a quarter, roughly, of the extant *rímur* have ever appeared in print, and many of the editions are old (for example from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) and far from critical. Until more of the *rímur* become available in more easily accessible forms, it is unlikely that research into and analysis of their content will progress significantly. The current article takes one small step towards ameliorating this situation by presenting the first edition, translation and analysis of a short single-fitt *ríma* from the seventeenth century, namely *Apellis ríma*.[2]

This short *ríma*, describing a Greek painter who travels to Rome and produces a painting on the subject of Friendship, the

2. *Apellis ríma* is listed as *Appellis ríma* (i.e. double p) in reference works, namely handrit.org and Finnur Sigmundsson, *Rímnatal*, 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Rímnafélagið, 1966), 1:36, 2:37, but the single-p form is used here. There is variation in the manuscript witness, with the form "Appellis" (genitive) appearing in the table of contents (f. 1v), but "Apellis" (also genitive) is used in the title at the start of the work (f. 130r), and "Apelles" (nominative) appears twice in the body of the poem (f. 130v). The latter form corresponds to the common English form "Apelles" (nominative), a transliteration of the Greek απηλλής.

symbolism of which is then interpreted by wise men, is said, in Finnur Sigmundsson's *Rímnatal* to exist in only one manuscript, namely JS 45 4to.[3] Colophons (for example on f. 132v) reveal that the manuscript was written in 1731. A browse of *handrit.is* does not suggest that any new manuscripts have been discovered since the *Rímnatal* was published in 1966. Finnur Sigmundsson gives the author as Eiríkur Hallsson í Höfða (1614–1698), which fits with the "S: E: H: S:" (i.e., "S[éra] E[iríkur] H[alls]S[on]"), which appears just below the title in the manuscript (f. 130r). This would mean that the text in the manuscript, called "Mýrabók" by its previous owner Jón Sigurðsson (see JS 314 8vo, f. 29r), was written over thirty years after the author's death.[4] Eiríkur Hallsson is perhaps most famous for the dramatic events of his personal life, whereby the church was forced to intervene to broker a reconciliation between him and his first wife, Margrét Jónsdóttir, in May 1659. She, only a month later, died after falling from a church loft and striking her head on the choir-doors.[5] The perceived convenience of this death, which permitted Eiríkur to marry Geirlaug Helgadóttir, a farmer's daughter from Grímsnes on Látraströnd, who had been a bone of contention between him and Margrét, led to accusations of foul play, which Eiríkur was forced to defend himself against both legally and poetically (in his poem "Rógsvala," approx. "slander-quencher").[6] Beyond this domestic tumult, he was active producing a large number of poems, among which are psalms, *kvæði* and *rímur*, his work on the latter, according to Finnur Sigmundsson, having placed him "í fremstu röð rímnaskálda á 17. öld" ("at the forefront of

3. Finnur Sigmundsson, *Rímnatal*, 1:36.

4. For this reason, among others, it would be desirable to have further confirmation of the authorship. Hálfdan Einarsson (1732–1785) in his *Sciagraphia* (Copenhagen: Sander et Schröder, 1777) does not list *Apellis ríma* under the works of "Ericus Einari" (78–79; "Einari" is presumably an error for "Halli," since the other works listed are those of Eiríkur Hallsson). Nor does Jón Borgfirðingur in his list of the works of Eiríkur Hallsson in JS 104 4to (this manuscript is the first part of a three-volume—followed by JS 105 4to and JS 106 4to—list of authors in alphabetical order, with Eiríkur Hallsson as number 203). Einar Bjarnason does not mention *Apellis rímur* among the works of Eiríkur Hallsson in his *Fræðimannatal* (JS 98 4to, pp. 89–90). Kári Sólmundarson, however, does list *Apellis ríma* as one of the works of Eiríkur Hallsson (item 222 under author lxxxiii) in his "Rímna og vísna höfunda tal" in Lbs 741 fol. (p. 40).

5. Jón Þorkelsson, "Frá síra Eiríki Hallssyni í Höfða," *Blanda* 1 (1918–20): 354–85.

6. "Rógsvala" (52 stanzas) is printed in *Blanda* 1 (1918–20): 364–85.

the *rímur*-poets of the seventeenth century").[7] Of the latter group three examples have so far appeared in print, namely *Ýmisríma*, *Bekraríma* and the *Rímur af Hrólfi kraka*.[8] A brief discussion of Eiríkur Hallsson's life and works also appears in the introduction to the more recent edition of the *Rímur af Hrólfi kraka*.[9] Of *Apellis ríma*, however, all we are told is that it is "um gríska málarann Appellis [sic]" ("about the Greek painter Apelles").[10]

Apelles of Kos is a figure known from classical antiquity and described in Book 35 of the *Natural History* (*Historia naturalis*) of Pliny the Elder (23–79 C.E.), as part of a section in which eminent artists and their crowning achievements are recounted. Sections 79–97 provide us with the principal information regarding this painter, of whom it is said that he "omnes prius genitos futurosque postea superavit" ("surpassed all the painters that preceded and all who were to come after him"),[11] and who was believed to have been

7. *Stakar rímur frá 16., 17., 18. og 19. öld*, ed. Finnur Sigmundsson, Rit Rímnafélagsins 9 (Reykjavík: Rímnafélagið, 1960), xvii. A number of examples of Eiríkur Hallsson's non-*rímur* poetry appear in *Ein liftil Psalma og Visna book*, edited by Hálfdan Einarsson (Hólar: Halldór Eiríksson, 1757). A digitized version of this book is easily accessible at *baekur.is*., and eleven poems by Eiríkur Hallsson appear, such as the following: 1. "Psalmur um Manndooms Tekning og Fæding vors HErra JEsu Christi," Bviijv–Bxv; 2. "Þackargjørd fyrer Christi Pijnu, og Fridþæging vid Gud," Cjv–Cijv; 3. "Psalmur um Christi Upprisu," Civr–Cviijr etc. A *kvæði* attributed to Eiríkur, "Hugsa ég (um) það hvern dag" (Lbs 1745 8vo, f. 59r–59v), can also be viewed online at *handrit.is*, although it should be noted that elsewhere this poem has also been attributed to Stefán Ólafsson; see Stefán Ólafsson, *Kvæði*, edited by Jón Þorkelsson, 2 vols. (Copenhagen: Bianco Luno, 1885–86), 217. See also "Eiríkur Hallsson" at bragi.is.

