A NEW INTRODUCTION TO OLD NORSE

PART II: READER
PREFACE

This fourth edition of A New Introduction to Old Norse, Part II: Reader contains, in addition to all those in previous editions, nine new texts: extracts from The Book of Settlements, the Saga of Eiríkr the Red (about an expedition to Vínland), Njáls saga, a law-book (Grágás), a learned text (treatise on physiognomy), examples of Old Danish and Old Swedish writings and the Norwegian King’s Mirror; and two complete poems, another eddic (heroic) poem (Hamðismál) and the ríma about St Óláfr. The vocabulary of these texts is included in the fourth edition of Part III: Glossary and Index of Names.

The texts have been prepared and annotated by the following:

I, XVII and XX: Michael Barnes.
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XIV: Peter Foote.
XVIII: Elizabeth Ashman Rowe.
XXV: John McKinnell.

The introductions are by the same writers, except in the case of Text I. This is by Anthony Faulkes, who has also been general editor of the whole volume, and compiled the main Glossary and Index in Part III, the fourth edition of which includes supplementary Glossaries and Indexes to the East Norse texts and the runic inscriptions by Michael Barnes. The general ‘Introduction to the Study of Old Norse’ is by Alison Finlay.

The plan of this volume was that it should include at least one extract from works in each of the main genres of Old Norse literature. This plan has now been fulfilled, and NION now offers an introduction to the whole range of early Scandinavian writings. Users of this book are reminded that several further complete Old Icelandic texts with glossaries are available in other Viking Society publications (see p. xxxiv below).

The first part of Text I, the extract from Hrólfs saga, has a comprehensive grammatical commentary. The remainder of the extract is fully glossed with virtually complete references. It is recommended that
students begin with this text to ensure that they understand the grammatical structure of Old Icelandic before proceeding to others where the grammatical information in the glossary and notes is much sparser. The succeeding texts are glossed with progressively fewer references, though it is hoped that all words have been explained on their first occurrence in each extract, so that it will not be necessary for them to be read in the order in which they are printed. Idioms and constructions are explained much more fully in the Glossary than is usual in teaching books because experience has shown that it is these that cause the greatest difficulty in understanding Old Icelandic texts; and numerous cross-references are included to help elementary students identify the entry forms of words that appear in the texts in guises that are difficult to recognise—another of the persistent problems of learning this language.

Spelling, of both texts and textual notes, has been normalised, using the symbols listed in NION I, §§ 2.1.1–2.1.3 (with the addition of ‘ę’ for the short open e in Old Norwegian). This also applies to the verses, and the language of these has not been archaised as has been the custom in most previous editions. Word forms have on the whole not been changed from what appears in the manuscripts, either to conform to what is believed to have been normal in the early thirteenth century for early sagas or to replace the modern forms that appear in late manuscripts (e.g. in those of Hrólf’s saga); or to replace the Norwegian forms that appear in Fagrskinna and Konungs skuggsjá. This is intended to help students to become accustomed to the wide variety of forms (archaic, dialectal, post-classical or analogical) that appear commonly in editions (and dictionaries and grammars), and also to ensure that they are aware of the different forms that underlie the normalised texts that have traditionally been used in teaching, and of the variations in the language between AD 900 and 1400 over the wide cultural area inhabited by Vikings in the Middle Ages. It should also make it easier for them to progress to independent reading of texts where the language is not fully normalised. All such variant forms are included in the Glossary in NION III, with cross-references as necessary.

Emendations to the base texts have been marked by pointed brackets ‹ › around letters added to the manuscript readings, square brackets [ ] around letters supplied that are illegible and italics for letters changed (the manuscript readings in the last case are given in footnotes).
CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS ........................................................................................................... viii
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF OLD NORSE .................................................... ix
CHRONOLOGY ............................................................................................................. xxxvii
MAP OF ICELAND ....................................................................................................... xl
LIST OF LAWSPEAKERS .............................................................................................. xlii
I: HRÓLFS SAGA KRAKA ............................................................................................ 1
II: Snorri Sturluson: EDDA ...................................................................................... 15
III: Sturla Þórðarson: ÍSLENDINGA SAGA ............................................................... 23
IV: KORMAKS SAGA .................................................................................................. 35
V: BJARNAR SAGA HÍTDÆLAKAPPA ...................................................................... 43
VI: FAGRSKINNA ....................................................................................................... 55
VII: Snorri Sturluson: HEIMSKRINGLA ................................................................. 79
   A: ÓLÁFS SAGA TRYGGGVASONAR .................................................................... 82
   B: HARALDS SAGA SIGURDARSONAR ................................................................ 89
   C: THE ART AND CRAFT OF THE SKALDIC STANZA ..................................... 94
VIII: Ari Porgilsson: ÍSLENDINGABÓK ................................................................. 99
IX: ÞRYMSKVIDA ..................................................................................................... 127
X: VÖLUNDARKVIDA ................................................................................................. 141
XI: ÞÝÐREKS SAGA ................................................................................................... 155
XII: SAGA AF TRISTRAM OK ÍSÑND .................................................................... 163
XIII: MARÍU SAGA .................................................................................................. 173
XIV: JÓNS SAGA HELGA ......................................................................................... 179
XV: LAXDÆLA SAGA ................................................................................................. 191
XVI: AUÐUNAR PÁTTR ............................................................................................ 201
XVII: RUNIC INSCRIPTIONS ..................................................................................... 211
XVIII: MÖDRUVALLABÓK ......................................................................................... 239
XIX: LANDNÁMABÓK .............................................................................................. 255
XX: EAST NORSE ..................................................................................................... 261
XXI: EIRÍKS SAGA RAUDA ..................................................................................... 281
XXII: ÓLÁFS RÍMA HARALDSSONAR .................................................................... 307
XXIII: PHYSIOGNOMY ............................................................................................. 323
XXIV: KONUNGS SKUGGSJÁ ................................................................................... 333
XXV: HAMÐISMÁL .................................................................................................... 343
XXVI: NJÁLS SAGA ................................................................................................... 363
XXVII: GRÁGÁS ....................................................................................................... 381
ABBREVIATIONS


ÍF = Íslenzk fornrit I– , 1933– .


INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF OLD NORSE

1. Old Norse or Old Icelandic?

The main aim of this Reader, and ultimately of *A New Introduction to Old Norse* as a whole, is to introduce students to representative extracts from works in each of the major genres of literature surviving in Old Icelandic, along with the necessary apparatus for reading these texts in their original language. This introduction offers a brief overview of these genres, together with an account of their context. Some bibliographical references are given at the end of each section, and more general suggestions for further reading are listed at the end of this Introduction, but these bibliographies are not exhaustive, and tend to favour works available in English. More specific introductory material and bibliographical suggestions can be found in the Introduction to each text in the Reader.

The term ‘Old Norse’ has traditionally been used to refer to the language, literature and culture of medieval Scandinavia in the Middle Ages. Some scholars condemn the term as an appropriation of the culture and heritage of Iceland, and prefer the label ‘Old Icelandic’, since virtually all the surviving literary texts were either written in Iceland, or are preserved only in Icelandic manuscripts (Jónas Kristjánsson 1994). But ‘Old Norse’ does capture the fact that this literary heritage ultimately represents a culture originating in mainland Scandinavia, which was taken during the Viking Age (see 2 below) not only to the Viking colonies, including Iceland, that were established in the Atlantic, but also as far afield as Greenland and North America. According to accounts in the sagas, the impetus for the settlement of these colonies came primarily from Norway, though attempts have been made to gauge the accuracy of this account by scientific means, and to argue for a strong Celtic element in the early Icelandic population. The picture of strong cultural links between Norway, Iceland and settlements in Orkney, the Hebrides and northern Britain (including Ireland) has not been seriously challenged. The language of Norway and its colonies is referred to as West Norse, to distinguish it from East Norse, the language of Sweden and Denmark. For an account of the term ‘Old Norse’ as it applies to the language, see Grammar, ‘Introduction’ 1.2.

Apart from the runic inscriptions in Text XVII, the texts included in this Reader have an Icelandic emphasis, which reflects the
predominance of the Icelanders in recording the history of the Scandinavian peoples, developing new literary forms, and preserving texts of many kinds through copying and reworking over many centuries. But Texts VI, XI and XXIV originated in Norway and a selection of East Norse extracts is included in Text XX.

Even those primarily interested in the material culture — the history or archaeology — that comes within the sphere of Old Norse will find themselves extrapolating information from Icelandic texts. The study of Old Icelandic is also a starting point for runic studies, although there are virtually no genuinely medieval runic inscriptions in Iceland. But the medieval culture of Iceland is a rewarding study in itself. This remote outpost of Norway, first settled in the late ninth century, was the location for a unique political experiment; until 1262–64, when it became subject to the Norwegian crown, it remained a society without a king, ruled by an oligarchy of the most substantial landowners and chieftains. Though an Icelandic historian has recently described Iceland in this ‘Free State’ or ‘Commonwealth’ period as ‘a headless, feuding society’ (Helgi Þorláksson in McTurk 2005, 136), medieval Icelandic writers developed an ideology which represented it as self-sufficient and, within limits, egalitarian. The early history of their own society was represented in detail by Icelandic authors, but the historical account developed largely in the thirteenth century inevitably casts a mythologising glow over the period of settlement, and is treated with caution (if not dismissed) by modern historians. The literature of medieval Iceland is extraordinarily rich and includes at least two genres unparalleled elsewhere: the Sagas of Icelanders, highly sophisticated prose narratives relating the semi-fictionalised lives of early farmer heroes; and the highly-wrought skaldic poetry found in praise poems for Scandinavian and other rulers, usually composed by Icelandic poets, but also in less formal lausavísur (‘occasional verses’) scattered through the Sagas of Icelanders.

Though in Germany and North America Old Norse is usually taught in departments of Germanic or Scandinavian studies, in Britain it has traditionally been studied as part of a degree in English. This is a historical survival of the development of antiquarian interest in the Anglo-Saxon past which began in the seventeenth century; scholars seeking to fill gaps in their knowledge of Anglo-Saxon antiquities turned to the rich heritage of Norse texts. The Scandinavian and Anglo-
Saxon peoples were both offshoots of a common Germanic past: as well as speaking related languages, they shared a pre-Christian religion. There is evidence for this shared religion in the account of the Roman historian Tacitus, writing at the end of the first century AD, who refers in his Germania to the cult among the Germanic tribes of the goddess Nerthus, whose name is etymologically identical with that of the Norse god Njörðr. Yet extended accounts of this pagan religion are found only in Norse sources, the Prose Edda of Snorri Sturluson and the mythological poems of the Poetic Edda; early, sometimes pre-Christian references also survive in the diction of skaldic verses which Snorri’s Edda was written to explicate. Tacitus also refers to the warlike ideology of these early Germanic warrior peoples, for whom ‘it is infamy during life, and indelible reproach, to return alive from a battle in which their prince was slain. To preserve their prince, to defend him, and to ascribe to his glory all their own valorous deeds, is the sum and most sacred part of their oath.’ This so-called ‘heroic code’ of extreme bravery in battle has been seen as informing poems in English such as Beowulf and The Battle of Maldon, no less than the poems of Sigurðr and other heroes in the Poetic Edda, and their literary heirs, the warrior-farmers of the Sagas of Icelanders. And Beowulf reveals a more tangible link with early Scandinavia, since it tells of the deeds of legendary heroes of the Danes, Swedes and other early Germanic peoples, and alludes to legendary history also reworked in Icelandic sources such as the fourteenth-century Hrólfs saga kraka (see Text I).

G. Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion of the North (1964).

2. The Vikings

The period c.750–1050, known as the Viking Age, saw widespread incursions of Scandinavian peoples, mainly Norwegians and Danes, on the cultures of Western Europe. English and Frankish sources record the impact of the wælwfylas ‘slaughter-wolves’, as they are called in the Old English poem The Battle of Maldon, first as pagan despoilers of the rich resources of the monasteries on the Northumbrian coast,
and across the Channel north of the Seine estuary, in the late eighth century. They conquered and established colonies in Orkney, Shetland, the Hebrides and around the Irish coast in the ninth century, the time also of the settlement of the previously uninhabited Atlantic islands, Iceland and the Faroes. The further colonisation of Greenland, and exploration in North America, are recorded in the Icelandic ‘Vinland sagas’ (see Text XXI), though these settlements did not turn out to be permanent. The battle of Maldon in 991 was probably part of a campaign led by the Danish king Sven Forkbeard (Sveinn tjúguskegg in Icelandic texts), which culminated in his conquest of the English kingdom in 1013. England was ruled after him by his son Knut (Canute in English, Knútr in Icelandic texts); Scandinavian claims to English rule ended, however, with the defeat of the Norwegian Haraldr hardráði at Stamford Bridge in 1066.

While Viking raiders were ravaging in the west, similar activity was directed at eastern Europe and Russia from what is now Sweden. These Vikings targeted local resources, largely furs and slaves, which they obtained by seizure and the exaction of tribute. The term Rus, probably first used by the Finns of north-western Russia to refer to Scandinavians operating in their lands, gave what is now Russia its name. Trading routes were established to the Black Sea and as far south as Constantinople, where Scandinavians served the Byzantine Emperor as mercenary warriors in the Varangian guard.

The Anglo-Saxon and Frankish chroniclers who recorded the Viking raids from the point of view of their victims gave these heathen plunderers an understandably bad press. A more sympathetic representation had to await the development of written culture in Scandinavia following the conversion to Christianity c. 1000 AD; Icelandic writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, recreating the history of the Viking period, cast a contrastingly heroic glow over the activities of their ancestors. Some testimony contemporaneous to events survives in the form of skaldic verse, derived from eulogies to warlike leaders of the Viking Age. This must have survived for two centuries or more in oral form before it was embedded in the prose works of later writers. Sagas based on these verses and reproducing their warlike ideology record the history of the Norwegian and other Scandinavian kings, and the writers of Sagas of Icelanders elaborated the deeds of ordinary Icelandic farmers into Viking heroic epics.
Further evidence from pre-Christian times survives in the form of runic inscriptions. The runic alphabet was used in Scandinavia before the introduction of Latin alphabet. Although inscriptions appear most often on memorial stones and are brief and formulaic, they chart the movements of those commemorated, frequently travellers from Sweden via the Baltic and Russia to Constantinople. Runic inscriptions also provide valuable linguistic evidence for the early development of the Scandinavian languages (see Text XVII).

The origin of the word Viking (víkingr) is obscure. It may derive from the region of Norway around Oslo, known in the Middle Ages as Vikin, or from the substantive vik ‘small bay’, suggesting that Vikings were prone to lurk in coves or bays, or from Old English wic ‘settlement’, particularly used in place-names of ports, associating them rather with centres of trade — whether as legitimate traders or attackers. In The Battle of Maldon, wicingas is used synonymously with many terms identifying the Norsemen as aggressors (wælwulfas) and, especially, seafarers (brimlìphende, sæmenn). In Old Icelandic texts the word víkingr appears tainted with the same disapproval, and is usually applied not to heroic figures but to thugs and ‘berserkir’; but fara í víking (to go on a Viking expedition) was a proper rite of passage for the young saga hero.


3. The Early History of Iceland

The history of Iceland from its first settlement (dated to 870) down to 1118 is told in the Íslendingabók of Ari Porgilsson (see Text VIII and p. 56 below), probably written about 1134. This book, which in the surviving manuscripts is called Libellus Islandorum — or rather the first, now lost version from 1122–33 on which it is based, which Ari refers to as Íslendingabók — is probably the first narrative work to
be written in Icelandic, though Ari himself refers to the first recording of parts of the laws in the eleventh century. Ari uses a system of chronology that relates events in the history of Iceland to the larger picture of the Christian history of Europe. He deals with the settlement and the establishment of the law; the founding of the Alþingi, the annual general assembly held at Pingvellir in south-west Iceland each summer at which legislation was passed and litigation pursued; the division of the country into fjórdungar (‘quarters’ or administrative districts; see map on pp. xl–xli); the settlement of Greenland; and — as a climax — the conversion to Christianity and the history of the early bishops.

A more detailed account of the settlement of Iceland is given in Landnámabók (‘The Book of Settlements’), which may originally have been compiled as early as 1100 by contemporaries of Ari, who has been thought to have had a role in the compilation himself (see Text XIX). It records in topographical order the arrival in Iceland of some 430 settlers, giving details of their families and descendants. Surviving versions are from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and later, much expanded with material from Sagas of Icelanders and elsewhere, so that their historicity is hard to assess.

Ari’s account of the conversion to Christianity in about 1000 AD tells a remarkable story of the adoption of the new religion by a consensus reached by the ruling oligarchy of large landholders and chieftains. A more detailed account is given in the thirteenth-century Kristni saga, probably written by Sturla Þórðarson. The history of the Church in the years 1056–1176 is chronicled in another thirteenth-century work, Hungrvaka (‘Awakener of Hunger’), relating the history of the first five bishops of Iceland. The Biskupa sögur, more extensive biographies of the bishops of the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, were often written by contemporaries of the bishops themselves or other clerics (see Text XIV).

The laws of the Icelandic commonwealth are preserved in the composite collection known as Grágás (‘Grey Goose’), found in various fragments and copies the earliest of which is from the mid-twelfth century (see Text XXVII). It is difficult to assess the relation of the surviving material to the originally oral law, recited annually at the Alþingi by the lawspeaker, part of which, according to Ari, was first committed to writing in 1117–18. With the submission of Iceland to Norway in 1262–64 Grágás was superseded first by a law code
called Járnsíða and then by Jónsbók, of which many fine manuscripts survive. These codes were drafted in Norway.

The later secular history of Iceland down to the 1260s was told in Sturlunga saga, actually a compilation of sagas sometimes called samtíðarsögur (‘Contemporary Sagas’, or more accurately ‘Sagas of Contemporaries’) (see section 10 below and Text III), since they were written by contemporaries and sometimes eyewitnesses of the events related.


J. Byock, Viking Age Iceland (2001).


4. The Language

This Reader offers texts, mostly in excerpts, in the original language from the full range of Old Icelandic literary genres. Many of the best-known texts can be read in translation, and references to some available translations are included at the end of each section of this Introduction and on pp. xxxiv–xxxvi as well as in the separate introductions to each extract. But experiencing the texts in their original language repays the difficulty of learning the language in many ways. This is of course true of literature in any language. In the particular case of
Icelandic, the distinctive laconic and often ironical style of the sagas is often diluted in translation. The highly specialised linguistic requirements of poetry, particularly the highly technical demands of skaldic poetry, cannot be adequately met in translation; and leaving aside issues of literary style, there are pitfalls in attempting to assess the validity of Old Norse texts as historical sources without reference to their original form and idiom, especially where their import depends on the intricate interweaving of prose with verse citation.

A basic introduction to the Old Norse language and its relation to Modern Icelandic can be found in *A New Introduction to Old Norse*. *Part 1: Grammar*, Chapter 1, and a bibliography of grammatical and linguistic works on p. 267 of the same book (2nd edition). A supplementary list is included below, concentrating on dictionaries of most use to students, and works available in English.


5. Sagas

The word *saga* is related to the verb *segja* ‘to say’, meaning to say or tell, and refers in medieval texts to almost any kind of narrative predominantly in prose (though the term is not used of some books that we would call chronicles). Icelandic medieval narratives are of many different kinds, some of them unique to Icelandic, others translations or adaptations of other European genres. Their division into different categories or types of saga is largely the work of modern scholars, however; though the terms *konungasögur* (‘Kings’ Sagas’) and *riddarasögur* (‘Knights’ Sagas’ or romances) occur occasionally in medieval contexts, the others are modern inventions.

The development of saga writing has sometimes been represented as a progression from the early translation of Latin Saints’ Lives into
the vernacular, to the full flowering of the Sagas of Icelanders, and then to a decline into a fashion for more fantastic forms; but this is misleading. The writing of one kind of saga did not cease with the development of new types, and some of the translations of ‘fantastic’ European romances are among the earliest sagas to be written. The reality is that most of these kinds of saga were being written concurrently throughout the medieval period, and cross-fertilised and influenced each other.

According to the Preface to Snorri Sturluson’s Saga of St Óláfr, \( \textit{Pat var meirr en tvau hundred vetra tólfrað er Ísland var byggt, adr menn teki hér sögur at rita} \) ‘It was more than 240 years after the settlement of Iceland that people began to write sagas here’ (\textit{Heimskringla} II, 422). This places the beginning of saga writing at about 1110, which agrees with modern estimates; there is evidence of vernacular writing in Iceland from the early twelfth century (for an account of this early period of Icelandic writing, see Turville-Petre 1953). Snorri’s phrase \( \\textit{sögur at rita} \) highlights the necessary question whether there was such a thing as a pre-literary, oral saga. It is assumed that most of the sagas must go back to oral roots, but the question of the forms that oral narrative might have taken is still much debated (see Clover 1986), and discussions of the sagas as literary types must be limited to the written texts we know.


6. Sagas of Icelanders
The best-known category of saga is the Íslendingasögur or Sagas of Icelanders, also known as Family Sagas. These are now taken to be the most distinctive and significant Icelandic saga form, although this was not always the case; in the nineteenth century, when the sagas were read more literally as historical sources, the Kings’ Sagas were valued more highly, at least by readers outside Iceland. There are about 40 Sagas of Icelanders, narrating events that mostly took place or were said to have taken place in the period 930–1030, which is therefore
often called the ‘Saga Age’. Many begin with preludes reaching back before the beginning of the settlement of Iceland in 870. The sagas range in length from just a few pages to the epic scope of Njáls saga (see Text XXVI), 159 chapters in the standard edition. Some, such as Gísla saga or Grettis saga, are biographically structured on the life of a single individual; others, such as Laxdœla saga (see Text XV), deal with several generations of the same family or of the inhabitants of a district. Most of the main characters, and some of the events of the sagas, are clearly historical, though their treatment is fictional. Since the sagas were written during the thirteenth century about events some three centuries earlier, they have been compared with historical novels (see Harris 1986), but this undervalues their genuinely historical intent to reconstruct the past in a manner which the author and audience probably thought of as likely to be true. From a modern perspective we can see that thirteenth-century preoccupations, and sometimes reflections of thirteenth-century events, have been projected onto the sagas’ recreation of the past, and in fact the whole project of the writing of the Sagas of Icelanders is often interpreted as a reaction to the turbulent political situation in thirteenth-century Iceland, a deliberate idealising of the distinctively Icelandic Commonwealth period at a time when Iceland was submitting to the Norwegian throne. It is also significant that the period covered by the sagas exactly spans the period of Iceland’s conversion to Christianity in 1000 AD, and a major preoccupation in many sagas is either the event of the conversion itself, or the contrast of the author’s attitude to the pagan past with his own Christian world view.

These sagas can be divided into sub-groups on the basis of their geographical origin within Iceland; those from the east (such as Hrafnkels saga) tend to be shorter, those from the north and west, such as Kormaks saga (see Text IV) and Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa (see Text V), more often include skaldic verses, allegedly spoken by the characters in the sagas themselves. There are also thematic groupings: the ‘outlaw sagas’ about Grettir, Gísli and Hróðr, and the poets’ sagas, including those believed to be the very earliest Sagas of Icelanders, dealing with Icelanders who served as skalds at the courts of Scandinavian rulers. Also included in the Sagas of Icelanders are the so-called Vinland Sagas, dealing with the settlement of Greenland and the expeditions made from there to North America; the name derives from Vinland, meaning ‘land of wine’, the name given to one
of the places visited (see Text XXI). Archaeological investigations in North America have confirmed the presence of Viking settlers at L’Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland, although the Vinland sagas include a good deal of fanciful and confused material.

The Sagas of Icelanders are sometimes described as feud sagas. Some critics have interpreted feud as a fundamental structuring device in these sagas, others have drawn the conclusion that feud was as much a preoccupation in medieval Icelandic society as it was in the literary world of the sagas.

Íslensk fornrit II–XIV (1933–91).
Íslendinga sögur, ed. Jón Torfason et al., 2 vols (1985–86) (Version in Modern Icelandic spelling, also available on CD-rom with searchable concordance (1996)).
The Complete Sagas of Icelanders I–V, tr. Viðar Hreinsson et al. (1997); several of the sagas in this collection are reproduced in The Sagas of Icelanders, introduction by R. Kellogg (2000).
P. M. Sørensen, Saga and Society (1993).

7. Kings’ Sagas

The sagas known as konungasögur or Kings’ Sagas are mainly historical biographies of the kings of Norway, though other Scandinavian states are represented too: Knýtlinga saga concerns the kings of Denmark, and Orkneyinga saga the rulers of Orkney, technically not kings but jarls. According to a chronological model the Kings’ Sagas would have to precede the Sagas of Icelanders, since their roots lie in earlier historical works, some in Latin, some in the vernacular, written
in both Norway and Iceland in the twelfth century. The Íslendingabók of Ari Þorgílssson (see Text VIII), from about 1130, is an example of this early historiography, and of course the surviving version concentrates on the history of Iceland; but Ari’s preface tells us of an earlier version, now lost, that included konunga ævi (‘lives of kings’). It is not clear what form these took or how detailed they were. For further details of early historiography, see the Introduction to Text VI below (pp. 56–58, and bibliography p. 60). The Kings’ Sagas also have roots in hagiography (the lives of saints or heilagra manna sögur), since they draw on early lives of the two missionary kings of Norway, Óláfr Tryggvason, credited with the conversion of the Nordic countries, and his successor Óláfr Haraldsson inn helgi (‘the Saint’).

The fact that Icelanders were involved in historical writing from the start, in Norway as well as in Iceland, either as authors or as authoritative sources, must be linked with the fact that Icelanders had a virtual monopoly of the profession of court poet to Scandinavian rulers, composing the complex dróttkvætt (‘court metre’) or skaldic verse (see 12 below) that was used as an essential oral source by the writers of Kings’ Sagas. It is said in the Prologue to Snorri Sturluson’s Heimskringla that this poetry is the most reliable kind of historical source since the complexity of the metre renders it less prone to corruption and change than oral report not in verse would be. The stylistic technique developed in the Kings’ Sagas, where a verse is cited as authority for what has been said in a prose passage, undoubtedly influenced the practice of citing verse in the Sagas of Icelanders too, where it is used to promote a realistic impression even in cases where it is not difficult to see that the verse cited has no historical authenticity.

The most distinguished example of the Kings’ Saga genre is Snorri Sturluson’s Heimskringla (see Text VII), a collection of sixteen sagas of kings of Norway from its legendary origins to the late twelfth century, structured as a triptych of which the central and longest third is the biography of King Óláfr the Saint. Snorri probably wrote the collection in the 1220s or 1230s; he had already written the saga of King Óláfr as a free-standing work before incorporating it in the collection. Snorri drew on earlier, shorter works covering all or some of the same historical span, such as Morkinskinna and Fagrskinna (see Text VI), but these are continuous narratives rather than being divided into biographies of individual kings. The writing of Kings’
Sagas after Snorri became a process of expansion, using his work as a basis but interpolating material of different kinds; ironically enough, a late compilation such as the fourteenth-century Flateyjarbók re-instates some of the more fantastic hagiographical or legendary material that Snorri had pruned from his sources. Another kind of elaboration found in both Morkinskinna and Flateyjarbók is the inclusion of þættir (the singular form is þáttir), often thought of as comparable to the modern short story but characterised by their context within the texture of the Kings’ Sagas; they typically relate an encounter between the king in question and a visitor to his court, usually an Icelander, and help to reveal the king’s character in a fictional, and often humorous mode (see Auðunar þáttir, Text XVI).

The assembling of the Kings’ Sagas into these larger wholes tends to mask their diversity; in Heimskringla the mythological and legendary Ynglinga saga, drawing on poetic and oral sources to relate the descent of the early kings of Sweden and Norway from the pagan gods, contrasts both with the hagiographical Saga of St Óláfr and with sagas giving near-eyewitness accounts of events of the late twelfth century. Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar, indeed, written by Sturla Þórðarson, chronicles the life of the king who oversaw the submission of Iceland to Norway, and can be read alongside Sturlunga saga as a source for the thirteenth-century history of Iceland.

Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar, ed. G. Vigfusson, tr. G. Dasent, Icelandic Sagas II and IV, Rolls series (1887–94).
Stories from the Sagas of the Kings, ed. A. Faulkes (1980).
Heimskringla, tr. L. M. Hollander (1964).
8. Legendary sagas (fornaldarsögur)

The category of fornaldarsögur (‘sagas of the ancient time’), known as Legendary or Mythical–Heroic Sagas, is more miscellaneous, encompassing about thirty texts many of which are based in the remote Germanic past and include many fantastic episodes and themes. The increasing popularity of these sagas in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the fact that the Sagas of Icelanders believed to be comparatively late (such as Grettis saga) show a taste for this kind of material, has led the fornaldarsögur to be dismissed as a late and even decadent form, the suggestion being that at a time of cultural decline the Icelanders sought refuge in an escapist view of the golden age of the heroic past. More recently an opposing interpretation has been that the increased taste, from the late thirteenth century onwards, for more fictional forms, including a readiness to engage with foreign models, represents a new literary self-confidence in Iceland. As far as chronology is concerned, it is important to bear in mind that what may have been the earliest example of this genre, Skjöldunga saga, a history of the earliest Danish kings which is now mostly lost, was written probably near the end of the twelfth century, before any of the Sagas of Icelanders were written. The legendary Ynglinga saga would also come into this category if it were not subsumed into Snorri’s historical scheme. So sagas of this kind were being produced throughout the period of composition of the Sagas of Icelanders.

Some fornaldarsögur are prose retellings of known heroic poems; Völsunga saga, for instance, is a rather flat paraphrase of the legendary poems of the Poetic Edda, with the story of the dragon-slaying Sigurðr at its centre. Another group closer to folktale in its origins is sometimes called ‘Adventure Tales’ and includes themes such as the quest, sometimes but not always for a wife and kingdom. The way in which the fornaldarsögur put their diverse sources to use as entertainment can be illustrated by the story of Bóðvarr Bjarki in Hrólfss saga kraka (see Text I), which tells the essentially heroic story of a hero who rids the hall of the Danish King Hrólf (the Hroðulf of Beowulf) of a marauding beast. A similar story is told in Beowulf in epic mode, but gets a burlesque treatment in the Icelandic saga.

Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks, ed. C. Tolkien and G. Turville-Petre (1956).
Saga Heiðreks konungs ins vitra (= Hervarar saga), ed. and tr. C. Tolkien (1960).
9. Heilagra manna sögur

Other saga genres are more closely related to their European counterparts. The genre of heilagra manna sögur (‘sagas of holy people’, Saints’ Lives) has the distinction of being the first kind of saga to be written in Iceland. The practice of writing was introduced to Iceland by the Church, as elsewhere in Europe, and the first documents written in the vernacular language were, not surprisingly, translations of foreign religious texts, such as Saints’ Lives, for the instruction of lay people. One of the earliest surviving is Matheus saga, one of the postola sögur (Sagas of Apostles), which must date from earlier than 1150; at the other extreme Thómas saga erkibyskups, a life of the twelfth-century English saint Thomas Becket, whose cult was enormously popular in Iceland, is extant in several versions from the thirteenth century and later. The genre is represented in this Reader by the account of a miracle from Maríu saga (Text XIII). Although this group belongs to an international genre, Turville-Petre and others argue that the realistic mode and use of dialogue of the native Icelandic genres can be traced back to the style of these early translated texts: as he says (1953, xx), ‘the learned literature did not teach the Icelanders what to think or what to say, but it taught them how to say it’.

Heilagra manna sögur, ed. C. R. Unger (1877).
The Old Norse–Icelandic Legend of Saint Barbara, ed. and tr. K. Wolf (2000).
Postola sögur, ed. C. R. Unger (1874).
Matheus saga postula, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson (1994).
Thómas saga erkibyskups, ed. C. R. Unger (1869).
10. Contemporary Sagas (*samtíðarsögur*)

The genre of *Heilagra manna sögur* has connections both with the lives of the missionary kings (see above under Kings’ Sagas), and with the *biskupa sögur*, lives of the bishops of Iceland from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries. Of these, the lives of the two bishops who achieved sanctity, Þorlákr and Jón of Hólar (see Text XIV), though classic hagiographies in their rhetoric and cataloguing of miracles, have features in common with the *samtíðarsögur* (‘Contemporary Sagas’). These last are mainly collected into a large compilation called *Sturlunga saga* (see Text III), and deal with more recent events in Iceland’s history than the Sagas of Icelanders, in particular the extensive feuds and factional war leading up to the submission of Iceland to Norway in 1262–64. With these sagas we come closest to the modern conception of history, and they are generally accepted as historically reliable in a way that the Sagas of Icelanders are not, but their effect of realism is often created using the same carefully contrived conventions as those of the more fictional genre.


11. Riddarasögur

The *riddarasögur* (‘Sagas of Knights’) or chivalric sagas can be divided into translations of romances popular in Europe and England, and indigenous Icelandic romances making use of the same courtly milieu and themes. As with the *fornaldarsögur*, the writing of *riddarasögur* is sometimes seen as a late development, but we know
from a preface attached to the earliest surviving one, *Tristrams saga ok Íslandar* (see Text XII), that it was composed in 1226 at the court of King Hákon of Norway, which makes it squarely contemporaneous with the writing of the earliest Sagas of Icelanders. Although a new florid style was developed for the writing of *riddarasögur*, these early translations at least are strikingly similar to the Sagas of Icelanders in their use of an apparently impersonal narrative perspective, and while tending to stick closely to the events recorded in their originals, strip out most of the elements of description and refined analysis of emotion characteristic of their French originals.

M. Kalinke, *King Arthur North by Northwest*.
The matière de Bretagne in *Old Norse–Icelandic Romances* (1981).

12. Eddic poetry

Eddic poetry is so named after the collection of 29 poems called the *Poetic Edda*, preserved in a manuscript from c.1270 known as the Codex Regius, and dating from the ninth to the twelfth centuries. The origin of the term *edda* is uncertain. It was used of the Codex Regius collection by its seventeenth-century owner, Bishop Brynjólfr Sveinsson, who called it ‘Sæmundar Edda’ (mistakenly believing it to be written by the early Icelandic historian, Sæmundr Sigfússon) to distinguish it from Snorra Edda, the prose work by Snorri Sturluson. This suggests that in the seventeenth century the term was taken to imply a collection of mythological material, though it is clear that in
the Middle Ages, as for Snorri Sturluson, it meant ‘Art of Poetry’. The poems of the Codex Regius are arranged thematically, ten dealing with mythological material, nineteen with heroes of the legendary Germanic past. A section of perhaps eight leaves, now missing from the manuscript, would have included further heroic poems. Six mythological poems (or parts of them), one of which is not in the Codex Regius, are preserved in the fragmentary manuscript AM 748 I a 4to, from about 1300, which may have been another, similar poetical compilation, and a few others in manuscripts of Snorra Edda and elsewhere.

The metres of eddic poetry derive from the Germanic alliterative pattern essential also to Old English, Old Saxon and some Old High German verse. While the structural unit in these languages is the long line made up of two linked half-lines, eddic verse breaks up into stanzas of variable length, but most usually of eight lines (equivalent to four Old English long lines, the lines linked in pairs by alliteration). The prevailing metre, fornyrðislag ‘old story (or ‘talk’) metre’, normally includes two stressed syllables and a varying number of unstressed syllables in each line, and either one or two stressed syllables in the first half-line alliterate with the first stressed syllable of the second half-line. Variant metres are málahátt ‘speeches metre’, in which each line is heavier, and made up of no fewer than five syllables, and ljóðahátt ‘songs-form’, in which two lines of fornyrðislag are followed by a third, so called full line, which alliterates within itself. A basic account of eddic metres is found in Turville-Petre 1976, xiii–xvi.

The first four poems of the Edda focus on the god Óðinn, and — through his perpetual quest for wisdom — on mythological and gnomic lore. All are cast in direct speech. Völuspá, made up of Óðinn’s dialogue with a sybil from the giant world, relates the events — past, present and future — in the history of the gods, ending in their downfall at ragnarök (‘the doom of the gods’) and the regeneration of the world and a new generation of gods. Vafþrúðnismál and Grímnismál are both catalogue poems set in narrative frameworks; Hávamál ‘the speeches of the high one’ is itself a compilation of several separate poems, incorporating catalogues of gnomic wisdom as well as events from the god’s own history. Skírnismál narrates the winning by the god Freyr of the giant-bride Gerðr. The remaining mythological poems are concerned with Þórr, including the humorous Hárbarðsljóð, in
which Þórr is outwitted by the cunning of Óðinn, and Prymskviða, the burlesque account of Þórr’s journey to Jötunheimr to retrieve his stolen hammer (see Text IX). Lokasenna is a satirical poem in which the gods are comprehensively attacked by the ambiguous god-giant Loki, who accuses each of them in turn of immorality; it ends with Þórr’s forcible silencing of Loki.