8. The former two poems appear in *Stakar rímur*, ed. Finnur Sigmundsson (55–64 and 65–69) and *Bekraríma* is now available in an English translation: Philip Lavender, "*Bekraríma* or 'The Rhyme of the Ram' by Eiríkur Hallsson," in *Text to Artefact: Studies in Honour of Anne Mette Hansen*, edited by Katarzyna Anna Kapitan, Beeke Stegmann, and Seán D. Vrieland (Leeds: Kismet Press, 2019), 239–48. *Hrólfs rímur* are first published as Eiríkur Hallsson and Þorvaldur Magnússon, *Riimur af Hroolfi Konwngi Kraka* (Hrappsey: Guðmundur Ólafsson, 1777; N.B. misattribution on title page: Þorvaldur Magnússon is given as Þorvaldur Rögnvaldsson) and re-edited as Eiríkur Hallsson and Þorvaldur Magnússon, *Hrólfs rímur kraka eptir Eirík Hallsson og Þorvald Magnússon*, edited by Finnur Sigmundsson, Rit rímnafélagsins 4 (Reykjavík: Rímnafélagið, 1950).

9. Eiríkur Hallsson and Þorvaldur Magnússon, *Hrólfs rímur kraka*, xiv–xxvi.

10. Eiríkur Hallsson and Þorvaldur Magnússon, *Hrólfs rímur kraka*, xxv.

11. Pliny, *Natural History*, edited by S. D. F. Detlefson and Karl Mayhoff, trans. Horace Rackham et al., 10 vols., Loeb Classical Library 330, 352–53, 370–71, 392–94, 418–19 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942–83), 9 (Books 33–35, 1952):318–19. Sections 79–97 cover pp. 318–33.

active around 332–329 B.C.E. Anecdotes are told of an impromptu line-drawing contest against Protogenes of Rhodes, of Apelles' criticism of an overzealous shoemaker,[12] and of his relationship with Alexander the Great, among other things. A number of specific paintings are described in sections 90–97, but no mention is made of a painting concerning the theme of friendship. Moreover, the only allegorical representation alluded to is one of war ("Belli imaginum") being led, with hands tied behind his back, by Alexander the Great.[13] Nevertheless, an appearance by Apelles in an apocryphal story told by Lucian of Samosata (c. 125–c. 180 C.E.) in an essay entitled "Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ῥᾳδίως πιστεύειν Διαβολῇ" (Lit. "On not being quick to put faith in it," however usually referred to by the title, "Slander"), ensured the painter's standing in Early Modern Europe as a master of allegorical depiction. In the anecdote Apelles is at the court of King Ptolemy, where he is slandered and summarily judged.[14] He is eventually exonerated but produces a painting on the subject of Calumny, which Lucian ekphrastically describes in his essay. Guarino da Verona (1374–1460) who studied Greek in Constantinople, 1403–1408, made a translation of the essay there under the title "De Calumnia" (1408). He brought the episode to the attention of Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472), polymath and artist, who wrote about it in his Latin *De Pictura* (1435) and Italian *Della Pittura* (1436). It seems that Alberti's description may have influenced important Renaissance artists such as Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506) and Sandro Botticelli (c. 1445–1510), both of whom brought the ekphrasis to life in works called the "Calumny of Apelles" (Mantegna's drawing, c. 1504–1506, Botticelli's painting c. 1494–1495). As James A. W. Heffernan has stated "the painting described by Alberti is explicitly allegorical. Except for the donkey-eared man to whom the slander is reported, every figure

12. This exchange is the source of the saying "ne ultra crepidam sutor" ("not beyond the sandal, shoemaker," or in colloquial English "do not get above you station"). Pliny, *Natural History*, 9:324–25.

13. Pliny, *Natural History*, 9:330–31.

14. Lucian of Samosata, "Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ῥᾳδίως πιστεύειν Διαβολῇ," in Works, edited by Nils Nilén et al. trans. A.M. Harmon et al., 8 vols., Loeb Classical Library 14, 54, 130, 162, 302, 430–32 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913–67), 1:359–93. The anecdote about Apelles is on 362–67.

in the painting is identified as a particular abstraction."[15] Rudolph Altrocchi and David Cast have both shown the profound influence of the "Calumny of Apelles" on humanist culture, but none of these sources, however, allude to Apelles having produced an allegorical image of Friendship.[16]

If we try to trace the image of Friendship evoked for us in the *ríma*, rather than its supposed author, we are presented with a sudden wealth of material in the Early Modern period. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the so-called "culto de la amistad" ("cult of friendship") was spurred on by a growing interest in classical culture.[17] In 1514, for example, the *Moralitates* of Robert Holcot (c. 1290–1349) were first published in Venice: there we are presented with an image of Amor as a bare-headed youth dressed in green with the words "hyems" (winter) and "estas" (summer) written on his forehead. Upon his side, which is said to be open, are written "longe" (far) and "prope" (near),[18] while his garment is described as being inscribed with "mors" (death) and "vita" (life).[19] As Holcot explains the meaning of this figure it becomes clear that it refers to the love between friends. Just over a decade earlier in a work written long after that of Lucian, the

15. James A. W. Heffernan, "Alberti on Apelles: Word and Image in De Pictura," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 2 (1996): 345–59 at 354.

16. Rudolph Altrocchi, "The Calumny of Apelles in the Literature of the Quattrocento," *PMLA* 36 (1921): 454–91; David Cast, *The Calumny of Apelles: A Study in Humanist Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981).

17. Beatriz Antón, "La (vera) amicitia en los Emblemata (1596) de Denis Lebey de Batilly," in *Studia Classica et Emblematica caro magistro Francisco J. Talauerae Esteso dicata*, edited by V. Rodríguez, V. Alfaro and G. Senés (Zaragoza: Libros Pórtico, 2019), 107–57. On the development of the concept of friendship more generally from the medieval to early modern period see Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge in the introduction to *Friendship in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Explorations of a Fundamental Ethical Discourse*, edited by Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge, Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture 6 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 1–183.

18. "In latere quod apertum erat sic scriptura jacebat longe & prope" (Upon his side, which was open, were situated the words "far" and "near"). But in the same description of the youth dressed in green in Robert Holcot, *In librum sapientiæ regis Salomonis Prælectiones CCXIII* (Basel: Jacob Ryter. 1586), Moralitas XXVI: Pictura amoris sive amicitiæ (The picture of love or friendship), 731, the sentence reads: "Erat latus eius apertum, ita ut videretur cor, in quo scripta erant hæc verba: longe et prope" (His side was open so that his heart was thus seen, upon which were written these words: "far" and "near").