Völundarkviða (see Text X), which tells of the supernatural smith Völundr (‘Weland’ in Old English, later Wayland) and his revenge against the tyrant Niðuðr, may be seen as a bridge between the mythological poems proper, and those dealing with the world of men (though it is followed by the mythological Alvíssmál, another catalogue set in the narrative frame of a wisdom contest, about Þórr’s encounter with a dwarf).

The heroic poems of the Edda deal with legendary figures — the two Helgis, Sigurðr, Gunnarr and Hamðir (see Text XXV) whose stories must originally have been distinct, but who, even before the compilation of the Codex Regius, were beginning to be linked into a cycle. This process culminated in the fourteenth-century Völsunga saga, a prose retelling that completes the fusion of these legends into a single family saga and attempts to smooth out the elements of contradiction and overlap introduced by the juxtaposition of originally separate poems from a variety of styles and periods. At the centre is the hero Sigurðr, slayer of the dragon Fáfnir (Siegfried in German versions of the story), who is betrothed to the valkyrie Brynhildr but marries Guðrún Gjúkadóttir, and suffers vengeance at the hand of Guðrún’s brother Gunnarr, who is married to Brynhildr.

Some figures in the eddic poems, such as the Atli of Atlakviða (Attila the Hun) and his enemy Gunnarr, king of the Burgundians, have an identifiable historical background and elements of their stories can be found in early histories such as that of the sixth-century Jordanes (see Dronke 1969, 29–38 and 192–96). The story of Sigurðr is told with considerable differences in the Middle High German Nibelungenlied.

13. Skaldic poetry

This term derives from the Old Norse word skáld ‘poet’, appropriately in that, while eddic poetry is anonymous, most skaldic poetry is attributed to a named poet. The Icelandic term for the metre most common in skaldic poetry is dróttkvætt, an adjective derived from dróttkværð ‘poetry in court metre’, referring to the aristocratic milieu of this poetic style. The earliest surviving skaldic poetry dates from the ninth century, but poems in skaldic metres, usually on religious subjects, continued to be composed throughout the fourteenth century. Skaldic poetry is famous for its convoluted syntax, elaborate diction and taxing alliterative, rhyming and syllable-counting requirements (for an exposition of these, see VII C below).

The Kings’ Sagas include accounts of skalds appearing at courts, in Norway and elsewhere, to offer poems in praise of rulers, and it seems there was a premium set on length and elaborate construction (there are stories of skalds who get into trouble by offering a mere flokkr or sequence of verses in place of a drápa, a formal poem of at least twenty stanzas, including at least one refrain); but most surviving poems are experienced in more fragmentary form, in quotations in Kings’ Sagas, often of no more than a single stanza, in the context of the event they refer to. Their reconstitution into long poems, few of which can be considered complete, and where the order of the stanzas is often in doubt, is the work of modern editors. On the other hand, the authors of the histories who cite these verses as corroboration for their historical narrative, and for whom they must often have been the only source, usually identify the poet by name and often give a
name to the poem to which the verse belongs as well (see Texts VI and VII for the citing of verses as historical evidence). Most early court poets were Norwegian, but from c.1000 most skalds seem to have come from Iceland.

In the Sagas of Icelanders the citing of verse is superficially similar in that an episode may be supported by the citation of a single verse, but the verse is more often woven into the fabric of the narrative as dialogue, or the comment of an individual on the events of the saga. These verses are usually lausavísur or free-standing verses, specific to the occasion they refer to, though attempts have been made to reconstruct longer poems from some. Like the verses in the Kings’ Sagas, some of these verses must have survived in oral form from the time of their composition (which may often have been later than the events or claimed events to which they are tied in the sagas), and have been the sources for the thirteenth-century prose narratives in which they are incorporated. But their historical authenticity is harder to establish than that of the Kings’ Sagas verses, and some are taken to be ‘forgeries’, or in less emotive terms, embellishments composed by the saga authors themselves to enhance the apparent historicity of their narratives.

A sub-group among the Sagas of Icelanders is the so-called poets’ sagas, written mostly early in the thirteenth century, which seem to indicate an interest in the biographies of Icelandic poets. But although they quote a good deal of occasional verse attributed to the poet, they seem almost to avoid the public or historical role of the court poet (see Text IV, which features love verse by the poet Kormakr, and even a stanza he shares with his beloved, Steingerðr; and Text V, in which the rival poets Björn Hítdœlakappi and Þórðr Kolbeinsson recite verses). The saga which investigates most closely the temperament and sensibility of the poet is Egils saga Skallagrímssonar, often supposed to be the work of Snorri Sturluson.

Another repository of skaldic poetry dismembered into single stanzas, and an invaluable source of information about it, is the Prose Edda of Snorri Sturluson (also known as Snorra Edda). In this treatise Snorri set out, according to his own account, to instruct young poets in the mysteries of skaldic verse at a time when its conventions may have become less popular and memories of the pagan religion that underpinned it were beginning to fade. The work consists of four parts: a Prologue; Gylfaginning, an outline of the pre-Christian Norse
religion supported by quotations from eddic mythological poems; *Skáldskaparmál* (‘the language of poetry’) giving an account of the kennings (poetic periphrases) and *heiti* (poetic synonyms) used by the skalds, and liberally exemplified by quotations; and *Háttatal* (‘catalogue of verse-forms’), which takes the form of a poem, composed by Snorri himself, in 102 stanzas, each exemplifying a variant skaldic verse-form. His Edda is thus a vital source of information on both mythology and the skaldic craft. Although it is primarily a learned work, the stories in *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál* are told with verve and humour (see Text II below). *Háttatal* was most probably composed after Snorri’s first visit to Norway in 1218–20, and the rest of his Edda may well have been written later.

While the art of skaldic poetry had acknowledged roots in the pagan religion, its conventions were adapted after the Conversion to Christian themes. Poets of the Conversion period straddle the two religions: Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld, for instance, composed for both the pagan Jarl Hákon and, later, Hákon’s proselytising Christian successor, Óláfr Tryggvason, and the poet’s saga dramatises the story of his own conversion (in which he demands, and gets, the king’s agreement to act as his godfather) and its implications for his poetic craft. By the twelfth century Church patronage was encouraging the development of a genre of religious *drápur*, adapting the conventions of *dróttkvætt* within a literate monastic culture, in contrast to the oral context of their predecessors. Where earlier encomiastic poems survive fragmentarily as scattered references within the Kings’ Sagas, twelfth-century *drápur* such as *Geisli*, composed by the Icelander Einarr Skúlason for recitation at the shrine of St Óláfr in Niðaróss (Trondheim), probably in 1153, are the earliest to survive complete. Poets continued to compose extended poems in *dróttkvætt* into the fourteenth century, fusing traditional skaldic elements with themes derived from continental material.

A development from skaldic poetry, probably originating early in the fourteenth century and remaining popular well into the nineteenth, was the distinctively Icelandic genre of *rímur*. These long narrative poems, sometimes interspersed with lyrical passages called *mansöngvar* (‘love poems’), often reworked the narrative material of sagas, usually *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*. They made use of skaldic diction but with rhythms closer to those of ballads. Óláfs ríma Haraldssonar (Text XXII) is the earliest surviving example.
14. Modern Icelandic

Icelandic is a conservative language and has changed less since the Middle Ages than the other Scandinavian languages, so that medieval texts are still comparatively accessible to the modern Icelandic reader. Many editions of medieval texts, including most of those in this Reader, are printed in a normalised spelling that aims to represent the language of the thirteenth century; though this differs somewhat from modern Icelandic spelling, it is much closer to modern spelling than is that of the original manuscripts. Although pronunciation has changed considerably, this is masked by the fact that many teachers of Old Norse
adopt modern pronunciation. For an account of differences between Old and Modern Icelandic pronunciation, see NION I, pp. 14–21.

Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon, Íslensk orðsifjabók (1989) [etymological dictionary].

15. Manuscripts

Attitudes to medieval literature in post-medieval Iceland were also conservative. As in other European countries, antiquarian interest in the medieval past began to develop in the Renaissance, but this went alongside an unbroken tradition of the copying of medieval texts. This continued long after the introduction of printing, with handwritten and printed texts existing side by side. Several thirteenth-century sagas are now preserved only in manuscripts from the seventeenth century and later. The spelling of texts reproduced in this Reader has been normalised, with conventional abbreviations expanded editorially; as an introduction to reading texts as they appear in early manuscripts, an extract from the fourteenth-century Möðruvallabók (Text IV) has been reproduced in facsimile as Text XVIII.

With the revival of antiquarian interest in the Nordic medieval past, and the consciousness of its preservation largely in Icelandic manuscripts, scholars in Scandinavia made collections of Icelandic manuscripts. The largest of these was built up over a lifetime by the Icelandic scholar Árni Magnússon, who was employed as assistant to the Danish Royal Antiquarian, Thomas Bartholin, and later as Professor of History at the University of Copenhagen. During a ten-year stint (1702–12) on a royal commission making a census of all the farms in Iceland he scoured the country for manuscripts and documents of all kinds; after his return to Denmark in 1713 he continued to obtain manuscripts in Norway and Denmark, as well as those he was given or sold by connections in Iceland. Many that he was unable to buy he copied, or commissioned others to copy; he also painstakingly researched the provenance of manuscripts. Despite a fire in Copenhagen in 1728 that destroyed a few dozen of Árni’s manuscripts (together with all his printed books and some of his notes), Árni did more than anyone
else to preserve Iceland’s medieval literary heritage. His collection was bequeathed to the University of Copenhagen when he died in 1730, and was the basis for the manuscript institute there that still carries his name. As a result of negotiations in the mid-twentieth century, a large proportion of this collection (mainly manuscripts whose subject matter related specifically to Iceland) has now been returned to Iceland, where it is housed in an institute that also bears Árni’s name, The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies. The first manuscripts to be returned were the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda and the great Kings’ Saga compilation Flateyjarbók.

Many Icelandic manuscripts have been printed in facsimile editions. Some can also be viewed on the internet at:

http://am.hi.is/WebView/
http://arnamagnaeansk.ku.dk/haandskriftssamlingen/eks/

Íslensk handrit. *Icelandic Manuscripts* I– (1956–).

**General reference and further reading**

Icelandic texts in English editions

Texts with notes and glossary:

Stories from the Sagas of the Kings, ed. A. Faulkes (1980).

Texts with parallel translation:

R. Frank, Old Norse Court Poetry, Islandica XLII (1978).
Guta saga, ed. C. Peel (1999).
Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar, ed. G. Vigfusson, tr. G. Dasent, Icelandic Sagas II and IV, Rolls series (1887–94).
Jómsvíkinga saga, ed. N. Blake (1962).
The Old Norse–Icelandic Legend of Saint Barbara, ed. and tr. K. Wolf (2000).
Saga Heiðreks konungs ins vitra (= Hervarar saga), ed. and tr. C. Tolkien (1960).

Translations of the Sagas of Icelanders:
Many of these translations are reproduced by Penguin under the heading
‘World of the Sagas’, as follows:
The Sagas of Icelanders, introduction by R. Kellogg (2000) [Egils saga,
Vatnsdœla saga, Laxdœla saga, Hrafnkels saga Freysgodha, Bandamanna
saga, Gísla saga, Gunnlaugs saga, Refs saga, Grœnlendinga saga, Eiriks
saga rauða, þættir]
Egil’s Saga, tr. B. Scudder, introduction by Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir (2004).
Gisli Surtsson’s Saga and the Saga of the People of Eyri, tr. Vésteinn Ólason,
Njál’s saga, tr. R. Cook (2002).
Sagas of Warrior Poets, ed. D. Whaley (2002) [Kormaks saga, Bjarnar saga
Hítðælakappa, Hallfreðar saga, Gunnlaugs saga, Viglundar saga].

Other translations:
T. M. Andersson and W. I. Miller, Law and Literature in Medieval Iceland:
Heimskringla, tr. L. M. Hollander (1964).
A History of Norway and the Passion and Miracles of the Blessed Óláfr, tr.
Hrafnkels Saga and Other Icelandic Stories, tr. Hermann Pálsson (1971).
Icelandic Histories and Romances, tr. R. O’Connor (2002).
King Haralds Saga by Snorri Sturluson, tr. Magnus Magnusson and Hermann
Pálsson (1976).
Íslendingabók – Kristní saga. The Book of the Icelanders – The Story of the
The Life of Gudmund the Good, Bishop of Hólar, tr. G. Turville-Petre and E. S. Olszewska (1942).
The Saga of King Sverri of Norway, tr. J. Sephton (1899, reissued 1994).
The Saga of Tristram and Isond, tr. P. Schach (1973).
The Sagas of Kormak and the Sworn Brothers, tr. L. M. Hollander (1949).
The Skalds, A Selection of their Poems, tr. L. M. Hollander (1968).
Sven Aggesen, Works, tr. E. Christiansen.
The Vinland sagas: Grænlendinga saga and Eirik’s saga, tr. Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (1973).
## CHRONOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AD</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c.725</td>
<td>Beowulf written</td>
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<tr>
<td>793</td>
<td>First viking raid on Northumbria</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.850</td>
<td>Beginning of viking settlement in England</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.870</td>
<td>Beginning of viking settlement in Iceland</td>
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<tr>
<td>871</td>
<td>Alfred the Great becomes king of England</td>
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<td>c.885</td>
<td>Haraldr finehair becomes king of all</td>
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<td>Norway</td>
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<td>[Þorbjörn hornklofi</td>
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<td>930</td>
<td>Foundation of Alpingi</td>
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<td>c.965</td>
<td>Division of Iceland into quarters</td>
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<td>c.985</td>
<td>Beginning of settlement of Greenland</td>
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<td>995</td>
<td>Óláfr Tryggvason becomes king of Norway</td>
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<td>999/1000</td>
<td>Christianity accepted in Iceland</td>
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<td>c.1000</td>
<td>Discovery of America by vikings</td>
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<td>c.1005</td>
<td>Fifth court established</td>
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<td>1010</td>
<td>Burning of Njáll</td>
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<td>1014</td>
<td>Battle of Clontarf</td>
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<td>1030</td>
<td>Fall of St Óláfr at Stikla(r)staðir</td>
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<td>1056</td>
<td>First bishop at Skálaholt, Sæmundr the Wise born</td>
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<td>1066</td>
<td>Fall of Haraldr harðræði in England, Battle of Hastings</td>
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<td>1067/8</td>
<td>Ari the Wise born</td>
</tr>
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<td>1096</td>
<td>Tithe laws introduced</td>
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<td>1106</td>
<td>First bishop at Hólar</td>
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<tr>
<td>1117–18</td>
<td>Laws first written down</td>
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<td>c.1125</td>
<td>Íslendingabók compiled</td>
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<td>1153</td>
<td>Archbishopric established at Niðaróss</td>
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<td>c.1190–1210</td>
<td>Sverris saga</td>
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<td>1197</td>
<td>Jón Loptsson dies</td>
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<td>Bishop Þorlákr of Skálaholt declared saint</td>
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<td>1200</td>
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<td>1215–18</td>
<td>Snorri lawspeaker</td>
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<td>1217</td>
<td>Hákon Håkonarson becomes king of Norway</td>
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<tr>
<td>1218–20</td>
<td>Snorri’s first visit to Norway</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.1220</td>
<td>The Prose Edda</td>
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<tr>
<td>1222–31</td>
<td>Snorri lawspeaker again</td>
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<td>1226</td>
<td>Tristrams saga</td>
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1237–9 Snorri’s second visit to Norway
1240 Duke Skúli killed
1241 Snorri Sturluson killed 23rd September

C.1250 Oldest surviving manuscript fragment of a saga of Icelanders
   (Egils saga)
1261 Magnús Hákonarson crowned king in Norway
1262–4 Icelanders acknowledge the king of Norway as their sovereign
1263 King Hákon dies

C.1275 Codex Regius of eddic poems. Morkinskinna
C.1280 Njáls saga. Hrafnkels saga. King Magnús Hákonarson dies
1284 Sturla Þórðarson dies

C.1320 Grettis saga

C.1340 Chaucer born

C.1350 Möðruvallabók written [Eysteinn Ásgrímsson
1382 Flateyjarbók begun
1397 Norway and Iceland come under Danish rule
1550 Reformation in Iceland
1944 Iceland regains complete independence
The diagram shows the approximate periods during which the various medieval Icelandic literary genres were cultivated. The dotted lines mark the time of the conversion to Christianity (1000), the end of the Commonwealth (1262) and the Reformation (1550).
WEST ICELAND
LAWSPEAKERS OF THE MEDIEVAL ICELANDIC COMMONWEALTH

1. Úlfljótr (cf. Text VIII, note 19; Laws I 1–2) .................................................. c.930–949
2. Hrafn Hœngsson .................................................................................................. c.950–969
3. Pórarinn Ragabraðir Óláfsson ................................................................. 970–984
4. Porkell máni Þorsteinsson ............................................................................... 985–1001
5. Porgeiir Ljósveitningagoði Þorkelsson ...................................................... 1002–1003
6. Grímr Svertingsson .......................................................................................... 1004–1030
7. Skapti Þóroddsson ........................................................................................... 1031–1033
8. Steinn Þorgeirsson .......................................................................................... 1034–1053
9. Porkell Tjórvason ............................................................................................... 1054–1062
10. Gellir Þólværksson .......................................................................................... 1063–1065
11. Gunnarr inn spaki Þorgrímsson ................................................................. 1066–1071
12. Kolbeinn Flosason .......................................................................................... 1072–1074
13. Gellir Þólværksson (second time) .......................................................... 1075–1083
14. Gunnarr inn spaki Þorgrímsson (second time) .................................. 1084–1097
15. Sighvatr Surtsson .......................................................................................... 1098–1107
16. Markús Skeggjason ......................................................................................... 1108–1116
17. Úlfheðinn Gunnarsson .................................................................................. 1117–1122
18. Bergþórr Hrafnsson ......................................................................................... 1123–1134
19. Guðmundr Þorgeirsson .................................................................................. 1135–1145
20. Hrafn Úlfheðinsson ......................................................................................... 1146–1155
21. Finnr Hallsson .................................................................................................. 1156–1166
22. Gunnarr Úlfheðinsson ..................................................................................... 1167–1202
23. Snorri Húnbogason ......................................................................................... 1203–1209
24. Styrmir Oddason ............................................................................................ 1210–1214
25. Gizurr Hallsson ................................................................................................ 1215–1221
26. Hallr Gizurarson ................................................................................................ 1222–1231
27. Styrmir inn fróði Kárason ............................................................................. 1232–1235
28. Snorri Sturluson ............................................................................................. 1236–1247
29. Teitr Þorvaldsson ............................................................................................ 1248–1250
30. Snorri Sturluson (second time) ................................................................... 1251–1253
31. Styrmir inn fróði Kárason (second time) .................................................... 1254–1258
32. Teitr Þorvaldsson (second time) .................................................................. 1259–1262
33. Óláfr hvítaskáld Þórdarson .......................................................................... 1263–1265
34. Sturla Þórdarson ............................................................................................. 1266–1268
35. Óláfr hvítaskáld Þórdarson (second time) ................................................... 1269–1271
Hrólfs saga is one of the sagas known as heroic, mythical, or ‘of ancient time’ (Modern Icelandic fornaldarsögur). Their main distinguishing feature is that they take place before the settlement of Iceland, chiefly in northern Europe (whereas most of the ‘Romance Sagas’ take place in southern Europe). They are often based on poems like the heroic lays of the Poetic Edda. Hrólfs saga contains stories associated with the Danish Skjölðung dynasty (also celebrated in the earlier but now mostly lost Skjölðunga saga), which seem to underlie some parts of the Anglo-Saxon poem Beowulf too. Hrólfkr kraki corresponds to Hroðulf, nephew of King Hröðgar, and the historical background of the legends about these kings was Scandinavia in the fifth and sixth centuries of our era. In Hrólfs saga, however, the story has come under the influence of later genres, and Hrólfkr and his kappar (‘champions’) are to a certain extent based on Charlemagne and his peers; the kastali (‘castle’) mentioned in the present extract, which appears to be separate from the traditional höll (‘hall’), also belongs to a later period. The double fight against the monster has certain similarities to Beowulf’s fights against Grendel and Grendel’s mother, and Bœðvarr bjarki inherits some of Beowulf’s characteristics from his own bear-like father. The story as it is told here, however, lacks the high seriousness of Beowulf and the Chansons de Geste, and contains some of the comedy and irony which feature in other medieval Icelandic tales.

All the surviving manuscripts of Hrólfs saga were written in the seventeenth century or later, and although the original saga is believed to have been compiled in the fourteenth, none of the manuscripts seems to preserve the original text unchanged, and their language is more like Modern than Old Icelandic. Many late forms and spellings are retained here. They are explained in the grammatical notes. The present text is based on the manuscript AM 285 4to. Where this manuscript is incoherent it is emended from AM 9 fol.

The passage begins mid-way through chapter 23 with Bœðvarr bjarki arriving at King Hrólfkr’s court where he has come to seek service with the king (in the first part of the chapter Bœðvarr has been visiting his two brothers, cf. line 149). On his way there through rain and mud he had lodged with a poor peasant and his wife who told him that their son Hótttr was at the court and being badly treated by the courtiers; they asked Bœðvarr to be kind to him.
King Hrólfr’s courtiers had been throwing bones into the corner where Hátttr was cowering. There is a historical example of viking bone-throwing in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle under the year 1012 (the martyrdom of Archbishop Alphege or Ælfheah) and a mythical one in Snorri Sturluson’s Edda, Gylfaginning ch. 44; and one might also compare the Odyssey XX 287–319 and XXII 284–91; Judges 15: 15.

The abbreviations used in the grammatical notes are explained at the beginning of the Glossary in Part III; the figures in brackets refer to sections of the Grammar in Part I. Unlike the Grammar and Glossary, the grammatical notes here distinguish strong masculine nouns (sm.) from weak masculine (wm.), strong feminine nouns (sf.) from weak feminine (wf.), and strong neuter nouns (sn.) from weak neuter (wn.); see 3.1.4 and 3.1.8 in the Grammar.

Bibliography


Chapter 23

... Síðan ferr Bóðvarr leið sína til Hleiðargarðs. Hann kemr til konungs atsetu. Bóðvarr leiðir þegar hest sinn á stall hjá konungs hestum hinum beztu ok spyrð öngvan at; gekk síðan inn í holl ok var þar fátt manna.

síðan adv. ‘then’. ferr sv. ‘goes’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of fara (3.6.10). Bóðvarr sm. (personal name): nom., the subject of the sentence; the adv. síðan occupies the first position in the sentence, so Bóðvarr is in third position since the finite verb must be in first or second place (3.9.1). leið sf. ‘way’ ‘journey’ ‘path’: acc., the direct object of the sentence; fara does not normally take an object, but may be construed with so-called ‘locative objects’ (ones that indicate where something took place, cf. Eng. he jumped the ditch) — here we might translate ‘on his way’. síðan adv. ‘then’. ferr sv. ‘goes’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of fara (3.6.10). Bóðvarr sm. (personal name): nom., the subject. leiðir wv. ‘leads’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of leiða. þegar adv. ‘at once’ ‘immediately’. hest sm. ‘horse’: acc., the direct object. öngvan pron. ‘no one’: acc. m. sg., the direct object; masculine is used since a human being is denoted and feminine gender has not been specified, masculine being the default gender (cf. fáir line 23).
Hann sezk útarliga, ok sem hann hefr setit þar nökkrar hríð, heyrir hann þrausk nökktut útar í hornit í einhverjum stað. Bóðvarr litr þangat ok sér at mannsþond kemr upp ór mikilli beinahrúgu, er þar lá; hönðin var svört mjökl. Bóðvarr gengr þangat ok spyrð hvver þar væri í heina-

4 hann pron. ‘he’: nom., the subject. sezk wv. ‘sits down’: 3rd sg. pres. indic., -sk form (3.6.5.3), of setja; the sense is reflexive, the literal meaning being ‘sets/places himself’. útarliga adv. ‘far out [i.e. near the door]’: ok conj. ‘and’; this conj. connects the immediately preceding independent sentence with the one beginning heyrir hann þrausk nökktut at the end of line 4. sem conj. ‘when’ (3.8.2.1, end). hann pron. ‘he’: nom., the subject. hefr wv. ‘has’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of hafa (3.6.7). setit sv. ‘sat’: supine (= pp. nom./acc. n. sg.) of sitja—sat—sátu—setit; hefr + setit forms a so-called perfect construction, the equivalent of Eng. has sat (3.6.2). þar adv. ‘there’. nökkrar pron. ‘some’ ‘a little’: acc. f. sg.; here used adjectively, nökkr (an abbreviated form of nökkuðra) agrees with hríð. hríð sf. ‘while’: acc., since the phrase nökkr hríð functions here as time adverbial (3.1.2, 3.1.5 (10)). heyrir wv. ‘hears’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of heyrða; the finite verb is in first position because the independent sentence in which it occurs is immediately preceded by a dependent sentence (3.9.1). hann pron. ‘he’: nom., the subject. þrausk sn. ‘rummaging’: acc., the direct object. nökktut pron. ‘some’ ‘a’: acc. n. sg.; here used adjectively, nökktut agrees with þrausk. útar adv. ‘farther out’: comp., consisting of út + comp. suffix -ar. í prep. ‘in’. hornit sn. + art. (horn-it) ‘the corner’: acc., the case triggered by í when motion is denoted; the English speaker may not conceive of hearing something somewhere as involving motion, but the clue is provided by the motion adv. útar — the hearing of hann, the subject, is directed farther out into the corner. í prep. ‘in’. einhverjum pron. ‘some’: dat. m. sg.; here used adjectively, einhverjum agrees with stað. stað sm. ‘place’: dat., the case triggered by í when location is denoted; note that stað is one of those masculine nouns that has no ending in the dat. sg. (3.1.4, 3.1.8, paradigm 2). Bóðvarr sm. (personal name): nom., the subject. lítr sv. ‘looks’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of líta—leit—lítu—lítið. þangat adv. ‘thither’ ‘there’. ok conj. ‘and’. sér sv. ‘sees’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of sjá (3.6.10). at conj. ‘that’. mannsþond sf. ‘man’s hand’: nom., the subject; note that although mánns, gen. sg. of mãðr, is sm., the gender of the compound is determined by the second element, hón; note further that the nom. case and sg. number of the compound is expressed by hón alone. kemr sv. ‘comes’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of koma—kom—kómu—komit. upp adv. ‘up’. ór prep. ‘out’. mikilli adj. ‘big’: strong dat. f. sg., agreeing with beinahrúgu. beinahrúgu wfv. ‘bone-pile’ ‘pile of bones’: dat., the case always triggered by ór; like mannsþond above, beinahrúgu is a compound, whose gender is determined and case and number expressed by the second element, hrúgu; in the following the structure of compounds will receive no further analysis. er conj. ‘which’. þar adv. ‘there’. lá sv. ‘lay’: 3rd sg. past indic. of liggja—lá—lágu—légit: the finite verb does not often immediately follow a subordinating conjunction, and here þar intervenes (3.9.1). hónðin sf. + art. (hónð-in) ‘the hand’: nom., the subject. var sv. ‘was’: 3rd sg. past indic. of vera (3.6.10). svört adj. ‘black’: strong nom. f. sg. (3.3.2), agreeing with hóndin. mjökl adv. ‘very’ (3.9.2). Bóðvarr sm. (personal name): nom., the subject. gengr sv. ‘goes’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of ganga—gækk—gengu—gengit. þangat adv. ‘thither’ ‘there’. ok conj. ‘and’. spyrð wv. ‘asks’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of spyrja. hvver pron. (interrog.) ‘who’: nom. m. sg.; hvver fulfills a double function here, (1) as a conjunction introducing the sentence, (2) as the subject (3.8.2.3); since a human being is denoted, masculine, the default gender, is used (see öngvan, line 3). þar adv. ‘there’. væri sv. ‘was’: 3rd sg. past subj. of vera (3.6.10); the subj. is normally used in dependent interrogative sentences where the main verb of the independent sentences of which they are the object is one of ‘asking’; on the word-order hvver þar væri, see the analysis of lá in line 6. í prep. ‘in’.
hrúgunni. Pá var honum svarat ok heldr óframliga:

‘Høtr heiti ek, bokki sæll.’

‘Því ertu hér,’ spyr Böðvarr, ‘eða hvat górir þú?’

Høtr svarar, ‘Ek góri mér skjaldborg, bokki sæll.’

Böðvarr segir, ‘Vesall ertu þinnar skjaldborgar!’

beinahrágunni wft. + art. (beinaðru-NN) ‘the bone-pile’ ‘the pile of bones’: dat., the

case triggered by í when location is denoted. þá adv. ‘then’. var sv. ‘was’: 3rd sg. past

indic. of vera (3.6.10). honum pron. ‘to him’: dat., the indirect object; note that in the

absence of a nominative subject, honun is the first (and only) noun phrase in the sen-

tence (for an alternative analysis of the syntactic role of honum, see 3.9.3); on the

word-order þá var honum, see the analysis of Böðvarr in line 1. svarat wv. ‘an-

swered’: pp. nom. n. sg. of svara; in the absence of a subject with a particular gender

and number which svarat could agree, n. sg. is used; nom. case is assumed since

were there a subject, e.g. þat, it would be in the nom.; var svarat, the equivalent of Eng.

was answered, forms the passive counterpart to active NN svaraði ‘NN answered’ (3.6.4).

ok conj. ‘and’. heldr adv. ‘rather’. óframliga adv. ‘timidly’. Høtr sm. (personal

name): nom., the subject complement — here in first position because it is emphasised

(3.9.1). heiti sv. ‘am called’: 1st sg. pres. indic. of heita—hét—hétu—heitit. ek pron.

‘I’: nom., the subject. bokki wm. ‘buck’ ‘fellow’: nom., the case used when someone is

being addressed. sell adj. ‘happy’ ‘fortunate’: strong nom. m. sg., agreeing with

bokki; the phrase bokki sell may be translated ‘good fellow’ ‘good friend’ ‘kind sir’ or

the like — it is a slightly formal term of endearment. því adv. (interrog.) ‘why’ (the

10 more common word for ‘why’ is hví). ertu = ert þú. ert sv. ‘are’: 2nd sg. pres. indic.

of vera (3.6.10). þú pron. ‘you’: nom., the subject. hér adv. ‘here’. spyr wv. ‘asks’:

3rd sg. pres. indic. of spyrja. Böðvarr sm. (personal name): nom., the subject. eða

conj. ‘or’: when introducing a question eða is often closer in meaning to English and or

but — here the former. hvat pron. (interrog.) ‘what’: acc. n. sg., the direct object;

neuter is used because the pron. denotes a state or action — what Høtr is doing — and

neuter is the gender for inanimate or abstract reference. gorir wv. ‘are . . . doing’: 2nd

sg. pres. indic. of göra (3.6.7); note that ON does not distinguish between simple (e.g.

do) and continuous constructions (e.g. are doing), but expresses both meanings by the

same form. þú pron. ‘you’: nom., the subject. Høtr sm. (personal name): nom., the

subject. var wv. ‘answers’; 3rd sg. pres. indic. of svara. ek pron. ‘I’: nom., the

subject. gorí wv. ‘am making’: 1st sg. pres. indic. of göra (3.6.7); on the English

translation of the present tense, see gorir in line 10. mérr pron. ‘myself’ ‘myself’:

dat., the indirect object; note that there is no separate reflexive form of the 1st or 2nd

person pronouns, and that mérr can thus mean both ‘me’ and ‘myself’ (3.2.1). skjaldborg

sf. ‘shield fortification’ ‘shield wall’: acc., the direct object; skjaldborg — a term de-

noting a battle formation in which men confront the enemy with an impenetrable wall

of shields — is used here metaphorically to denote the protective construction Høtr is

building out of the pile of bones. bokki wm. ‘buck’ ‘fellow’ (see line 9). sell adj.

‘happy’ ‘fortunate’ (see line 9). Böðvarr sm. (personal name): nom., the subject.

segir wv. ‘says’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of segja. vesall adj. ‘wretched’: strong nom. m.

sg., agreeing with þú (ertu = ert þú, cf. line 10), which has masculine reference; vesall

is moved into first position in the sentence to give it emphasis, and since the verb, the

erf of ertu, must be in either first or second position in an independent sentence, it

comes next, pushing the subject, the þú of ertu, into third place (3.9.1). ertu (see line

10 and the analysis of vesall immediately above). þinnar poss. adj. ‘in respect of

your’: gen. f. sg., agreeing with skjaldborgar. skjaldborgar sf. ‘shield fortification’

’shield wall’ (see line 11); gen., dependent on the adj. vesall and imparting the sense ‘in

respect of’ ‘with regard to’.

I: Hrólfs saga kraka

5

...
Boðvarr þrífr til hans ok hnykkir honum upp ór beinahrúgunni. Hóttir kvað þá hátt við ok mæli:

\begin{quote}
‘Nú viltu bana mér! Gør eigi þetta, svá sem ek hefi nú vel um búizk, en þú hefr nú rofí í sundr skjaldborg mína, ok hafða ek nú górt hana
\end{quote}


13
14 (personal name): nom., the subject. kvað sv. ‘cried out’: 3rd sg. past indic. of kveda–kvad–kvadu–kvit. þa adv. ‘then’. hátt adv. ‘loudly’ (3.5.1). við prep. ‘at’: the prep. is used here absolutely, ‘this’ or ‘this treatment’ being understood as following við (3.7.7; see also at in line 3). ok conj. ‘and’. mæli sv. ‘protected myself’ ‘made myself secure’: supine (= pp. nom./acc. n. sg.); neuter is used because the pronoun refers to an action — the destruction of the pile of bones — and neuter is the gender for inanimate or abstract reference. svá adv. ‘so’: the construction here is discontinuous — svá, which has its natural place before the sem that introduces the dependent sentence (3.8.2.4), modifies the adv. vel, which would normally immediately follow, but vel itself modifies the verb phrase um búizk, and has been attracted to the position preceding it inside the dependent sentence. sem conj. ‘as’ (3.8.2.4). ek pron. ‘I’: nom., the subject. hefi sv. ‘have’: 1st sg. pres. indic. of hafa (3.6.7). nú adv. ‘now’. vel adv. ‘well’ (see the analysis of svá in this line). um prep. ‘around’: the prep. is used here absolutely since the noun phrase it governs is expressed by the -sk inflexion of búizk (3.9.8.3). búizk sv. ‘protected myself’ ‘made myself secure’: supine (= pp. nom./acc. n. sg.), -sk form (3.6.5.3), of búa–bjó–bjoggu–búit: as is clear from the translation, the -sk suffix here imparts a reflexive sense to the verb; hefi + búizk forms a so-called perfect construction, the equivalent of Eng. have protected (myself) (3.6.2). en conj. ‘but’. þú pron. ‘you’: nom., the subject. hefr sv. ‘have’: 2nd sg. pres. indic. of hafa (3.6.7). nú adv. ‘now’. rofí sv. ‘broken’: supine (= pp. nom./acc. n. sg.) of rjúfa–rauf–rauf–rofí; hefr + rofí forms a so-called perfect construction, the equivalent of Eng. have broken (3.6.2). i sundr adv. ‘asunder’ ‘to pieces’: although formally this phrase consists of prep. + adv., it functions as an adverb just like English asunder — historically prep. + adj.; often sundr is used on its own with the same meaning as í sundr. skjaldborg sf. ‘shield fortification’ ‘shield wall’: acc., the direct object of rofí. mina poss. adj. ‘my’: acc. f. sg., agreeing with skjaldborg; note that the possesive follows the noun it modifies, the usual word-order in ON (3.9.2). ok conj. ‘and’. hafða sv. ‘had’: 1st sg. past indic. of hafa (3.6.7). ek pron. ‘I’: nom., the subject. nú adv. ‘now’. górt sv. ‘made’: supine (= pp. nom./acc. n. sg.) of góra (3.6.7); hafða + górt forms a so-called pluperfect or past perfect construction, the equivalent of Eng. had made (3.6.2). hana pron. ‘her’: acc., the direct object of górt: note that the femi-
svá háva útan at mér, at hon hefr hlíf fór vérð þóllum húggum ykkar, svá ekkert húgg hefr komið á mik lengi, en ekk var hon þó enn svá búin sem ek æitlaða hon skyldi vera.