19. Robert Holcot, *Moralitates* (Venice: Simon de Luere, 1514), Moralitas XX: "De amore ad proximum," fol. 23r–v.

Margarita philosophica (Freiburg, 1503) of Gregorius Reisch (c. 1467–1525), there is in Book XII, chapter 30 "De amicitia sive affabilitate," an engraving of the youth pointing at his exposed heart, which brings us closer to the image of friendship described in *Apellis ríma*.[20] Many other similar descriptions come afterwards. The description by Giglio Gregorio Giraldi (or Lilius Gregorius Gyraldus) (1479–1552) in his *De deis gentium varia et multiplex historia* might be mentioned, the ultimate source of which, apparently unbeknownst to him, was Reisch.[21] Then there is Laurentius Haechtanus (1527–1603) who includes in his *Mikrokosmos* an engraving (number 15) captioned "De viridi ivvenis imagine" (Concerning the green appearance of a young man) identified in the accompanying poem as "Amicitia" (Friendship). The poem also expounds the significance of the six words associated with the youth.[22] Finally, there is the extremely influential image of Amicitia in the *Iconologia* of Cesare Ripa, in which the youth is portrayed as female although still with her finger pointing at her heart.[23]

The emblem of friendship travelled widely, as witnessed, for example, by appearances in English literature of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In *Wits Theatre of the Little World*, (London: I[ames] R[oberts], 1599), a compilation put together by Robert Albott (fl. 1600) probably under the patronage of John Bodenham (c. 1559–1610), the anthologist, we read that friendship appeared "in the shape of a young man, whose heade was bared, and vpon his breast was written *Sommer* and *Winter*; who hauing his breast open, & putting his finger to his hart, had therein sette,

20. Gregor Reisch, *Margarita philosophica* (Freiburg: Joannes Schottum Argentorati [of Strassburg], 1503), bb5v. This illustrates the sentence on the previous page that the youth has "winter" and "summer" on his forehead "habebatque latus apertum usque ad cor, et brachium inclinatum digito cor ostendens, ubi scriptum erat longe et prope" (and he had his side open to the heart and a bent arm with a finger pointing to the heart where "far" and "near" is written).

21. Giglio Gregorio Giraldi, *De deis gentium varia et multiplex historia* (Basel: Johannes Oporinis, 1530), 73. Giraldi follows this description with a poem praising Apelles (74).

22. Laurentius Haechtanus, *Mikrokosmos* (Antwerp: Gérard de Jode, 1579), Oiijv–Oivr.

23. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia, ouero, Descrittione di diuerse imagini cauate dall'antichità, & di propria inuentione* (Rome: Lepido Facij, 1603), 16. Giraldi, *De deis gentium*, 73, had introduced Amicitia as a "goddess."

Farre and neere, & on the skirts of his coate were drawn, Life and death."[24] Likewise in Henry Peacham's *Minerva Britanna* (1612) we are told that:

> There was in Rome a goodlie statue fram'd / Of youthfull hew, arraied all in greene, / Which of the people was *trve-frendship* nam'd: / *Winter and Sommer*, on his brow were seene: / Within his breast, his heart did plaine appeare, / Whereon these wordes were writen, farre, and neere. / Vpon his skirt, stoode *life* and *death* below, / To testifie in life and death his loue, / That farre and neere, with open heart do show, / Nor place, nor space, true frendship should remoue: / Winter and sommer, whatsoever came, / In faire or foule, we should be still the same.[25]

While both of these examples have much in common with the description in *Apellis ríma*, there are also differences: Albott's work fails to mention the shabby clothing of the boy while Peacham's describes him as dressed in green. More importantly neither include the extensive exposition of the symbolism.[26]

In considering how this image of friendship made its way to Iceland the obvious suspect is the *Specvlvm amicitiæ, þad er Vinaspegill*, published at Hólar in 1618.[27] Halldór Hermannsson provides information about this work in his bibliography of seventeenth-century Icelandic books,[28] where he explains that this is a translation by Sveinn Símonarson (1599–1644; father of Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson), based on either a German original by Sigismund Suevus (Schwabe) (1526–1596) called *Speculum Amicitiae*

24. Robert Albott, *Wits Theatre of the Little World* (London: I[ames] R[oberts], 1599), fol. 66r.

25. Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna or a Garden of Heroical Deuises, furnished, and adorned with Emblemes and Impresas of sundry natures, Newly devised, moralized, and published* (London: Walter Dight, 1612), 181.

26. One further example, showing that female authors too worked with this theme, can be found in the poem "Upon a joynted Ring" by Francellina Stapleton (fl. 1655); see Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson, eds., *Women Poets (1520–1700): An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 340–41.

27. A digitized version of this book can be viewed online at baekur.is. There is also a handwritten copy in ÍBR 57 8vo, which is also digitized and can be viewed at handrit.is.

28. Halldór Hermannsson, *Icelandic Books of the Seventeenth Century, 1601–1700*, Islandica 14 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Library, 1922), 101.

(or *Spiegel guter Freundschaft*)[29] or the Danish translation of that work, *Speculum Amicitiae. Det er Venskabs Speyel* (Copenhagen: Salomon Sarbor, 1613; second edition 1632), produced by Mads Godicksön.[30] Sigismund Suevus' text clearly bears most similarities with that of his German predecessor, namely Reisch's *Margarita philosophica*.

The Icelandic edition, *Specvlvm amicitiæ, þad er Vinaspegill,* is published without page numbers, but the information about the Roman image of "amicitia" is found on pages C[j]^{v}–Ciij^{v} (ff. 14r–15 in ÍBR 57 8vo) and is worth reproducing in its entirety.[31]

> Þa hafa þe*i*r gømlu Romveriar mælad upp Vinskapen, med eirne fagurlegre Mynd a þen*n*an hætt. Þeir mæludu eitt Vngmen*n*e, med bert Høfud, *og* storgiørdum Fatabwninge. Vnder h*a*ns yferfate var skrifad, Daude *og* Lÿf. Yfer hans Høfde stod skrifad, Vetur *og* Sumar. Hans vinstre Sÿda var alldeilis open, so ad sia matte hans Hiarta. Þetta Vngmen*n*e riette wt sÿna Arma, *og* vÿsade m*ed* Fingrenum a sitt Hiarta, *og* þar hia stod skrifad, Fiarre *og* Nærre.
>
> Þesse Mynd edur Mælverk hefur haft eina agiæta Merking.
>
> 1. Merker Vngmen*n*ed, Ad Vinattan a æ *og* jafnan ad vera ny *og* fesk *og* alldrei ad elldast eda wtkolna.

29. The treatise on friendship was published as Sigismund Suevus, *Speculum amicitiae: Spiegel guter Freundschaft mit schönen Sprüchen, historien und Exempeln erkleret* (Görlitz: Fritsch, 1578) and then as item number twelve in the collection of his works appearing under the title of *Spiegel des menschlichen Lebens* (Leipzig: Henning Große, 1587), fol. 173v–192r at fol. 176r. There is a reduced facsimile of this text in M. A. van den Broek, ed., *Sigismund Suevus: Erbauungsschriften; Spiegel des menschlichen Lebens, eine Auswahl*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Erbauungsliteratur des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit 6 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984), fol. 173v–192r. Sigismund introduces this figure of Friendship as appearing in a painting of "einen Jüngling, mit vnbedecktem Heubte, vnd in enem groben Kleide" (a youth with uncovered head and in a rough garment). Of significance is the fact that the German also contains an eight-point exposition of the symbolism of the words associated with the figure with the number of each point set in the right-hand margin. This work is not to be confused with the earlier *Spiegel des menschlichen Lebens* (1475), a German translation by Heinrich Steinhöwels (1412–1482) of the *Speculum vitae humanae* (1468) of Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo (1404–1470).

30. That is Matthias Godickson, "Præst i Malmoe" (a Parson in Malmö). See Jens Worm, *Forsøg til et Lexicon over danske, norske og islandske Lærde mænd som ved trykte Skrifter have giort sig bekiendte,* 3 vols. (Helsingør: Det Kongelig allene privilegerede bogtrykkerie, 1771–84), 1: 355–56.

31. Sigismund Suevus, *Specvlvm amicitiæ: Þad er Vina speigell,* trans. Sveinn Símonarson (Hólar: n.p., 1618), Civ–Ciijv.

2. Lyka sem hans Høfud var ohuled *og* bert fyrer huørium Man*n*e, so skyllde Madur avallt jata *og* medkien*n*a sinn Vin, og skammast sÿn ecke þar ad.

3. Hans ouøndud Klæde votta, ad eirn riettur godur Vinur, skule ecke j neirn mata sier feila, edur fyrerverdast vegna ytre Fatæktar sÿns Vinar, helldur ad han*n* hafe Samaumkun med hønum, *og* hialpe hønu*m* epter Mætte.

4. Daude *og* Lÿf, sem skrifad var under hans Kæpu, kien*n*er einum og sierhueriu*m*, ad elska sin*n* Vin af Hiarta, *og* setia h*a*ns vegna sitt Lÿf j Daudans hættu *og* fær, ef þørf krefur. So s*e*m Men*n* lesa vm marga Vysa heidna Men*n*, ad so giørt hafe. Huørra dæme ad Jonathas *og* Dauids Vinatta langt yfergeingur.

5. Þesse tuø Ord, Sumar *og* Vetur, giefa oss til Hugleidingar, þad ad Madur huørke yfergiefe sinn Vin j Medlætis nie j Motgangs Tydenne.

6. Hans open Sÿda jn*n* til Hiartans merker, ad þu hylier *og* dylier eckert fyrer Vin þÿnum (sie þad annars frasagna verdt)

7. Finguren sem a Hiartad vÿsar merker, ad Mun*n*ur *og* Hiarta hallde eitt, *og* sie samhlioda

8. J sÿdasta mata, aminna þesse Ord, Fiarre *og* Nærre, ad riettur vinskapr a ecke ad þriota, *og* ad ein*n* Vinur afseige ecke an*n*an, nie hønu*m* gleyme, huørsu vÿdt edur langt s*e*m vera kan*n* þeirra j mille. Vid soddan Malverk þarf eingen christen Madur ad blygdast, þui þad kien*n*er, Huad godur Vinskapur er *og* heiter, so sem Guds Ord *og* H*eiløg* ritning noglega audsyner

There is a startling correlation (as well as some significant deviations, which will be discussed below) between the structuring of this passage and the order in which various features and interpretations are provided in the text of Eiríkur Hallsson's poem. The following translation includes in square brackets the number of each verse in *Apellis ríma*, which principally corresponds to the key features of the prose text.

Then the ancient Romans depicted Friendship with a beautiful image in this way: they painted a young man [19] with a bare head, and ill-fitting clothes [20]. At the bottom of his outer garment [21] was written "Death" and "Life". Above his head was written "Winter" and "Summer" [22]. His left side was completely open, so that his heart

was visible [23]. This young man stretched out his arm and pointed with his finger at his heart [23], and alongside was written "Far" and "Near" [24].

This picture or painting has been given a fine interpretation.

1. The young man means [31] that friendship has ever and always to be new and fresh and never grow old or cool off [32].

2. Just as his head was uncovered and stood bare before all men [33], so should one always acknowledge and recognize one's friend and not be ashamed of him.

3. His shoddy clothing [35] testifies to the fact that a truly good friend should in no way be unreliable or fail to show solidarity on account of the outer poverty of his friend, but should rather show him compassion and help him to the best of his ability [36].

4. "Death" and "Life," which were written at the bottom of his cape, teach us all to love our friend from the heart and to put our life on the line for his sake [37], should the need arise. This, in the same way as people read about many wise heathens who have done thus, among whom the examples of Jonathan and David's friendship stand out the most.

5. These two words, "Summer" and "Winter" [38], lead us to the consideration that a man should not abandon his friend in good times or times of hardship [39].

6. His open side, revealing the heart [41], means that you should neither hide nor conceal anything from your friend (be it something worth telling) [43].

7. The finger that points to the heart means that the mouth and the heart should act as one and be in agreement [45].

8. Finally, these words, "Far" and "Near" [48], remind us that true friendship need never run its course and that a friend does not deny the other nor forget him, no matter how great the distance between them may be [49]. Presented with such an artwork, no Christian man need be ashamed, because it teaches us what good friendship is and promises us, just as God's words and Holy Scripture amply reveal to us.

As can be seen, the corresponding verses all appear in the same order as in *Vina spegill*. They are padded out with additional verses in the poem, but this is unsurprising and most likely due to the necessity of accommodating the rhyme scheme and metrical

requirements. There are also some verbal similarities between the two texts, for example "hans høfud var ohuled *og* bert" in the prose and "hans hið skæra höfuð bert, / hulið öngum felldi" (v. 33) in the poem. Some of the imagery of the poem, moreover, may allude to other section of *Vina spegill*: in v. 36 we hear the exhortation to "unn honum eins og sjóði seims" ("love him like a purse of gold"), and the description of a friend formulated thus fits neatly with section II of the treatise "Huad dyrmætur Fiesiodur ad godur Vinskapur er" ("What a precious purse good friendship is").[32] All but one of the eight elements of the image that are interpreted in the prose appear in the poetry, so *Vina spegill* can account for the vast majority of information in the poem.