Böðvarr mælti: ‘Ékkj mun tu nú fá skjaldborgina gorða lengr.’

nine 3rd person pron. is used because the reference is to the feminine noun borg. svá adv. ‘so’, háva adj. ‘high’: acc. f. sg., agreeing with hana; the nom. m. sg. form of this adj. is hár (3.3.8.5, point (5)). útan adv. ‘from without’ ‘externally’ (3.5.1). at prep. ‘towards’ ‘up to’: together útan at might be translated ‘around’ — the wall extending towards Hótrr affords him protection from the outside world. mér pron. ‘me’: dat., the case always triggered by at. at conj. ‘that’. hon pron. ‘she’: nom., the subject; on the feminine gender, see hana in line 16. hefr wv. ‘has’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of hafa. hlíf wv. ‘protected’: supine of hlifa. mér pron. ‘me’: dat., the direct object (3.1.5 (16) and (18)), við prep. ‘against’. þollum adj. ‘all’: dat. pl., agreeing with þöggun. þöggun mn. ‘blows’: dat., the case triggered by við in the sense ‘against’ (3.7.4). ykka poss. adj. ‘your [dual]’: originally the 2nd dual poss. adj. was inflected for case, gender and number (3.3.9), but in later ON the invariable form ykkar (formally gen. of the pronoun þú; 3.2.1) came to be the norm; the use of the dual here is unexpected since the reference is to a large number of people, as the text goes on to make clear — possibly Hótrr is categorising Böðvarr as one entity and the courtiers as another, but more likely this is a modern Icelandic usage, where the originally dual 1st and 2nd person forms are used to denote all numbers higher than one; note that the possessive follows the noun it modifies, the usual word-order in ON. svá conj. ‘so’: svá is normally an adverb, but it regularly combines with a following at to form a two-word conjunction introducing sentences of result or purpose (‘so that’; 3.8.2.2); occasionally the at is omitted, as here, and svá then adopts the role of conjunction. ekkert pron. ‘no’: nom. n. sg.; here used adjectively, ekkert (a later form of ekkki) agrees with ðóg. ðóg mn. ‘blow’: nom., the subject. hefr wv. ‘have’; 3rd sg. pres. indic. of hafa. komit sv. ‘come’ ‘landed’: supine of koma—komi—kómœ—komið. á prep. ‘on’. mik pron. ‘me’: acc., the case triggered by á when motion is denoted. lengi adv. ‘for a long time’. en conj. ‘but’. ekkki adv. ‘not’: although formally the nom./acc. n. sg. form of the pron. engi ‘no one’ ‘none’, ekkki is often used synonymously with the adv. eigi ‘not’. var sv. ‘was’: 3rd sg. past indic. of vera (3.6.10). hon pron. ‘she’: nom., the subject: ekkki occupies first position in the sentence (for reasons of emphasis), so the subject comes in 3rd place since only one element may precede the finite verb (3.9.1); on the use of the feminine gender, see line 16: hana. þó adv. ‘all the same’ ‘nevertheless’. enn adv. ‘yet’. svá adv. ‘so’. búin sv. ‘prepared’ ‘constructed’: pp. nom. f. sg., agreeing with hon, of búa—bjó—bjöggu—búit. sem conj. ‘as’. ek pron. ‘I’: nom., the subject. æitlaða wv. ‘intended’: 1st sg. past indic. of æitla. hon pron. ‘she’: nom., the subject. skyldi pret.-pres. vb. ‘should’: 3rd sg. past; formally skyldi may be either indic. or subj. (3.6.7), but in a dependent sentence describing a hypothetical situation, i.e. what was intended, it is likely to be subj. vera sv. ‘be’: inf. (3.6.10). Böðvarr sm. (personal name): nom., the subject. mælti wv. ‘said’: 3rd sg. past indic. of mæla. ekkki adv. ‘not’ (see the analysis of ekkki in line 18). muntu = munt þú. munt pret.-pres. vb. ‘will’: 2nd sg. pres. indic. of munti (3.6.7). þú pron. ‘you’: nom., the subject; on the word-order adv. + finite verb + subject, see the analysis of hon in line 18. nú adv. ‘now’. fá sv. ‘get’: inf. of fá—fekk—fengit—fengit. skjaldborgina sf. + art. (skjaldborgingu-ina) ‘the shield fortification’ ‘the shield wall’: acc., the direct object. gorða wv. ‘made’ ‘constructed’: pp. acc. f. sg. (a later form of gorva), agreeing with skjaldborgina, of gorða; fá + gorða forms a periphrastic construction, the equivalent of Eng. get made (3.9.7.1). lengr adv. ‘any longer’: comp.
Hrólfs saga kraka

21 Hóttur mælti, ‘Skaltu nú bana mér, bokki sæll?’
   Bóðvarr bað hann ekki hafa hátt, tók hann upp sifan ok bar hann út
   ór hóllinni ok til vatns nökurs sem þar var í nánd, ok gáfu fáir at
   þessu gaum. Hann þváði hann upp allan.

Sifan gekk Bóðvarr til þess rúms sem hann hafði áðr tekit, ok leiddi

21 Hóttur sm. (personal name): nom., the subject. mælti wv. ‘said’: 3rd sg. past indic. of
   mæla. skalt = skalt þú. skalt pret.-pres. vb. ‘shall’: 2nd sg. pres. indic. of skulu
   (3.6.7); the usual implication of skulu is intention, so that although ‘shall’ is the English
cognate of skalt, an idiomatic English translation would be ‘do [you] intend to’ ‘are
you going to’. þú pron. ‘you’; nom., the subject. nú adv. ‘now’. bana wv. ‘kill’: inf.
mér pron. ‘me’; dat., the direct object (3.1.5 (16) and (18)). bokki wv. ‘buck’ ‘fellow’

(see line 9). sæll adj. ‘happy’ ‘fortunate’ (see line 9). Bóðvarr sm. (personal name):
nom., the subject. bað sv. ‘bade’ ‘told’: 3rd sg. past indic. of bóða—báðu—beðit.
   hann pron. ‘him’; acc., the direct object of bað (but see the analysis of hafa in this line).
   ekki adv. ‘not’ (see line 18). hafa wv. ‘behave’ ‘act’; inf. (3.6.7); the basic meaning of
   hafa is ‘have’, but when construed with an adv. and nothing further it takes on the sense
   of behaving in the manner denoted by the adv; bað hann ekki hafa is an acc + inf.
   construction, in which acc. hann can be analysed both as the direct object of bað and
   the subject of hafa (3.9.4). hátt adv. ‘loudly’, ‘noisily’ (3.5.1). tók wv. ‘took’ ‘lifted’;
   3rd sg. past indic. of taka—tók—tóku—tekit. hann pron. ‘him’; acc., the direct object.
   of bera—bar—báru—borit. hann pron. ‘him’; acc., the direct object. út adv. ‘out’.

22 ór prep. ‘from’. hóllinni sf. + art. (hóll-inni) ‘the hall’: dat., the case always triggered
   by ór. ok conj. ‘and’. til prep. ‘to’. vatns sn. ‘lake’: gen., the case always triggered
   by til. nökurs pron. ‘some’ ‘a certain’: gen. n. sg.; here used adjectivally, nökurs
   agrees with vatns and follows it. sem conj. ‘which’. þar adv. ‘there’. var sv. ‘was’;
   3rd sg. past indic. of vera (3.6.10); on the word-order sem þar var, see the analysis of lá
   in line 6. í prep. ‘in’. nánd sf. ‘proximity’: dat.; the case triggered by í when location
   is denoted; idiomatic English for í nánd would be ‘near by’. ok conj. ‘and’. gáfu sv.
   ‘gave’ ‘paid’: 3rd pl. past indic. of gáf = gáf—gáfu—geft. fáir adj. ‘few’: strong nom.
   m. pl., the subject; although fáir is the sole element in the noun phrase and thus has no
   noun to agree with, it takes nom. m. pl. form because the referent is plural and probably
   exclusively male, and masculine is in any case the default gender where people in gen-
   eral are denoted (3.3; 3.3.6 (19–21)). at prep. ‘to’. þessu pron. ‘this’; dat. n. sg. — dat.
   case is automatic after at; on the neuter gender, see þetta in line 15. gaum wv. ‘heed’,
   ‘attention’: acc., the direct object. hann pron. ‘he’; nom., the subject. þváði wv.
   ‘washed’: 3rd sg. past indic. of þváð; more commonly this verb is strong (3.6.9.3). hann
   pron. ‘him’; acc., the direct object. upp adv. ‘up’ ‘thoroughly’. allan adj. ‘all’; acc. m.
   sg., agreeing with hann; more idiomatic English for allan would be the adverbial phrase
   ‘all over’. sifan adv. ‘then’. gekk sv. ‘went’: 3rd sg. past indic. of ganga—gekk—
   gengu—gengit. Bóðvarr sm. (personal name): nom., the subject. til prep. ‘to’. þess
   pron. ‘that’; gen. n. sg.; here used adjectivally, þess agrees with rúms. rúms sn. ‘seat’
   ‘place’: gen., the case always triggered by til. sem conj. ‘which’. hann pron. ‘he’; nom.,
   the subject. hafði wv. ‘had’: 3rd sg. past indic. of hafa. áðr adv. ‘previously’
   ‘before’. tekit sv. ‘taken’: supine of taka—tók—tóku—tekit. ok conj. ‘and’. leiddi
   wv. ‘led’: 3rd sg. past indic. of leiða. eptir prep. ‘after’. sér refl. pron. (referring back
to the understood subject, Bóðvarr; 3.2.1; 3.2.6 (6) and (10)) ‘him’: dat., the case trig-
   gered by eptir in the sense ‘after [motion]’ ‘following’. Hótt sm. (personal name): acc.,
   the direct object. ok conj. ‘and’. setr wv. ‘places’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of setja (3.6.9.3).
Eptir sér Hött ok settr hann þar hjá séð. En hann er svá hreiddr at skelfr á honum leggr ok lîðr, en þó pykisk hann skilja at þessi maðr vill hjálpa sér. Eptir þat kveldar ok drífa menn at hollunni ok sjá Hrólfss kappar at Höttur var settir í bekkr upp ok þykir þeim séð maðr hafa gört

**hann** pron. ‘him’: acc., the direct object. **þar** adv. ‘there’. **hjá** prep. ‘next to’. **sér** refl. pron. ‘him’: dat., the case always triggered by hjá; on the use of the refl. pron., see the previous sér in this line. **en** conj. ‘but’. **hann** pron. ‘he’: nom., the subject. er sv. ‘is’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of vera. **svá** adv. ‘so’. **hreiddr** adj. ‘frightened’: strong nom. m. sg., agreeing with hann. **at** conj. ‘that’. **skelfr** sv. ‘trembles’: 3rd. sg. pres. indic. of skjálfa—skalf—skulf—skolfit. **a** prep. ‘on’. **honun** pron. ‘him’: dat., the case triggered by á when location is denoted; body-part possession is often indicated in ON by á + dat., corresponding to adj. in English — thus á honum here should be rendered ‘his’. **leggr** sm. ‘hollow bone [of arm or leg]’: nom., the subject. **ok** conj. ‘and’. **lîðr** sm. ‘joint’: nom., the subject; the conjoined nouns leggr ok lîðr are used here by synecdoche for the whole body, the sense being that Hött trembled all over — that may be in part why the verb skelfr is sg., even though together leggr ok lîðr make a pl. subject, but another possible reason is that skelfr precedes the subject, and that the writer was not clear in his mind at that point what form the subject was going to take (3.9.8.2). **en** conj. ‘but’. **þó** adv. ‘nevertheless’. **pykisk** ww. ‘thinks’: 3rd. sg. pres. indic., -sk form (3.6.5.3), of pykja (3.6.9.3); the sense is reflexive, the literal meaning being ‘thinks himself’ — the -sk takes the place of the direct (reflexive) object in an acc. + inf. construction ‘thinks himself to . . . [i.e. thinks that he . . .]’ (3.9.4). **skilja** ww. ‘understand’: inf. of skelfr. **at** conj. ‘that’. **þessi** pron. ‘this’: nom. m. sg.; here used adjecti-

vally, þessi agrees with maðr. **maðr** sm. ‘man’: nom., the subject. **vill** ww. ‘wants’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of vilja (3.6.7); indic., rather than subj., is used because the depend-

ent sentence describes not a hypothetical situation, but what Höttur understands to be a fact. **hjálpa** sv. ‘[to] help’: inf. of hjálpa—h(j)alp—hulpu—hólpit. **sér** refl. pron. (referring back to Höttur, the subject of the higher sentence, rather than þessi maðr; 3.2.1) ‘him’: dat., the direct object (3.1.5 (16) and (18)). **eptrír** prep. ‘after’. **þat** pron. ‘that’: acc., the case triggered by eptir in the sense ‘after [time]’; on the neuter gender, see þetta in line 15. **kveldar** ww. ‘evening draws on’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of kvelda; the construction is impersonal in the sense that no subject is conceived or expressed (3.9.3). **ok** conj. ‘and’. **drífa** sv. ‘drifts’: 3rd. pl. pres. indic. of drífa—dreif—drifu—drifit. **menn** sm. ‘men’: nom., the subject. **at** prep. ‘to’ ‘towards’. **hollunni** sf. + art. (hólu-nnt; 3.1.7.4 (3)) ‘the hall’: dat., the case always triggered by at. **ok** conj. ‘and’. **sja** sv. ‘see’: 3rd pl. pres. indic. of sjá (3.6.10). **Hrólfss** sm. (personal name): gen., indicating possession or association. **kappar** wm. ‘champions’ ‘warriors’: nom., the subject. **at** conj. ‘that’. **Hóttur** sm. (personal name): nom., the subject. **var** sv. ‘was’: 3rd. sg. past indic. of vera. **settr** ww. ‘placed’ ‘put’: pp. nom. m. sg. of setja, agreeing with Höttur. **i** prep. ‘in(to)’ ‘on’. **bekk** sm. ‘bench’: acc., the case triggered by í when motion is denoted. **upp** adv. ‘up’. **ok** conj. ‘and’. **þykir** ww. ‘seems’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of þykja (3.6.9.3). **þeim** pron. ‘to them’: dat., representing the experiencer, i.e. the person experiencing the process denoted by the verb (3.9.4); the construction þykir þeim is impersonal in the sense that there is no nominative subject (3.9.3) — though see maðr in this line. **sá** pron. ‘that’: nom. m. sg.; here used adjecti-

vally, sá agrees with maðr. **maðr** sm. ‘man’: nom., the subject: we have here a hybrid construction, nom. + inf., where sá maðr is taken as the subject of the immediately following inf. clause rather than as the object of þykir (3.9.4); on a more abstract level the whole of the inf. clause sá maðr hafa gört sik ærit djarfan can be analysed as the subject of þykir in that this is what ‘seems’ to ‘them’. **hafa** ww. ‘have’: inf. **gort** ww. ‘made’: supine of göra.
30 sik œrit djarfan, er þetta hefr Hóttr, þá hann sér kunningja sína, því hann hafa illt eitt af þeim reynt; hann vilja ljif gjarnan ok fara aptr í beinahrúgu sína, en Bóðvarr heldr honum, svá at hann náir ekki í burt at fara, því hann þottisk ekki jafnberr fyrir höggm

30 sik refl. pron. (referring back to the subject, sá maðr; 3.2.1; 3.2.6 (6) and (10)) ‘himself’: acc., the direct object. ेer adv. ‘enough’, ‘sufficiently’. ेjarfan adj. ‘bold’ ‘arrogant’: strong acc. m. sg., the object complement agreeing with sik, which has masculine singular reference; an idiomatic translation of pykir þeim sá maðr hafa gort sik ेer ेjarfan would be ‘it seems to them the man has shown considerable arrogance’. ेr conj. ‘who’. ेeta pron. ‘this’: acc. n. sg., the direct object; on the neuter gender, see ेeta in line 15. ेfr wv. ‘has’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of hafa. ेil prep.: the prep. is used here absolutely, i.e. without a following noun or noun phrase (3.7.7), its function being to modify the sense of the verb. ेkeit sv. ‘taken’ ‘undertaken’ ‘done’: supine of taka—tók—tóku—tekit; it is the prep. til, used in close collocation with taka ‘take’, that gives the sense ‘undertaken’ ‘done’. ेl adj. ‘bad’ ‘expressing dislike’: strong acc. n. sg., agreeing with tilit. ेilit sn. ‘look’ ‘glance’: acc., the direct object. ेfr wv. ‘has’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of hafa. Hóttr sm. (personal name): nom., the subject. ेpa conj. ‘when’: þá is normally an adverb meaning ‘then’, but it regularly combines with a following er to form a two-word conjunction with the meaning ‘when’; sometimes the er is omitted, as here, and þá then adopts the role of conjunction (3.8.2.1). ेhan pron. he: nom., the subject. ेsr sv. ‘sees’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of sjá (3.6.10). Kunningja wm. ‘acquaintances’: acc., the direct object. ेina refl. poss. (referring back to the subject; 3.2.1) ‘his’: acc. m. pl., agreeing with kunningja. ेvi conj. ‘because’: því is normally an adverb meaning ‘therefore’, but it regularly combines with a following at to form a two-word conjunction introducing sentences of reason or cause (3.8.2.2); sometimes the at is omitted, as here, and því then adopts the role of conjunction. ेhan pron. he: nom., the subject. ेfr wv. ‘has’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of hafa. ेilit adj. ‘bad’ ‘evil’; strong acc. n. sg., the direct object; on the absence of a noun with which ेilit can agree and the use of the n. sg., see fátt in line 3. ेitt adj. ‘alone’: strong acc. n. sg., agreeing with ेilit; this is the same word as the numeral ‘one’, and although used here adjectivally, it corresponds most naturally to the Eng. adverbs ‘only’, ‘just’. ेaf prep. of ‘from’. े þeim pron. ‘them’: dat., the case always triggered by ेaf. ेreyn wv. ‘experienced’: supine of reynta. ेhan pron. he: nom., the subject. ेvill wv. ‘wants’; 3rd sg. pres. indic. of vilja (3.6.7). ेlif wv. ‘[to] live’: inf. ेgjarnan adv.: the function of ेgjarnan here is to emphasise vill — we might translate the sentence ‘he wants very much to live’. ेok conj. ‘and’. ेfara sv. ‘go’: inf. of fara (3.6.10). ेapt adv. ‘back’. ेí prep. ‘in(to)’. ेbeinahrúgu wf. ‘bone-pile’ ‘pile of bones’: acc., the case triggered by í when motion is denoted. ेina refl. poss. (referring back to the subject, hanna ‘his’: acc. f. sg., agreeing with beinahrúgu. ेen conj. ‘but’. ेBóðvarr sm. (personal name): nom., the subject. ेheldr wv. ‘holds’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of haldá—helí—heldu—haldit. ेhonum pron. ‘him’: dat., the direct object. ेsva adv. ‘so’. ेat conj. ‘that’: see svá (1) in line 18. ेhann pron. ‘he’: nom., the subject. ेnáir wv. ‘gets’ ‘manages’ ‘is able’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of ná. ेekki adv. ‘not’: see ekki in line 18. ेi burt adv. ‘away’. ेat inf. marker ‘to’. ेfara sv. ‘go’: inf. of fara. ेvi conj. ‘because’; see því in line 31. ेhann pron. ‘he’: nom., the subject. ेþottisk wv. ‘thought’ ‘felt’: 3rd sg. past indic. -sk form (3.6.5.3) of pykja (3.6.9.3); the -sk suffix here corresponds to a dative experiencer (as in honum þótti ‘to him seemed’), while hann, the subject of the infinitive clause (with omitted infinitive; 3.9.5.2) hann ekki [vera] jafnberr ‘he not [to be] equally exposed [i.e. he would not be equally exposed]’ is moved into the higher sentence and becomes the subject of þóttisk (3.9.4). ेekki adv. ‘not’. ेjafnberr adj. ‘equally exposed’; strong
Þeira, ef hann næði þangat at komask. Híðmenn hafa nú sama vanða, ok kasta fyrrst smáði beinum um þvert gölfit til Bóðvars ok Hattar. Bóðvarr lætr sem hann sjái eigi þetta. Hóttir er svá hraeddr at hann tekr eigi á mat né drykk, ok þykir honum þá ok þá sem hann muni vera lostinn. Ok nú mælir Hóttir til Bóðvars:

nom. m. sg., agreeing with hann (see the analysis of póttisk in this line). fyrir prep. ‘before’ ‘to’. hóggum sn. ‘blows’: dat., the case triggered by fyrir when location in front of is denoted. þeira poss. adj. ‘their’: the gen. of the 3rd pl. personal pronoun used with adjectival function (3.3.8.5 (6)). ef conj. ‘if’. hann pron. ‘he’: nom., the subject. næði wv. ‘managed’ ‘were able’: 3rd sg. past subj. of náð; the subjunctive is normally used in sentences introduced by ef where the verb is in the past tense. þangat adv. ‘thither’ ‘there’. at inf. marker ‘to’. komask sv. ‘come’ ‘get’: inf., -sk form, of koma—kom—kömu—komit; the -sk suffix imparts a reflexive sense to the verb, the literal meaning being ‘move oneself’. híðmenn sm. ‘courtiers’: nom., the subject. hafa wv. ‘have’ ‘maintain’: 3rd pl. pres. indic. of hafa. nú adv. ‘now’. sama adj. ‘the same’: weak acc. m. sg., agreeing with vanða; the weak form of this adjective suffices to express definite sense, though it is often found in conjunction with the def. art. vanða wm. ‘custom’ ‘practice’: acc., the direct object. ok conj. ‘and’. kasta wv. ‘throw’: 3rd pl. pres. indic. of kasta. fyrrst adv. ‘at first’. smáði adj. ‘small’: dat., pl., agreeing with beinum. beinum sn. ‘bones’: dat., with instrumental sense (3.1.5 (20)). um prep. ‘over’. þvert adj. ‘transverse’: strong acc. n. sg., agreeing with gölfit; the sense of þvert is adverbial (‘over the floor crossways’) and strong forms of this adj. are normally used whether the noun phrase in which it occurs is definite or indefinite. gölfit sn. + art. (gölf-it) ‘the floor’: acc., the case always triggered by um. til prep. ‘to’. Bóðvars sm. (personal name): gen., the case always triggered by til. ok conj. ‘and’. Hattar sm. (personal name): gen., the case always triggered by til. Bóðvarr sm. (personal name): nom., the subject. lætr sv. ‘acts’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of láta—lét—létu—látit. sem conj. ‘as though’. hann pron. ‘he’: nom., the subject. sjái sv. ‘sees’: 3rd sg. pres. subj. of sjá (3.6.10; sjáí is a later variant of sé); the subjunctive is used in sentences introduced by sem with the meaning ‘as though’, because what is expressed is unreal — Bóðvarr does see what is happening, but he pretends not to. eigi adv. ‘not’. þetta pron. ‘this’: acc. n. sg., the direct object; on the neuter gender, see þetta in line 15. Hóttir sm. (personal name): nom., the subject. er sv. ‘is’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of vera. svá adv. ‘so’. hraeddr adj. ‘afraid’: strong nom. m. sg., agreeing with Hóttir. at conj. ‘that’. hann pron. ‘he’: nom., the subject. tekr sv. ‘takes’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of taka—tök—töku—tekit. eigi adv. ‘not’. á prep. ‘on(to): tekr á, literally ‘takes on(to), means ‘touched’. mat sm. ‘food’: acc., the case triggered by á when motion is denoted. né conj. ‘nor’ (3.8.1). drykk sm. ‘drink’: acc., the case triggered by á when motion is denoted (eigi á mat ná [á] drykk). ok conj. ‘and’. þykir wv. ‘seems’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of þykja (3.6.9.3). honum pron. ‘to him’: dat., the case marking the experience of the ‘seeming’. þá adv. ‘then’. ok conj. ‘and’. þá adv. ‘then’: þá ok þá means ‘at every moment’. sem conj. ‘as though’. hann pron. ‘he’: nom., the subject. muni pret.-pres. vb. ‘will’ ‘must’: 3rd sg. pres. subj. of muna (3.6.7.); on the use of the subjunctive, see sjá in line 36. vera sv. ‘be’: inf. lostinn sv. ‘hit’: pp. nom. m. sg., agreeing with hann, of ljóst—læst—læst—lostit; vera + lostinn form a passive construction, the equivalent of Eng. be hit (3.6.4). ok conj. ‘and’. nú adv. ‘now’. mælir wv. ‘speaks’ ‘says’: 3rd sg. pres. indic. of mæla. Hóttir sm. (personal name): nom., the subject. til prep. ‘to’. Bóðvars sm. (personal name): gen., the case always triggered by til; on the word-order of nú mælir Hóttir, see Bóðvarr in line 1.
‘Bokki sæll, nú ferr at okkr stór knúta, ok mun þetta ætlat okkr til nauða.’

Boðvarr bað hann þegja. Hann sett við holan lófann ok tekri svá við knúunni ok fylgir þar leggrinn með. Boðvarr sendir aprt knútuna ok sett á þann sem kastaði, ok rétt framan í hann með svá hárðri svipan at hann fekk bana. Slær þá myklum ótta yfir hirðmennina.

Kemr nú þessi fregn fyrir Hrólf konung ok kappa hans upp í kastalann, at maðr mikilúðligr sé kominn til hallarinnar ok hafi drepit einn hirðmann hans, ok vildu þeir láta drepa manninn. Konungr spyrr, hvárt hirðmaðrinn hefði verit saklauss dreppinn.

‘Því var næsta,’ sýgðu þeir.

Komsk þá fyrir Hrólf konung þill sannindi hér um. Hrólfir konungr sagði þat skyldi fjarrari, at drepa skyldi manninn.

‘Hafi þit hér illan vanða upp tekit, at berja saklausa menn beinum; er mér í því óvirðing, en þýr stór skómm, at göra slikt. Hefi ek jafnan rætt um þetta áðr, ok hafi þit hér at öngvan gaum gefið, ok hygg ek at þessi maðr muni ekki allltið fyrir sér, er þér hafið nú á leitath; ok kallíð hann til mín, svá ek viti hverr hann er.’

Boðvarr gengr fyrir konung ok kvætti hann lýstiliga. Konungr spyrr hann at nafni.

‘Hattargriða kalla mik hirðmenn yðar, en Boðvarr heiti ek.’

Konungr mælir, ‘Hverjar bætr viltu bjóða mér fyrir hirðmann minn?’

Boðvarr svarar, ‘Til þess gøði hann, sem hann fekk.’

Konungr mælir, ‘Viltu vera mín maðr ok skípa rúm hans?’

Boðvarr svarar, ‘Ekki neita ek at vera yðar maðr, ok munu vit ekki skiljask svá buit, vit Höttur, ok dveljask nær þér báðir, heldr en þessi hefr setit; elligar vit þórum burt báðir.’

Konungr segir, ‘Eigi sé ek at honum sæmð, en ekki spara ek mat við hann.’
Boðvarr gengr nú til þess rúms sem honum líkaði, en ekki vildi hann þat skipa sem hinn hafði áðr. Hann kippti upp í einherjum stað þremur mónnum, ok síðan settusk þeir Hött þar niðr ok innar í hóllinni en þeim var skipat. Heldr þótt mónnum ódælt við Boðvar, ok var þeim inn mesti þúugi á honum.

Ok sem leið at jólum, gorðusk menn þar ókátir. Boðvarr spurd þött hverju þat sætti; hann sagði honum at dýr eitt hafi komit þar tvá vetr í samt, mikit ok ógurligt.

‘Ok hefr vængi á bakinu ok flýgr jafnan. Tvau haust hefr þat nú hingat vitjat ok gort mikinn skaða. Þat bita ekki vápn, en kappar konungs koma ekki heim, þeir sem eru einna mestir.’

Boðvarr mælti, ‘Ekkir er hólín svá vel skipuð sem ek ætlaða, at eitt dýr skal hér eyða ríki ok fé konungsins.’

Hött sagði, ‘fiá er ekki dýr, heldr er þat it mesta трoll.’

Nú kemr jólaaptann. Þá mælir konungr:

‘Nú vil ek at allir menn séu kyrrir ok hljóir í nótt, ok banna ek þllum mínnum mónnum at ganga í nókkurn hása við dýrit, en fé ferr eptir því sem auðnar, því ek vil eigi missa menn mínna,’

Allir heita hér góðu um, at göra eptir því sem konungr bauð.

Boðvarr leyndisk í burt um nóttnina; hann lætr Hött faram niðr sér, ok gorði hann þat nauðugr ok kallar sér stýrt til bana. Boðvarr segir betr muni til takask. Þeir ganga í burt frá hóllinni, ok verðr Boðvarr at bera Hött, svá er hann hraedd. Nú sjá þeir dýrit, ok því næst eðir Hött slíkt sem hann má ok kvað dýrit mundi gleypa hann. Boðvarr bað bikkju þá þegja ok kastar honum niðr í mosann, ok þar liggr hann ok eigi með öllum hraedd, ok eigi þorir hann heldr heim at fara. Nú gengr Boðvarr í móti dýrinu; þat hefur honum, at sverðit er fast í umgjörðinni, er hann vildi bregða því. Boðvarr eggjar nú fast sverðit ok þá bragðar í umgjörðinni, ok nú fær hann brugðit umgjörðinni svá sverðit gengr ór sliðrunum, ok leggr þeir undir bægi dýrsins ok svá fast at þegar stað í hjartanu, ok datt þá dýrit til jarðar dauð niðr. Eptir þat fær hann þangat sem Höttir liggr. Boðvarr tekr hann upp ok berr hann þangat sem dýrit liggr dauðt. Höttir skelfr ákaft. Boðvarr mælir:

‘Nú skaltu drekka blóð dýrsins.’

Hann er lengi tregr, en þó þorir hann vist eigi annat. Boðvarr lætr hann drekka tvá sopa stóra; hann létt hann ok eta nokkut af dýrshjartanu. Eptir þetta tók Boðvarr til hans ok áttusk þeir við lengi. Boðvarr mælti:

‘Helzt ertu nú sterkr orðinn, ok ekki vænti ek þú hraeddsk nú hirdmenn 105 Hrölfss konungs.’

Höttir svarar, ‘Eigi mun ek þá hraedaðsk upp frá þessu ok ekki þík.’

‘Vel er þá orðit, Höttir félagi,’ segir Boðvarr. ‘Fórum nú til ok reisum 108 upp dýrit ok búum svá um at menn hyggi kvikt muni vera.’
Hrólf's saga kraka

111 Heir gora nu svá. Eptir þat fara þeir heim ok hafa kyrrt um sik, ok veit enginn maðr hvat þeir hafa íðjat.

114 Konungr spyr um morguninn hvat þeir viti til dýrsins, hvárt þat hafi nokkut þangat vitting um nóttina. Honum var sagt at fé allt væri heilt í grindum ok ósakat. Konungr bað menn forvitnask hvárt engin sæi líkindi til at þat hefði heim komit. Varðmenn gorgu svá ok kómu skjót prík og sögdu konungi at dýrit féri þar ok heldr geyst at borginna.

117 Konungr bað hirðmenn vera nú hrausta ok duga nú hvern eptir því sem hann hefði hug til, ok ráða af óvætt þennan; ok svá var góð, sem konungr baðði, at þeir bjuggu sik til þess. Konungr horfði á dýrit ok mælti síðan:

‘Öngva sé ek þor á dýrinu, en hverr vill nú taka kaup til ok ganga í móti því?’

Boðvar mælti, ‘Þat væri næsta hrausts manns forvitnísbot. Hóttir félagi, rektu af þer illmaði þat at menn láta, sem enginn krellr eðr dugr muni í þer vera. Farþú nú ok dreptu dýrit. Máttu sjá at enginn er allfuðs til annarra.’

‘Já,’ svaraði Hóttir, ‘ek mun til þessa ráðask.’

Konungr mælti, ‘Ekki veit ek hvaðan þessi hreysti er at þer komin,

Hóttir, ok mikit hefr um þik skipazk á skammri stundu.’

Hóttir mælti, ‘Gef mér til sverðit Gullinhjalta, er þú hefði á, ok skal ek þá fella dýrit eða fá bana.’

122 Hrólf konungr mælti, ‘Þetta sverð er ekki beranda nema þeim manni sem bæði er góðr drengar ok hraustr.’

Hóttir sagði, ‘Ætla svá til, konungr, at mér muni svá háttat.’

125 Konungr mælti, ‘Hvat má vita, nema fleira hafi skipazk um hagi þína en sjá þykir? Því fæstir menn þykjask þik kenna, at þú sért hinn sami maðr. Nú tak við sverðinu ok njót manna bezt, ef þetta er til unnit.’

128 Síðan gengr Hóttir at dýrinu allðjarfliga ok höggir til þess, þá hann kemr í hoggföleri. Dýrit feller niðr dautt. Boðvarr mælir:

‘Sjáði nú, herra, hvat hann hefði til unnit.’

129 Konungr segir, ‘Víst hefr hann mikit skipazk, en ekki hefr Hóttir einn dýrit drepit; heldr hefr þú þat górt.’

Boðvarr segir, ‘Vera má at svá sé.’

132 Konungr mælir, ‘Vissa ek, þá þú komst hér, at fárir mundi þínir jafningar vera, en þó þyki mér þat þitt verk frælagast, at þú hefr gert hér annan kappa þar er Hóttir er, ok óvænligr þoðti til mikillar gafu.

135 Nú vil ek hann heiti eigi Hóttir lengr ok skal hann heita Hjalti upp frá þessu; skaltu nú heita eptir sverðinu Gullinhjalta.’

Ok endar hér þennan þátt frá Boðvari ok brøðrum hans.
II: Snorri Sturluson, EDDA: SKÁLDSKAPARMÁL

Skáldskaparmáli is the second part of the Prose Edda, written by Snorri Sturluson in Iceland, probably after his first visit to Norway in 1218–20, and he may have been intermittently engaged on the work until his death in 1241. It is a treatise on poetry, claiming to be addressed to young poets; Skáldskaparmáli (‘the language of poetry’) is mainly about poetic diction, and Háttatal (‘enumeration of verse-forms’), the third part, is about metre and formal devices such as alliteration and rhyme. Gylfaginning, the first part, and the first section of Skáldskaparmáli, given here, contain a series of mythological narratives that give the background to many of the kennings (periphrastic expressions, often metaphorical, for various concepts which sometimes require knowledge of the mythology of heathen Scandinavia for their understanding). A purportedly historical introduction to the mythology is provided in a Prologue to Gylfaginning, and in this first section of Skáldskaparmáli the mythological narratives told to explain various kennings lead up to a story about the origin of the mead of poetry.

Like most of the rest of the Prose Edda, the first section of Skáldskaparmáli is in dialogue form, the questions being asked by Ægir, a personification of the sea, and the stories being told by the god Bragi, according to Snorri a god of poetry. The setting is a feast, as in the eddic poem Lokasenna, and the dialogue, between one of the gods and a visitor to their hall, is reminiscent of both Gylfaginning and Vafþrúðnismál, another of the eddic poems.

The first story has a close parallel in the skaldic poem Haustlöng by Þjóðólfr of Hvinir, a Norwegian poet of the ninth century, which is quoted by Snorri in other parts of his Edda, and the story of the origin of the mead of poetry is paralleled in Hávamál verses 104–10. There are allusions to all the stories told in this selection in skaldic kennings, but even though there are analogues for some of them from mythologies outside the Norse area, it is uncertain how ancient they are.

The text here is based on the Codex Regius (GkS 2367 4to; = R). Emendations are from Codex Wormianus (AM 242 fol.) or Codex Trajectinus (MS No. 1374, University Library, Utrecht).
Bibliography


E[inn ma]ðr er nefndr Ægir eða Hlér. Hann bjó í ey þeirri er nú er kölluð [Hlé]sey. Hann var mjók fjölkunnigr. Hann gerði ferð sína til Ásgarðs, en er Æsir vissu ferð hans var honum fagnat vel ok þó margir hlutir með sjónhverfingum. Ok um kveldit er drekka skyldi, þá lét Óðinn bera ínna í höllina sverð, ok váru svá björt at þar af lýsti, ok var ekki haft ljós annat meðan við drykkju var setit. Þá gengu Æsir at gildi sínu ok settusk í hásæti tólf Æsir, þeir er dómendr skyldu vera ok svá váru nefndir: Þórr, Njörðr, Freyr, Týr, Heimdallr, Bragi, Viðarr, Váli, Ullr, Hœnir, Forseti, Loki; slíkt sama Ásynjur: Frigg, Freyja, Gefjun, Íðunn, Gerðr, Sigyn, Fulla, Nanna. Ægi þótti goðuglít þar um at sjásk. Veggðili öll váru þar tjólduð með foðrum skjóldum. Þar var ok áfenginn mjóðr ok mjók drukkit. Næsti maðr Ægi sat Bragi, ok áttusk þeir við drykkju ok orðaskipti. Sagði Bragi Ægi frá morgum tíðindum þeim er Æsir hofðu átt.

Hann hóf þar frásögn at þrjú Æsir föru heiman, Óðinn ok Loki ok Hœnir, ok föru um fjöll inn ok eyðímerkr ok var ítt til matar. En er þeir koma ofan í dal nakkvarn, sjá þeir öxna flokk ok taka einn uxnann ok snúa til seyðis. En er þeir hyggja at soðit mun vera, raufa þeir seyðinn ok var ekki soðit. Ok í annat sinn er þeir raufa seyðinn, þá er stund var liðin, ok var ekki soðit. Mæla þeir þá sín á milli hverju þetta mun tegna. Þá heyra þeir máli í eikina upp yfir sik at sá er þar sat kvazk ráða því er eigi söðnaði á seyðinum. Þeir lítu til ok sat þar þr n ok eigi líttill. Pá mælti þönninn: ‘‘Vilið þér gefa mér fylli mína af oxanum, þá mun söðna á seyðinum.’’