Nevertheless, it is worth focusing, albeit briefly, on the differences. Point number 4 in the interpretation, the inscription bearing the words "Life" and "Death," is substituted in the *ríma* with the pairing "God" and "Honor." No other version of the image of Friendship known to me includes these two words as an alternative, so it seems possible that Eiríkur Hallsson made this change himself. Supporting this interpretation is the fact that verse 36, where the substitution appears, does not completely abandon the topic of life and death, but rather links the divinely-sanctioned and morally-upright behavior implied by the two words with a commitment to put another's happiness before one's own continued existence ("þó þitt fjör [. . .] skyldi þrjóta," i.e., "though your life [. . .] should dwindle"). Tereza Lansing, discussing Eiríkur Hallsson and Þorvaldur Magnússon's *Rímur af Hrólfi kraka*, has observed that there is "explicit Christian evaluation of the 'heathen' matter, especially in the part composed by the rev. Eiríkur Hallsson,"[33] so perhaps we should see the emendation here as an attempt to draw the undisguisedly pagan material into a more Christian ambit.

We may also see the insertion of the image of Friendship into the frame of Apelles' visit to Rome as an innovation consciously made

32. Sigismund Suevus, *Specvlvm amicitiæ*, Djr.

33. Tereza Lansing, "*Hrólfs saga kraka* and related *rímur*," in *Skemmtiligastar lygisögur: Studies in Honour of Galina Glazyrina* (Самые забавные лживые саги: Сборник статей в честь Г. В. Глазыриной), edited by Tatjana N. Jackson and Elena A. Melnikova (Moscow: Dmitriy Pozharskiy University, 2012), 71–79 at 75.

by Eiríkur Hallsson. Apelles is not mentioned in connection with the image of Friendship in *Vina spegill*, although an individual named Apelles *is* referred to later on in the work in a separate anecdote about how a good man, Arcesilaus, supports his friend, Apelles, by secreting money beneath his pillow.[34] Accepting that this brief mention may have spurred the imagination of Eiríkur Hallsson and taking recourse to our own knowledge of his biographical details, a potential explanation for this juxtaposition of the frame with its contents can be constructed: following the death of his wife, Margrét, we know that Eiríkur Hallsson felt himself to be the victim of slander, and moreover obliged to defend himself (as in his poem "Rógsvala").[35] Apelles too, as we have seen, was most famous in the Early Modern period in relation to his being a victim of slander who produced one of the principal allegorical representations of that vice. In the frame, Apelles is said to have produced the painting of friendship upon having seen how "þar höfðust að / hirðar frænda róga" (men were occupied there with the slander of friends; v. 15).[36] Perhaps Eiríkur Hallsson wanted to allude to his position as a victim, much like Apelles, but at the same time sought to urge those who had previously been his avowed friends not to abandon him in his time of need: this was the winter of his adversity. While this is mere speculation, if such were the case, then the poem would most likely have been composed round about 1660 (Margrét Jónsdóttir died on the 13th June, 1659).

34. The anecdote is originally from Plutarch's essay "Πῶς ἄν τις διακρίνοιε τὸν κόλακα τοῦ φίλου" ("Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur"; How to distinguish a flatterer from a friend). See Plutarch, *Moralia*, edited by Gregorios N. Bernardakis *et al.*, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt et al., 16 vols., Loeb Classical Library 197, 222, 245, 305–06, 321, 337, 405–06, 424–29, 470, 499 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927–2004), 1:337–39. The translator, Babbitt, lists two separate Apelles in his index, one the painter and the other this friend of Arcesilaus. For a seventeenth-century reader of Sigismundus Suevus it seems unlikely, however, that it would have been possible to distinguish this man from the other famous bearer of that name.

35. "Rógsvala" focuses mostly on the Devil and slanderous enemies, but in doing so also touches on the concept of friendship, e.g. verse 39: "Guðs vinur vina / vera kýs ég hýr / en hatandi hina, sem herrans andi flýr" (I joyfully choose to be the friend of God's friends, but to hate the others, who flee the spirit of the Lord); Jón Þorkelsson, "Frá síra Eiríki Hallssyni í Höfða," 379.

36. "Frænda rógur" (strife of friends/relatives) can be read as a kenning for money, and indeed Eiríkur Hallsson uses it thus in the *Rímur af Hrólfi kraka*; Eiríkur Hallsson and Þorvaldur Magnússon, *Hrólfs rímur kraka*, 24, 174. In this case, however, the more literal interpretation seems fitting.

It is perhaps worth noting that *Apellis ríma* in JS 45 4to was not the final appearance of this gifted artist from classical antiquity in Icelandic manuscript culture. A manuscript in private ownership, given the shelfmark "Einkaeign 20" on handrit.is, where images can be viewed, contains as item 15 on ff. 394r–95v (or pp. 791–94) a short "Þáttur af Apelles." The scribe of this manuscript, the well-known Magnús Jónsson í Tjaldanesi (1835–1922), appears to have taken his information principally from Pliny and reveals no awareness of the *Apellis ríma* of Eiríkur Hallsson. It may be that the poem was simply too dense and didactic (without sufficient narrative incentive) for it to have wider popular appeal, as also suggested by its being extant in only one manuscript. Nevertheless, this short poetic work stands as testimony to the ways in which *rímur*-poets could tap into currents of Early Modern thought and put them to use in negotiating the vicissitudes of everyday life.

Apellis ríma by Eiríkur Hallsson

Text and Translation

Since this poem has never previously been published, I present a normalized text here, along with a translation, in order that it may be more easily read. I have normalized to Modern Icelandic, except on a few occasions where this disrupts the rhyme scheme. On such occasions a footnote is included.

[Title in JS 45 4to: "Apellis ríma út af hans Amicitia eður vináttu málverki S: E: H:S: (Séra Eiríkur Hallsson)"]

1 Mörg hafa dæmin mætir fyr
meistarar diktað fróðir
eptir því sem Beslu byr
bles um hyggju slóðir.

2 Mannlofs verðir meistarar þeir
menn af þrennu slagi,
svo sem bækur herma hér,
heiðnir í skárra lagi.

3 Stunduðu hvorki stríð né prakt
stórri spekt um vendir
snauðir heims af forsi og frakt
Philosophi kendir.

4 Einn var hópur sagðri af sveit
samlíkingar nærði,
út af vísum visku reit
vænar menntir lærði.

5 Djúpsær speki í gátum gekk,
gerðu aðrir ráða.
Æsopus þann fróðleik fékk
og fleiri sá ég skráða.

Excellent and wise masters have composed
many exemplary tales up to now,
since the "wind of Besla <trollwoman>" [THOUGHT]
blew across the "plains of thought" [MIND].[1]

There are masters worthy of praise,
men of three kinds,
as books tell us,
heathens of the better kind.