Þeir játa því. Pá lætr hann sígask ör trénu ok sezk á seyðinn ok leggr upp þegar it fyrsta lær oxans tvau ok báða bógana. Þá varð Loki reiðr ok greip upp mikla stöng ok reiðir af öllu afl ok rekr á kroppinn erinum. Þönninn bregzk við hobgít ok flýgr upp. Þá var fóst stöngin við kropp arnarins ok hendr Loka við annan enda. Þönninn flýgr hátt svá at fær taka niðr grjótir ok urðir ok viðu, [en] hendr hans hyggdr hann at slítu munu ör oxlum. Hann kallar ok biðr allþarfliða Þönninn fríðar, en hann segir at Loki skal aldri
lauss verða nema hann veiti honum svardaga at koma Íðunni út of Ásgarð með epli sín,¹ en Loki vil þat. Verðr hann þa lauss ok ferr til lagsmanna sinna ok er eigi at sinni sogð fleiri týðindi um þeira ferð áðr þeir koma heim. En at ákveðínni stundu teygir Loki Íðunni út um Ásgarð í skóg nokkvorn ok segir at hann hefir fundit epli þau er henni munu gripir í þykkja, ok bað at hon skal hafa með sér sín epli ok bera saman ok hin. Þá kemr þar Þjazi jötunn í amaráham ok tekir Íðunni ok flýgr braut með ok í Prymheim til bús síns.

‘En Æsir urðu illa við hvarf Íðunnar ok gerðusk þeir brátt háir ok gamlir. Þá áttu þeir Æsir þing ok [spyrr hverr annan] hvat síðarst vissi til Íðunnar, en þat var sét síðarst at hon gekk ór Ásgarði með Loka. Þá var Loki tekinn ok færðr á þingit ok var honum heitit bana eða þíslum. En er hann varð hræddr þa kvazk hann mundu sæk-j-a eptir Íðunni í Jötunheima ef Freyja vill ljá honum valshams er hon á. Ók er hann fer valshaminn flýgr hann norðr í Jötunheima ok kemr einn dag til Þjaza jötuns. Var hann róinn á sæ, en Íðunn var ein heima. Brá Loki henni í hnotar líki ok hafði í klóm sér ok flýgr sem mest. [Æ]n er Þjazi kom heim ok saknar Íðunnar, tekr hann arnarhaminn ok flýgr eptir Loka ok dró arnsúg í flugnum. En er Æsirnir sá er valrinn flaug með hnotina ok hvar þrønn flaug, þá gengu þeir út undir Ásgarð ok báru þannig byrðar af lokarpánnum, ok þá er valrinn flaug inn of borgina, létt hann fallask niðr við borgarvegginn. Þá slógu Æsirnir eldi í lokarpánu en þrønn mattí eigi stoðva er hann missti valsins. Laust þá eldínem í fiðri arnarins ok tók þá af fluginn. Þá váru Æsirnir nær ok drápu Þjaza jötun fyrir innan Ásgrindr ok er þat víg allfrægt.

‘En Skaði, dóttir Þjaza jötuns, tók hjálmi ok brynuju ok òll hervápn ok ferr til Ásgarðs at hefna fóður síns. En Æsir buðu henni sætt ok yfirbær, ok hit fyrsta at hon skal kjósa sér mann af Ásum ok kjósa at fóturn ok sjá ekki fleira af. Þá sá hon eins manns fær förkunnar fagra ok mælir:

“Þenna kýs ek, fátt mun ljótt á Baldri.”²

‘En þat var Njóðr ór Nóatúnum. Þat hafði hon ok í sættargjörð sinni at Æsir skiplu þat gera er hon hugði at þeir skyldu eigi mega, at hlægja hana. Þá gerði Loki þat at hann batt um skegg geitar nokkvorrar ok ðrum enda um hreðjar sér ok létu þau ymsi eptir

⁵¹ o R.
ok skráæti hvártveggja við hátt. Þá lét Loki fallask í kné Skaða ok þá hló hon. Var þá gjör sætt af Ásanna hendi við hana.

‘Svá er sagt at Öðinn gerði þat til yfirbótta við hana at hann tók augu Pjaza ok kastaði upp á himin ok gerði af stjórnur tvær.’

Þá mælir Ægir: ‘Mikill þykki mér Þjazi fyrir sér hafa verit, eða hvers kyns var hann?’

Bragi svarar: ‘Ólvaldi hét faðir hans, ok merki munu þer at þykka ef ek segi þer frá honum. Hann var mjók gullauðigr, en er hann dó ok synir hans skyldu skipta arfi, þá hofðu þeir mæling at gullinu er þeir skiptu at hvern skyldi taka munnfylli sína ok allir jafnmargar. Einn þeirra var Þjazi, annarr Lóðri, þriði Gangr. En þat hofum vær orðtak nú með oss at kalla gullit munntal þessa jótna, en vær felum í rúnum eða í skáldskap svá at vær kollum þat mál eða orða k-, tal þessa jótna.’

Þá mælir Ægir: ‘Þat þykk mér vera vel fólgit í rúnum.’

Ok enn mælir Ægir: ‘Hvaðan af hefir hafizk sú íþrótt er þer kallið skáldskap?’

Bragi svarar: ‘Þat váru upphof til þess at guðin hofðu ósætt við þat fólk er Vanir heita, en þeir logðu með sér friðstefnu ok settu grið á þá lund at þeir gengu hvártveggju til eins kers ok spýttu í hráka sínum. En at skilnaði þá tóku guðin ok vildu eigi láta týnask þat griðmark at sköpuðu þar ór mann. Sá heitir Kvasir. Hann er svá vitr at engi spyr hann þeirra hluta er eigi kann hann órlaun. Hann fór víða um heim at kenna mónnum fræði, ok þá er hann kom at heimboði til dverga nokkvorra, Fjalars ok Galars, þá kolluðu þeir hann með sér á einmæli ok drápu hann, létu renna blóð hans í tvau ker ok einn ketil, ok heitir sá Óðreyrir, en kerin heita Són ok Boðn. Þeir blendu hunangi við blóðít ok varð þar af mjöður sá at hverr er af drekkur verðr skáld eða fræðamaðr. Dvergnirnir sogðu Ásum at Kvasir hefði kafnat í munnviti fyrir því at engi var þar svá fróðr at spyrja kynni hann fróðleiks.

‘Þá buðu þessir dvergar til sín jótni þeim er Gillingr heitir ok konu hans. Þá buðu dvergnir Gillingi at rõa á sæ með sér. En er þeirr fóru fyrir land fram, röru dvergnir á boða ok hvelfði skipinu. Gillingr var ósyndr ok týndisk hann, en dvergnir réttu skip sitt ok reru til lands. Þeir sogðu konu hans þenna atburð, en hon kunn
illa ok grét hátt. Pá spurdí Fjalarr hana ef henni mundi hugléttara
108 ef hon sæi út á sæinn þar er hann hafði týnzk, en hon vildi þat. Pá
mælti hann við Galar bróður sinn at hann skal fara upp yfir dyrnnar
er hon gengi út ok láta kverstein falla í høfuð henni, ok talði sér
leiðask óp hennar, ok svá gerði hann. Pá er þetta spurdí Suttungr
bróðurson Gillings, ferr hann til ok tök dvergana ok flytr á sæ út
ok setr þá í flæðarsker. Þeir biðja Suttung sér lífsgriða ok bjóða
111 honum til sættar í þóðurgjöld mjóðinn dýra, ok þat verðrar at sætt
með þeim. Flytr Suttungr mjóðinn heim ok hirðir þar sem heita
Hnitbjörg, setr þar til gæzlu döttur sína Gunnlóðu. Af þessu kóllum
vér skáldskap Kvasis blóð eða dverga drekku eða fylli eða nakkvars
konar lög Óðreris eða Boðnar eða Sónar eða farskost dverga, fyrir
því at sá mjóðr f[lut]ti þeim fjarlausn ör skerinu, eða Suttunga
mjóð eða Hnitbjarga lögri.
114 Pá mælir Ægir: ‘Myrkt þykk mér þat mælt at kalla skáldskap
með þessum heitum, en hvernig kómu þeir Æsir at Suttunga miði?’
117 Bragi svarar: ‘Sjá saga er til þess at Óðinn fór heiman ok kom
þar er þrælar nú slógu hey. Hann spyrr ef þeir vili at hann brýni
ljá þeira. Þeir játa því. Pá tekri hann hein af belti sér ok brýndi, en
120 þeim þottí bíta ljárnir myklu betr ok fóludu heinina. En hann mat
svá at sá er kaupa vildi skyldi gefa við höf, en allir kváðusk vilja
ok báðu hann sér selja, en hann kastaði heininni í lopt upp. En er
allir vildu henda þá skipotusk þeir svá við at hverr brá ljánum á
háls ogrum. Óðinn sótti til náttstøðar til jótuns þess er Baugi hét,
bróðir Suttungs. Baugi kallaði illt fjárhald sitt ok sagði at þrælar
126 hans nú høfuðu dreipizk, en talðisk eigi vita sér ván verkmanna.
En Óðinn nefndisk fyrir honum Bólverkr. Hann bauð at taka upp
nú manna verk fyrir Bauga, en mælir sér til kaups einn drykk af
130 Suttunga miði. Baugi kvázk enskis ráð eiga af miðinum, sagði at
Suttungr vildi einn hafa, en fara kvezk hann munu með Bólverki
ok freista ef þeir fengi mjóðinn. Bólverkr vann um sumarit nú
mannsverk fyrir Bauga, en at vetri beiddisk hann Bauga leigu
sinnar. Pá fara þeir báðir til Suttungs. Baugi segir Suttungi bróður
sínnum kaup þeira Bólverks, en Suttungr synjar þverliga hvers dropa
af miðinum. Pá mælir Bólverkr til Bauga at þeir skyldu freista
véla nokkvorra, ef þeir megi ná miðinum, en Baugi lætr þat vel
135 kváð R. ráðs R.
vera. Þá dregr Bólverkr fram nafar þann er Rati heitir ok mælir at Baugi skal bora bjargit ef nafarrinn bítr. Hann gerir svá. Þá segir 144 Baugi at gögnum er borat bjargit, en Bólverkr blæss í nafars raufina ok hrjóta spænirnir upp í móti honum. Þá fann hann at Baugi vildi svíkja hann, ok bað bora gögnum bjargit. Baugi boraði enn. En er Bólverk<ø> blés annat sinn, þá fuku inn spænirnir. Þá brásk Bólverkr í orms líki ok skreið í nafars raufina, en Baugi stakk eptir honum nafrinum ok missti hans. Fór Bólverkr þar til sem Gunnlǫð var ok lá hjá henni þrjár nætr, ok þá lofaði hon honum at drekka af miðinum þrjá drykki. Í inum fyrsta dryk drakk hann all<ø> ör Óðreri, en í øðrum ör Bodn, í inu<ø> þríðja ör Són, ok hafði hann þá allan mjoðinn. Þá brásk hann í arnarham ok flaug sem ákafast. En er Suttungr sá flug arnarins, tók hann sér arnarham ok flaug eptir honum. En er Æsir sá hvar Óðinn flaug þá settu þeir út í garðinn ker sín, en er Óðinn kom inn of Ásgard þá spýtti hann upp miðinum í kerin, en honum var þá svá nær komit at Suttungr mundi ná honum at hann sendi aptr suman mjoðinn, ok var þess ekki gætt. Hafði þat hverr er vildi, ok kollum vér þat skáldfífla hlut. En Suttunga mjoð gaf Óðinn Ásunum ok fleim mǫnnum er yrkja kunnu. Því kollum v[é]r skáldskapinn feng Óðins ok fund ok drykk hans ok gjöf hans ok drykk Ásanna.'

Notes

1 According to Gylfaginning ch. 26, Bragi’s wife Iðunn had charge of the golden apples from which the gods needed to take bites so as to remain eternally young.

2 Baldr is described in Gylfaginning ch. 22 as the most beautiful of the gods and Skaði naturally hopes that she has chosen him.

151 ljá R. 155 Þjazi R. 156 þú R. 160 lit R.
Sturla Þórdarson (1214–84) belonged to the great Sturlung family and was nephew of Snorri Sturluson (d. 1241). His Íslendinga saga is the longest single saga in the compilation known as Sturlunga saga, which was probably made about 1300 and covers the history of Iceland from 1117 to 1264 with special attention to the thirteenth century. Other sagas in the collection (and by other authors than Sturla) are, for example, Porgils saga ok Hafliða (covering the period 1117–21), Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar (about a chieftain and notable physician from the Western Fjords killed in 1213), Póðar saga kakala (about Sturla’s cousin, Póðr kakali Sighvatsson, and with a description of a famous sea-battle fought in Húnaflói in 1244) and Svínfellinga saga (about family feuds in south-eastern Iceland in the years 1248–52). The sagas of the Sturlunga-compilation (often referred to as ‘Sagas of Contemporaries’) have significant value as contemporary historical sources for the turbulent period leading up to the country’s submission to Norway in 1262–64. This, perhaps paradoxically, was also a time of intense literary activity during which many of the Sagas of Icelanders were written.

Sturla’s Íslendinga saga covers the period 1183–1262 and was probably composed towards the end of his life, between 1271 and 1284. Sturla’s other literary works include Hákonar saga gamla, a biography of the Norwegian king Hákon Hákonarson (r. 1217–63; written 1264–65); Magnúss saga lagabætis, about Hákon’s son Magnús (r. 1263–80), probably completed shortly after his death; a redaction of Landnámabók; and probably Kristni saga, which describes the conversion of Iceland and the early history of its church. Further, he may have written a version of Grettis saga. Sturla was also a poet and, for example, composed skaldic poetry in praise of the kings Hákon Hákonarson and his son Magnúss lagabætur. He probably played a significant part in the compilation of the law-code Járnsíða which replaced the laws of the Commonwealth in 1271–73 (but which was itself replaced in 1281 by another called Jónsbók). Like other members of the Sturlung family, Sturla was closely involved in the often tumultuous political events of thirteenth-century Iceland (described not least in Íslendinga saga); but unlike several of them (for example, Snorri Sturluson), he survived the violence of the age and died of natural causes on the day after his seventieth birthday.
The protagonist of the story told in this extract, Gizurr Þorvaldsson (1208–68), played a central part in the history of Iceland in the period leading up to the end of the Commonwealth. After returning from Norway in 1252, Gizurr established himself at the farm Flugumýrr (modern Icelandic Flugumýri) in Skagafjörður in northern Iceland, in territory which Þórðr Sighvatsson kakali had entrusted to Eyjólfr Þorsteinsson and Hrani Koðránsson. At the same time Gizurr sought to cement his relationship with Sturla Þórðarson by marrying his son Hallr to Sturla’s daughter Ingibjörg. The wedding was celebrated at Flugumýrr in October 1253, and it was here, after many of the guests (including Sturla) had departed, that Eyjólfr and Hrani with a band of followers made their attack and eventually set fire to the farm. The extract describes the burning and the loss of Gizurr’s wife Gróa and their three sons. Gizurr escaped, however, to take a dreadful revenge, and within two years many of the attackers of Flugumýrr, including Eyjólfr and Hrani, were dead by the actions of Gizurr and his allies.

Sturla’s account of the burning has been admired for its vivid detail and objective narrative skill. It should be remembered that he had left the scene of the event only shortly before Eyjólfr’s attack and that his own thirteen-year-old daughter Ingibjörg, the bride, was one of the major figures in the drama as, fatally, was his newly-acquired son-in-law, Hallr, son of Gizurr. He was probably, however, writing his account some twenty years after the event. Accounts of the burning at Flugumýrr (though not necessarily Sturla Þórðarson’s) may well have influenced the story of the burning of Njáll and his sons as told in chapters 127–130 of Njáls saga.

The context of the episode given here may be summarised as follows. As noted above, Þórðr Sighvatsson kakali had put Eyjólfr and Hrani Koðránsson in control of the territory (in effect the whole of Iceland) which had been assigned to him by King Hákon Hákonarson. Eyjólfr had control over the westerly part of the area, including Skagafjörður, and Hrani the easterly part with Þýjafjörður. When Gizurr arrived back from Norway in 1252, however, the farmers of Skagafjörður accepted him as their leader and the following year Gizurr drove Eyjólfr out of Skagafjörður and settled at Flugumýrr. Eyjólfr moved to Móðruvellir in Hórgárdalr. Goaded on by his wife Púríðr (the daughter of Sighvatr Sighvatsson who had been killed by Gizurr at the Battle of Órlygsstaðir in 1238), Eyjólfr, together with Hrani Koðránsson,
attacked Gizurr at Flugumýrr in an episode the latter part of which is described in this selection. The intention was to kill Gizurr, but as will be seen, he escaped. After Gizurr went abroad in 1254, hostilities continued between Eyjólfr and Gizurr’s ally, Oddr Þórarinsson, and in these Eyjólfr appears to have had the support of Heinrekr Kársson (bishop of Hólar, 1247–60). Eyjólfr and Hrafn Oddsson, a prominent chieftain from north-western Iceland, killed Oddr at his home in Skagafjörður early in 1255. Oddr’s brother Þorvarðr allied himself with Þorgils Bóðvarsson skarði, Sturla Þórðarson and a third chieftain and attacked and killed Eyjólfr at Þveráreyrar on 19th July, 1255.

At the point where the selection begins, Gizurr and his companions in the farm at Flugumýrr have put up a stout and lengthy resistance to Eyjólfr and his band of assailants before the expedient of fire is resorted to. Time was not on the side of Eyjólfr and his band, who were in hostile territory (cf. lines 122–23). Their power base was in Eyjafjörður and eastwards from there, and they had to do something to resolve the impasse.

Sturlunga saga, and with it Íslendinga saga, is preserved in two medieval vellums, Króksfjarðarbók (AM 122 a fol.; written c.1350–70) and Reykjarfjarðarbók (AM 122 b fol.; written c.1375–1400). Both manuscripts (particularly the latter) are now defective and, in reconstructing lost parts of their texts, recourse must be had to the many copies in paper manuscripts (including a good one in the British Library) which were derived from them when they were more complete than now. The text of the selection here follows Króksfjarðarbók (ff. 101vb28–102vb26) but with certain emendations and additions mostly based on British Library Add. 11,127.

Bibliography


III: Íslendinga saga


Background reading:

*MS*, under *Hákonar saga gamla Hákonarsonar; Landnámabók; Magnúss saga lagabætis; Sturla Pórðarson; Sturlung Age; Sturlunga saga*.
Chapter 172

. . . Ok þá er Eyjólfr sá at þeim sóttisk seint, «en uggði» at heraðsmenn myndi at koma, þá báru þeir eld at. Jón af Bakka hafði haft tjórupinn með sér, ok þá tóku þeir gærur af þonum «er þar váru úti» 2 ok báru þar í eld ok tjóruna. Sumir tóku þóðu ok tráðu í gluggana ok logðu þar eld í, ok varð þá reykr mikill brátt í húsunum ok svælumíkt.