They neither engaged in conflict nor sought worldly wealth,
focused as they were on greater knowledge,
poor in the influence and accoutrements of the world,
and known as philosophers.

From the group that has been mentioned
there were some who cultivated comparisons,[2]
learnt of beautiful matters
from the secure "land of knowledge" [WISDOM, PHILOSOPHY].

Profound wisdom went into riddles,
and other men explained them.
Aesop had acquired such knowledge,
and I saw many similar things written down.

1. The conventions used to resolve the poetic diction are as follows. Alternative poetic names are indicated by an equal sign: "Valfaðir" (= Óðinn)." Angle brackets are used to give the sense of mythological and legendary names: "Besla <trollwoman>." Kennings are given in full within quotation marks and resolved in small capitals within square brackets: "plains of thought" [MIND]." When there is a sequence of kennings, the first one is in single quotation marks and its resolution in small capitals with an angle bracket to indicate what is the final result: the "trees of the 'seeds of the snake'" [GOLD > MEN]. Here the "seeds of the snake" are gold, and the "trees of gold" are men.

2. Literally "nourished comparisons." Allegorical representations would appear to be referred to here.

6 Aðrir létu ljóð um munn,
læst í dylgjum, ganga,
kneri dverga og Kvásirs brunn
kveiktu af góma tanga.

7 Soddan myrkva mannvits grein
margur forðum æfði
uppá hörpu og hljóða rein
heimsku og sturlan kæfði.

8 Þriðju æfðu málara mennt
móins runnar sáða.
Ekki var það illum hent
úr þeim flóka að ráða.

9 Einn í slíkum konstra krans,
kænn að öllu leyti,
djúpsær eyðir orma lands
Apellis að heiti.

10 Hvað sem fast í huganum sat
heims af lélegheitum
meistaralega málað gat
og myndað á penna reitum.

Others recited songs,
encoded with hidden meanings,[3]
kindled "ships of dwarves" [POEMS] and the "well of Kvásir<dwarf>"
[MEAD OF POETRY, POEM]
from the "isthmus of the gums" [TONGUE].

In times past many a man
practiced this obscure branch of wisdom
on the harp and on the "land of sounds" [INSTRUMENT],
quenching foolishness and despair.

Thirdly "trees of the 'seeds of the snake'" [GOLD > MEN]
practiced the art of painters.
It was not fitting for bad men
to get tangled up in that.[4]

There was one among this circle of artists,
clever in every way,
a wise "destroyer of the 'land of snakes'" [GOLD > MAN],
named Apelles.

Whatsoever worldly triviality
was fixed in his mind,
he could paint it masterfully
and form it on the "square of the pen" [SHEET, CANVAS].

3. "Dylgjur" are insinuations. To be locked in insinuations should probably be understood as referring to the hidden meanings that can be embedded in poetic utterances.

4. Literally, it says that it was not fitting for bad men to untangle that knotted mess, the meaning being that this is a complicated activity.

11 Hans skal ekki í ljóðalund
lyfta mennta spjaldi.
Fyrst að tíðin tærir stund,
Týrs á staupi ég haldi.

12 Óska nú sem áður fyr
yndi af velskap finni,
þeir sem glaðan Glettu byr
gefa skemmtan minni.

13 Gullhlaðs gleð ég lind og lund
ljúfu vinskaps orði.
Þetta efni í þanka um stund
þannig viður horfði.

14 Burt frá Athen reisti í Róm
ritaður málspekingur.
Apellis að allra dóm
æfði á spjöldum fingur.

15 Gisting tók í göfugum stað,
gætinn siði að spróga,
merkti hvað þar höfðust að
hirðar frænda róga.

No "tablet of arts" [PAINTING][5] by him
shall be evoked for the "poem-mind" [MIND, i.e., of the reader/listener].
Since time is flying by,
may I keep my grip on the "chalice of Týr" [POEM].[6]

They wish, now as before,
that they may find[7] pleasure from living well,
those who gladly pay heed
to my entertainment.[8]

I gladden the "tree of the gold-cloth" [WOMAN] and the mind
with the dear word of friendship.
This subject presented itself
thus, at this time, to my mind.

That wise man, of whom we have written,
travelled from Athens to Rome.
Apelles put his fingers to work upon canvasses
such that all esteemed him.

He took lodging in a respectable place,
careful to observe the customs.[9]
He noticed how men were occupied
there with the slander of friends.[10]

5. "Spjald" appears often in kennings, referring to a square tablet of a type used by women in weaving (and thus in kennings referring to women). Here however the "tablet of arts" or "learned tablet" would seem to be a painting (se also v. 14). Shortly afterward we are presented with an extensive description of one of Apelles' paintings; thus the meaning here must be that there is not time to describe his back catalogue.

6. To keep one's grip on the chalice of Týr would seem to mean to not be diverted from the poem. "Staup" normally appears with a heiti for Óðinn to mean the mead of poetry or metonymically a single poem, but it is not rare for "Týr" to be substituted with the same meaning.

7. The subject would seem to be "þeir" with the main verb as "óska." Some words are suppressed, with the full meaning being "þeir óska þess að þeir finni yndi af velskap."

8. Literally, "those who give [their] happy "wind of Gletta <trollwoman>" [MIND] to my entertainment." "Gletta" is the name of a trollwoman, and the wind of the trollwoman is the mind (see also verse 1).

9. "Spróga" is not a common word, but apparently means "to observe."

10. "róg" (n.) or "rógur" (m.) means "slander" or "strife." Here we would seem to have the accusative of a related term, "rógi." While this may be read literally as "the slander of friends," it is worth bearing in mind that this could be read as a kenning for money.

16 Vanta heldur vináttu enn gull
vitrum hugsast manni,
af því kviknar orðsök full
alvara burt úr ganni.[11]

17 Setti í hagar hendur spjald
hygginn tók að mála
ritaði efst á rúna fald
ráðir blossa ála.

18 Amicitia, elska, tryggð
eða hrein vinátta
heitir spjaldið. Hafnar stygð,
hún er fús til sátta.

19 Undir kastaði línum létt,
lagaði vænt bílæti
unglings sveins, sem ég hér get,
uppmálaður á fæti.

20 Berhöfðaður var sveinninn sá,
sjónar steinum litinn,
hispurlaus, en hörundi á
hempa forn og slitin.

21 Sats stóð neðsta faldi á
með farfa leturs skæran.
Lesa svo þeir, glöggt að gá:
"Guð" og þar með "æran."

11. "Ganni" is presumably a slight modification of "gamni," the dative singular form of "gaman" (n.). I have left it unemended here in order not to separate it from its rhyming partner "manni."

For the wise man it seems that
friendship is more precious than gold,
for the latter ignites serious reasons
to leave joy behind.

The "decision-maker of the 'flame of Áli' <sea-king>" [GOLD > MAN][12]
took a canvas in his skilled hands,
conscientiously started to paint,
wrote on the uppermost part of the "folded sheet of runes"
[PAPER, CANVAS].

"Amicitia," love, loyalty
or plain friendship,
is the name of the canvas. She rejects enmity,
is eager to resolve conflict.

Beneath that he dashed off some lines,
made a fine image of a young lad,
as I describe here,
represented in a standing pose.

That lad was bare-headed,
when looked at with the "stones of sight" [EYES],
plainly-dressed and with an old and tattered cape
covering his skin.

A sentence was written at the bottom of the cape
in the bright "color of the letter" [INK, PAINT].
Those words read thus, plain to see:
"God" and also "Honor."

12. "Áli" is generally considered to be a sea king. Here he may be seen rather as a personification of the sea, as for example the sea god "Ægir," and thus "the flame of the 'sea(-personification)'" is "gold." The alternative interpretation is that "ála" is the genitive plural of "áll" (eel), used as a poetic synonym of "snake" or "dragon": in such a case the kenning would be a confusing mixture of two typical periphrases for gold, "fire of the sea" and "bed of the dragon.

22 En í miðju enni sveins
orð hinn vísi setur,
björtum fór við blóma steins
bæði “sumar” og “vetur.”

23 Opin síðan vinstri var,
við svo blasir hjarta.
Vísifingur að beninni bar
brjósts þar yfir er varta.

24 Þar var skrifað á hjarta hjúp:
heitir orðið “nærri.”
Líka önnur lista djúp:
lína sú hét “fjærri.”

25 Spjald svo bar fyrir ríka ráðs
römsku dómara höllu,
eptir setti, en linna láðs
lundur gekk frá öllu.

26 Ráðherrar þar setta sjá
seint um kvöldið töflu,
hana upp tóku og horfðu á,
hugðu öngva vöflu.

27 Fyrst þeim þetta verkið vænt
virkt að fleiru snúa.
Eitthvað mundi efni kænt
undir þessu búa.

28 Spekingunum réðu í Róm
ráðning yfir að leggja,
“því meira er þetta en myndin tóm,
máluð augum seggja.”

And in the middle of the lad's forehead,
the man places words,
continued (writing) in the bright "flower of stone" [COLOR]
both "Summer" and "Winter."

His left side was open,
so that his heart is visible.
He held his index finger to the wound,
there over where the nipple is.

There was writing upon the "doublet of the heart" [CHEST]:
the word reads "Near."
There was another one, profound in its conception:
that line read "Far."

He then brought the canvas before the hall
of the powerful council of Roman judges,[13]
then set it down, and the "tree of the 'land of the snake'"
[GOLD > MAN]
walked away from it all.

The counsellors see the tablet set down there
late in the evening,
lifted it up and looked at it,
and came to an opinion without hesitation.

For them this beautiful work
was effective at confounding many.[14]
Some profound content
must lie beneath this.

They ordered the wise men in Rome
to come up with an interpretation,
"for this is more than an empty image,
painted for the eyes of men."

13. "Rík ráð römsku dómara" could perhaps be read as a kenning for the Roman senate.

14. Presumably to be "virkt að snúa fleiru" is a way of saying that the work confused many of them.

29 Spekta drjúgir spöruðu ei verk,
spakar stunda rúnir.
Þetta létu koma af kverk,
kænt að ráða búnir.

30 Auðráðinn er yfirskrift
ástvináttan forna.
Rétt mun ekki í róma gift,
ráð er við að sporna.

31 Dreingur mætur æsku í
áttu tryggð að planta!
Hún mun vaxa og vara frí
með vináttu sterka panta.

32 Má hana ekki mótfall neitt
mæða og fyrnast láta
hvort á gengur ljúft eða leitt.
Leyst er þessi gáta.

33 Hans hið skæra höfuð bert,
hulið öngum felldi:
það hefur höndum hygginn gert,
hagur í rænu veldi.

34 Hvort þinn vinur stærri stétt
stundar þá eða lægri,
ótorkenndur, slaglaus slétt,
slíkum vert því þægri.

Those men powerful in wisdoms spared no energy,
dedicate themselves to these wise letters.
They let this come forth from their throats,
ready to interpret wisely.

The rubric is easy to interpret,
(namely) dear Friendship of old.
But one may not be direct in the "gift of voices" [SPEECH]:[15]
It is advisable to be circumspect.

O fine lad in your youth,
you must plant the seed of loyalty.
She will grow and endure in liberty
with the secure guarantees of friendship.

No opposition can tire her
or make her leave,
whether times are good or bad.
This riddle is solved.

His gleaming bare head,
with no cloak covering it:
a thoughtful man has crafted that with his hands,
one skilled in the "domain of consciousness" [MIND].

Whether your friend is of a higher social class
or a lower one,
be[16] uncomplicated, not at all conflictive,
in such situations be all the kinder!

15. In older poetry and prose "gipt" (here normalized to gift in order that the rhyme with "yfirskrift" is more obviously maintained) can mean "gift" or "wedding" or "joy/luck." The overall meaning of the kenning would seem to be "speech" or "poem," the point being that while the rubric is clear, there is also a more hidden and convoluted meaning. Whether a poem is the "joy of voices" or speech is the "marriage of voices" or "gift of voices" is open for discussion.

16. I read "vert" as a syncopated form of "vertu." Thus, we have an imperative urging us how to behave.

35 Sveins óhreina forna fat
fína þýðing hefur:
merkir heimsins óþarft at
er hann mörgum gefur.

36 Þó þinn vinur höfnun heims,
hraki og vesöld mæti,
unn honum eins og sjóði seims
sældað þó þér gæti.

37 Guðs og æru í leyfi hann lát
lystar þínar njóta
þó þitt fjör í fullan mát
fyrir það skyldi þrjóta.

38 "Sumar" og "vetur" (eru þau orð)
endurnýja skaltu
velskaps háttu um vináttu borð
og værar tryggðir haltu.

39 Ei aðeins þá sumarið sælt
með sól þér skín á vanga,
heldur vetrar hrím ódælt
hart vill móti ganga.

40 Lukku misjafnt lýsist kyn:
litunum skipt hún getur.
Gleymdu aldrei góðum vin
hvort gengur verr eður betur.

41 Hér næst þýðir hjartað bert
hals á unga brjósti
dyggvum vin ei dulur sért.
Drag af öllum þjósti!

The lad's dirty old garment
has a fine interpretation:
it means the unnecessary hardship of the world,
which is doled out to many.

Though your friend should encounter worldly rejection,
hardship and wretchedness,
love him as if he were a purse full of gold,
though you could abandon him.[17]

With the blessing of God and Honor,
let him benefit from your happiness,
though your life, to a great extent,
should dwindle on account of that.

In "summer" and "Winter"—those are the words—
you must renew the habits of wellbeing
at the table of friendship
and preserve the tranquility of loyalty.

Not only when the joyful summer
with its sun shines on your cheeks,
but (also when) the troublesome and harsh frost of winter
wants to oppress you.

The nature of fortune can fade unpredictably:
she can change her colors.
Never forget a good friend,
whether things are going badly or well.

Next the bared heart
on the chest of the young man means
that you should not be secretive with a true friend.
Get rid of all your anger!

17. The final line is somewhat hard to interpret, partly because the verb "sælda" literally means "to sieve." It seems that it might have the extended meanings of "to scatter," "to lose," so I chose to read it as meaning "though he might be cast aside."

42 Hentari veitir ráð í raun
rækinn sannra dyggða.
Þessi nægist, þýðum baun,
þú fær(ð) léttir hryggða.

43 Ekkert skaltu láta leynt
ljúfum trygða vini,
reyndum vel með hjartað hreint,
í hverskyns rauna kyni.

44 Það má verka hugarhægð
holla ykkur báðum.
Angurs sviða bætir bægð
blíður vinur í ráðum.

45 Fingur vísar hjartað hreint
hefur slíkt að þýða:
hendur, munn og hugsun beint
hreinlyndi skal prýða.

46 Ef að skilur þetta þrennt
þínum vin að eiga,
þá er vitrum þar um kennt
þeir eigi elskast mega.

47 En ef þetta mætist mjúkt
með ástvinum báðum,
samheldið mun sætt og drjúgt
sælda gleði í náðum.

48 Seinast skrifað á hjartans hús
hugvináttu kærri,
fagri málað farfa krús
“Fjarri” bæði og “Nærri.”

The one devoted to true virtues
more fittingly provides advice in times of trouble.
Should this suffice—we interpret a little[18]—
you will get relief from your sorrows.

You should not keep anything hidden
from a dear and trustworthy friend,
one who has plenty of experience
and a pure heart, in any kind of hardships.[19]

That may bring about a trusting
peace of mind for both of you.
A kind friend to talk with to ameliorate
the trouble of the sting of anger.

The finger that points at the pure heart
means the following:
plain honesty should characterize
one's hands, mouth and thought.

If these three things do not come together,
to be given to your friends,
then wise men are taught that they (i.e., the friends involved)
cannot love each other.

And if these things should come easily together
for both of the dear friends,
that solidarity will sweetly and enduringly
spread gladness in times of respite.

Finally, written on the "house of the heart" [CHEST]
of the most dear Friendship,
painted with the beautiful "recipient of color" [PAINT],
stand both "Far" and "Near."

18. "Baun" means "bean" and is hard to make fit with the context. It can also be used figuratively to mean a small amount, and thus it is read here.

19. "Í hverskyns rauna kyni" would seem to mean "in any type of hardship," but the construction is somewhat awkward and pleonastic, in that "í hverskyns raunum" would be sufficient on its own.

49 Míla löng þó milli sé
mætra tryggða vina,
ávallt sæta samheldi
samt má ekki lina.

50 Út og suður, austur, vestur,
annar verður sveima,
eins hann sé í ástum festur
og hann sæti heima.

51 Menn svo heyra málshátt á,
í margri sögn það gengur:
una á meðan uppá sjá
augu en þeygi lengur.

52 Annað máltak öldin tér
oss að sanni nærri:
víst því betri virta er
vinur sem hann er fjærri.

53 Því umgengni dagleg dregur
dapra virðing stundum,
en fögnuður elskulegur
eykst með vina fundum.

54 Hafi svo aktað heiðnir menn
hreinvináttu bjarta
og nátturunnar sjónum senn
séð í guðlegt hjarta.

55 Að hann væri vera hrein
vináttu samþykkjandi
og ástar friðar alla grein
eilega heitt elskandi.

Though there be a distance of miles
between those excellent and loyal friends,
nothing may ever mitigate
their sweet loyalty.

All over the place, east and west,
the other one will roam around,
yet it is as if he were fixed in his love
and had remained at home.

People thus hear a saying told
—it appears in many a tale—
"enjoy while your eyes behold,
but not any longer."

There is another axiom that people say,
which is closer to the truth for us:
a friend is valued all the more,
the further[20] away he is.

Thus, daily interaction at times
leads to an unhappy evaluation,
but heartfelt gladness grows
when friends meet.

Heathen men seem thus to have
considered bright, true Friendship
and seen into the divine heart
with the sight of nature.[21]

So that he should be a pure being,
accepting friendship
and forever loving passionately
every branch of love's peace.

20. "Fjærri" is an alternative form of "fjarri" (emended in v. 48, but not here in order to preserve the rhyme).

21. "Sjónum nátturunnar" literally means "with the sight of the nature." Perhaps there is an implication that this, rather than being the normal physiological process of sight, is a more spiritual type of sight that allows the virtuous pagans to see the true nature of things.

56 Seggjum kristnum sómir lítt,
er sitja í ljósi bjarta,
bölvað haturs balið strítt
í brjósti geyma og hjarta.

57 Mun ei orðinn fordild frek
fúss og vináttuleysi.
Mín skal hönd ei mæða blek
meir þar stöku um reisi.

58 Ég því veit þó engill hreinn
argri veröld kenni,
mun það líkt sem minsti steinn
mali eða velti á henni.

59 Sígi niður seglið máls,
senn er komið að húmi.
Virt er engi viður stáls
valföðurs á skúmi.

It is ill-befitting for Christian men,
who sit in the bright light,
to conceal the harsh and accursed
fire of hate in their breast and heart.

Nor may there come to be excessive
vanity, anger and friendlessness:
my hand shall not exhaust the ink longer,
now as I construct the final verse.

Thus, I know that though a pure angel
should teach the angry world,
it is as if the smallest stone
grinds upon or rolls off it.

May the "sail of speech" [POEM] be lowered (i.e., ended),
since twilight has finally arrived.
No "tree of the steel" [MAN] is praised[22]
in the "dusk of Valfaðir" (= Óðinn) [NIGHT].[23]

22. "Virt" would seem to be a truncated form for "virtur," which we would expect with the subject "viður" (masc.).

23. "Skúmi" (masc.) means "shade" or "dusk," but should take the form "skúma" in the oblique cases. The meaning here is obviously the same, but we must assume that we are dealing with a neuter noun, "skúm," with the -i ending of the dative.

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