Gizurr lagðisk niðr í skálanum með setstokkinum þór um megin ok lagði nasínum ok höfuðit við gólfít 3 ok þar Gróa, kona hans, hjá honum.4 Þorbjörn nef lá þar hjá þeim, ok horfðusk þeir Gizurr at höfðunum.5 Þorbjörn heyrdi at Gizurr bað fyrir sér á marga vega háleítliga til Guðs, svá at eigi kvazk hann sílkan formála heyrt hafa, en hann þöttisk eigi sinn munn mega í sundr hefja fyrir reyk. Ok eptir þat stóð Gizurr upp, ok helt Gróa á honum. Gizurr gekk í anddyrit syðra, ok var honum þá erfitt mjók, bæði af reyk ok hita, ok var þat þá í hug at leita út heldr en vera lengr inni svælur.

Gizurr glaði stóð við dyrrið ok talaði við Kolbeinn grón ok bauð Kolbeinn honum gríð, því at þeir höfðu fyrr þat við mæltk at hvárr skyldi þórum gríð gefa, hvárr sem vald hefði til.6 Gizurr Þorvaldsson stóð at baki nafna sínnum meðan þeir töluddu þetta, ok svalaði honum heldr meðan. Gizurr glaði beiddisk at hann mundi kjósa mann með sér til griða. Kolbeinn játaði því, þegar frá væri Gizurr ok synir hans.

Þá kom þar til Gró í anddyrit Ingibjörg Sturludóttir ok var í náttserk einum ok berfætt.7 Hon var þá þrettán vetra gömul ok var bæði mikil vexti ok skóðulig at sjá. Silfrbelti hafði vafizk um feðr henni, er hon komsk ór hvílunni fram; var þar á pungr ok þar í gull hennar morg. Hafði «hon» þat þar með sér. Gróa varð fegin henni mjók ok segir at eitt skyldi yfir þær ganga báðar.

Ok er Gizuri hafði heldr svalat, þá var honum þat í hug at hlaupa eigi út. Hann var í líklaðum ok í brýnu, stálhúfu á hofði, sverðit Brynjubít í hendi. Gróa var ok í náttserk einum. Gizurr gekk at henni Gró ok tók fingrugull tvau ór brókabeltispungi sínnum ok fekk henni í hónd, því at hann ætalði henni líf en sér dauða. Annat fingrugullit hafði átt Magnús biskup, foðurbróðir hans, en annat Þorvaldr, faðir hans.8 Kvazk hann vilja at þeira gripa nytí vinir hans, ef svá fóri sem hann

Chapter 173

Nú verðr þar frá at hverfa. Þer Gróa ok Íngibjörg gengu nú út at durunum. Gróa bað Íngibjörgu útgvöngu. Þat heyði Kolbeinn grøn, frændi hennar,9 ok bað hana út ganga til sín. Hon kvazk eigi þat vilja, nema hon kóri mann með sér. Kolbeinn kvað eigi þat mundu. Gróa bað hana út ganga, — ‘en ek verð at leita sveinsins Þorláks, sostursonar míns,’ segir hon — Þorleifr hreimr var faðir hans.10 Íngiðinnar hafði út hlaupit áðr, ok loguðu um hann línklæðin er hann kom ofan á vøllinn. Hann var tíu vetra gamall. Kóska hann til kirkju.11

Pat er sumra manna sogn at Þorsteinn genja hryndi Gró inn í eldinn, ok þar fannsk hon í anddyrinu.12

Kolbeinn grøn hljóp inn í eldinn eptir Íngibjörgu ok bar hana út til kirkju. Tóku þá húsin mjók at loga.

Hallr Gizurarson kom litlu síðar at þeim inum syðrum durunum ok án beiskr með honum, fylgðarmaðr hans.13 Þeir váru báðir mjók þreyttir ok móðir af hita. Þordi var skotit um þverar dyrnar.14 Hallr horfði lítt á ok hljóp þegar út yfir borðit. Hann hafði sverð í hendi ok ekki fleira vápna. Einarr Þorgrímsson var nær staddr er Hallr hljóp út, ok hjó í høfuð honum með sverði, ok var þat banasar.15 Ok er hann fell, hjó annarr á fóttinn hegra fyrir neðan kné svá at nær tók af. Þórólfr munkr frá Þverá, ðolgerðarmaðr, var nýgenginn áðr út ok var þar í túninu.16 Hann tók gæru, er þar lár, ok skaut undir Hall, þá er þeir Einarr gengu frá honum. Hann kippti ðollu saman, Halli ok gærunni, á leið til kirkjunnar, þá er þeir hugðu eigi at. En Hallr var fáklæddr ok kom kulði í sár hans. Mumkrinn var ok berfastr, ok kól hann ok. Gat hann þó komit þeim þáum í kirkju of síðir.17

Árn beiskr hljóp þegar út eptir Halli. Hann drap fötum í borðit — var þá við aldri — ok fell, er hann kom út. Þeir spurdu, hvert þar færi svá hrapalliga.

‘Árn beiskr er hér,’ segir hann, ‘ok mun ek ekki griða þaða. Sé ek ok, at sá liggr hér skammt frá mér er mér líkar eigi illa at ek hafa slíka fór ok hann.’18
Kolbeinn mælti þá: ‘Man engi nú Snorra Sturluson, ef þú fær grið.’

Báðir unnu þeir Kolbeinn á honum ok Ari Ingimundarson; ok fleiri hjoggu þeir hann, ok lét hann þegar líf sitt.


Halldórr Guðmundarson gekk út suðdyrr af búrinu, ok var þar fyrir Eyrjólfr Þorsteinsson ok gaf honum grið. Ok er hann kom mjók at kirkjunni, var þar fyrir sá maðr er Þorkell smiðr hét, er síðan var veginn á Móðruvöllum. Hann tók til hans ok kvað eigi svá ött í kirkjuna, en annarr hjó til hans með sverði við forkirkjuna ok kom framan á hálsinn inum hegra megin, ok hraut blöðit allt á kirkjuna. Var þat mikill áverki. Komsk hann við þat í kirkju.

Nú töku Ólli húsin at loga, nema eldhús brann eigi ok litlastofa ok skyrbúr.

Chapter 174

Nú er at segja frá Gizuri Þorvaldssyni at hann kom at skyrbúri, ok hann Guðmundr, frændi hans, fylgði honum. Gizurr bað hann fara frá sér, kvað heldr megin eina fá nokkut undanbragð ef þess vildi auðna, þar sem þeir fengu eigi báðir. Þar kom þá ok Jón prestr Halldórsson, ok kvað Gizurr þá báða skyldu brott fara frá sér at sinni. Gizurr steypti þá af sér brynjunni ok stálhúfunni, en hafði sverðit í hendi. Þeir Jón prestr leiðuðu til suðröndur af búrinu ok fengu báðir grið. Gizurr Þorvaldsson gekk í búrit. Hann sá hvar skyrker stöð á stokkum í búrinu. Þar hleypti hann sverðinu Brynjubít ofan í skyrit svá at þat sökk upp um hjoðtin. Gizurr sá at þar var ker í jörðu hjá, lítit, ok var í sýra. En skyrkerit stöð þar yfir ofan ok hulði mjók sýrkerit þat er í jörðunni var. Þar var rúm þat er maðr mátti komask í kerit, ok fór Gizurr þar í kerit þat er í jörðunni var ok settisk niðr í sýruna í línklæðum einum, ok tók honum sýran í geirvörtur. Kalt var í sýrunni.

Skamma hríð hafði hann þar setit áðr hann heyrði mannamál ok heyrði at um var talat, ef hann fyndisk, at þrír menn váru til ætlaðir til...
áverka við hann, ok skyldi sitt høgg høggva hvert ok fara ekki ótt at, ok vita hvernig hann yrði við. Hrani var til ætlaðr ok Kolbeinn grón ok Ari Ingimundarson. Nú komu þeir í búrit með ljósi ok leituðu allt. Þeir kómur at kerinu er Gizurr sat í kerinu, ok logðu í kerit þær menn með spjótum eða fjórir. Þeir þættu um: sögðu sumir, at fyrir yrði, en sumir ekki. Gizurr hafði lófana fyrir kviði sér sem hógligast, at þeir skyldi sem sútt kenna at fyrir yrði. Hann skeindisk á lófunum ok svá framan á beinum á skofnunum. Váru þat lítil sár ok mörg. Svá hefur Gizurr sagt sjálfir, áðr þeir koði í búrit, at hann skalf af kuldæ, svá at svaglaði í kerinu; en er þeir kómur í búrit, þá skalf hann ekki. Tvisvar leituðu þeir um búrit, ok fór svá í hvártveggja sinn. Eptir þat gengu þeir í brott ok út ok bjöggusk í brott.

Gengu menn þá til griða, þeir er lífs váru, Guðmundr Fálkason, Þóórðr djakni, Óláfr er síðan var kallaðr gestr, ok hafði Einarr Þorgrímsson unnit á honum. Þá var í dagan. Stigu brennumenn þá á bak ok riðu út ór garði. Fótar-Ǫrn reið síðast ok segir Eyjólfi at hann sá manna ganga til kirkju ok var leiddr, ok kvazk hyggja at Gizurr væri; kvað þat eitt ráð at snúa aprt. Þeir svoðuðu margir, kváðu þat ekki vera mega. Varð ok ekki af, at þeir sneri aprt.

Gizurr hafði þá gengit til kirkju, sem Ærlæði, því at svá var honum kalt orðit at hann þólði eigi lengr þar at vera. Ok er Gizurr kom í kirkju, váru klæði borin at honum, ok vermiði sú kona hann á lærum sér er Hallfríðr hét ok var kólluð Garðafyldja, er síðan var heimakona með Kálfi Brandssyni á Viðimýri. Hann var háss orðinn mjök af reyk ok kuldæ. Gizurr hresstisk brátt ok bar sik vel ok drengiliga eptir síða mannraun ok harma. Hallr, son hans, andaðsk þá er nær var hálfjóst...
Notes

1 Jón and his son, Ljótr (‘Ugly’) were probably the last to join Eyjólfr’s party. His farm lay in Øxnadalr, only a little to the east of Øxnadalshøiðr, the high ground to be crossed before Skagafjörðr, where Flugumýrr lay, was reached. It is natural, then, that it was he who should provide the tjórupinnr, particularly if it were a relatively heavy object (see below). After the burning, in October 1253, a band of men under Gizurr ravaged Bakki while Jón was absent. And in late January of the following year, they surprised him while he was sleeping in his house (rather than in the church there where he had slept since the burning) and killed him. The meaning of the word tjórupinnr is uncertain. It may refer to a piece of wood covered in tar which could be used in starting a fire. But it more probably refers to a small barrel (or other vessel) containing tar (cf. older English pin, ‘small cask, keg’).

2 There would have been sheepskins stretched out to dry outside the farm at Flugumýrr.

3 Gizurr did this to be able to breathe the fresher air near the floor.

4 Gróa Álfsdóttir was Gizurr’s second wife, whom he had only married in 1252. She was certainly mother of Hallr (line 51) and Ísleifr (line 74), and possibly also of Ketilbjörn (line 74).

5 Þórbjörn nef was son of Þórdr Narfason, brother of Helga, mother of the bride, Ingibjörg Sturludóttir.

6 On grið, cf. Laws, I 183–84, 210, 260. Gizurr glaði appears to have been a close companion and supporter of Gizurr Þorvaldsson for at least a quarter of a century. He survived the burning at Flugumýrr, quite possibly by accepting Kolbeinn’s offer mentioned here. His home was at Lang(a)holt in Flói in southern Iceland. His by-name glaði means ‘the Cheerful’. Kolbeinn Dufgusson grøn was one of the incendiaries. He was subsequently apprehended and killed at Espihóll in Eyjafjörðr in January, 1254, by one of a band of men under Gizurr Þorvaldsson. Gizurr composed a skaldic verse commemorating the killing. Cf. lines 40–41 and note 9.

7 Ingibjörg Sturludóttir was the daughter of Sturla Þórdarson, the author of Íslendinga saga, by Helga Þórdardóttir. She was newly wed to Hallr Gizurarson.
8 Þorvaldr Gizurarson (d. 1235), Gizurr’s father, is known for, among other things, his foundation (1226) of the Augustinian monastery on the island of Viðey (off modern Reykjavík), of which he was first prior. See HOIC, 197–98 and Index.

9 Kolbeinn’s father Dufgus was a nephew of Þórðr Sturluson, father of Sturla Þórðarson, father of Ingibjørg. Cf. line 15 and note 6.

10 Þorleifr Ketilsson hreimr (died 1289; married to Gróa’s sister) had left the wedding-feast the day before the night of the burning (i.e. on Tuesday, 21st October, 1253), apparently leaving his son at Flugumýrr. He also joined Gizurr in the revenge for the burning. Þorleifr later distinguished himself by being elected lawspeaker (lógsægumaðr) on three occasions (1263–1265, 1268, 1271) and was the last person to hold the position.

11 Most of the churches of thirteenth-century Iceland were attached to farms and privately owned. It is natural that there should have been one at an important farm like Flugumýrr. In situations like the one described here, churches would have been regarded as places of sanctuary.

12 This refers to the gruesome scene where Gizurr returns to the farm soon after the burning and finds the remains of his wife and his son, Ísleifr. Þorsteinn genja may well be identical with Þorsteinn Guðmundarson, who after the event praised the stout resistance presented by the defenders at Flugumýrr.

13 Árni beiskr was the man who dealt Snorri Sturluson his death-blow at Reykholt on 23rd September, 1241. He was killed by Kolbeinn grön Dufgusson and Ari Ingimundarson at Flugumýrr.

14 A board had been put across the doorway by the attackers to prevent escape from the burning building.

15 Einarr Þorgímsson was from Øxnahóll in Øxnadalr (cf. note 1). He was killed there in January, 1254, by Óláfr gestr in Gizurr’s revenge for the burning (cf. lines 119–20).

16 Þórólfr munkr frá Þverá was presumably from Þverá, often called Munka-Þverá, in Eyjafjörður. A Benedictine monastery was established there in 1155 (cf. HOIC, 194). Ale was specially brewed for great
feasts such as this one at Flugumýrr and Þórólfr had presumably played at least some part in this.

17 *þeim báðum* must refer to Hallr and Þórólfr himself.

18 Árni’s reference to Hallr here presupposes a situation prior to the events described in lines 58–63; in other words, the narrative is here going back in time. Sturla recognised the difficulties of telling of a number of more or less simultaneous events. Earlier in the description of the events at Flugumýrr, he explicitly writes: ‘Now a number of things happened simultaneously, but one can only tell about one thing at a time’ (*Nú urðu margir atburðir senn, ok má þó frá einum senn segjá*).

19 It is appropriate that Kolbeinn should draw attention to Snorri Sturluson’s killing. His father was Snorri’s nephew as well as Þórðr Sturluson’s. Cf. lines 15–16, 40 and notes 6 and 9.

20 Guðmundarson: so Króksfjarðarbók; but some manuscripts have Ógmundarson here, and earlier in *Íslendinga saga* (ch. 172), a Halldórr Ógmundarson is mentioned amongst the defenders of Flugumýrr ‘er síðan var kallaðr hálshögg’ (who afterwards was known as ‘neck-chop’); cf. lines 85–86.

21 Móðruvellir was a farm in Hörgárardlur (not to be confused with Móðruvellir in Eyjafjörðr, about 33 km further south) some 50 km north-eastwards from Flugumýrr. In late January, 1254, three of the incendiaries were seized at Móðruvellir and killed. One of the three is named Þorgils Sveinsson, and it is quite possible that ‘Þorkell’ here is an error for ‘Þorgils’.

22 Excavations of the eleventh-century farmhouse at Stöng in southern Iceland have revealed the remains of a *skyrbúr* and evidence of large vats, some half-buried in the earthen floor, and similar remains have also been found at the Augustinian monastery on the island of Viðey off modern Reykjavík (cf. note 8 above). *Skýr* was a common dish in Scandinavia of the Middle Ages and is still widely consumed in present-day Iceland (often eaten with sugar and milk or cream); it consists of milk, soured and thickened, and is sometimes likened to yoghurt.
Although modern *skyr* has something of the consistency of cream-cheese, medieval sources refer to it being drunk.

23 Probably not the same as Prest-Jóan, who was involved in the killing of Kolbeinn grøn (cf. note 6 above).

24 *Sýra* was sour whey; this was a common drink in medieval Iceland and would have been stored in large quantities on farms. It was often mixed with water to make a drink called *blanda*.

25 Hrani Koðránsson, of Grund in Eyjafjörður, one of the incendiaries, was subsequently killed in revenge (May, 1254) on the island of Grímsey by a band of men under the leadership of Oddr Þórarinsson, an ally of Gizurr Þorvaldsson.

26 The repetition of the antecedent *kerinu* is perhaps for emphasis, though *er Gizurr sat í* may mean ‘while Gizurr was sitting in [it]’ rather than ‘which Gizurr was sitting in’.

27 Óláfr gestr survived the burning at Flugumýrr; cf. note 15 above.

28 We learned earlier that Fótar-Þorn acted as look-out for Eyjólfr’s band. We are also told that during the attack he spent most of his time on his horse. The latter circumstance might be consistent with the suggestion that he may have been called Fótar-Þorn because he had something wrong with his leg or foot.

29 Kálf Brandysson had himself been at the wedding-feast but had presumably left before the attack by Eyjólfr. He later married Guðný, another daughter of Sturla Þórðarson. In 1259 he also allied himself with Gizurr Þorvaldsson against his enemy, Þórðr Andrésson. Like his father and grandfather before him, he lived at Víðimýrr, a major farm in Skagafjörður.
IV: KORMAKS SAGA

The other Family Sagas with which Kormaks saga has most in common are Hallfreðar saga, Bjarnar saga Híðarlaþakappa, Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu and Laxdæla saga. In all of these apart from Laxdæla saga the hero, as in Kormaks saga, is a poet; and in all five sagas the hero seems to hesitate between, on the one hand, the idea of committing himself in marriage to a woman with whom he is intimately involved in Iceland and, on the other, the lure of the útanferð (‘journey abroad’), the need (as the hero sees it) to travel abroad to win fame and fortune. Kormaks saga is exceptional among these sagas in that its hero’s hesitation is attributed to supernatural causes, as this extract shows; and in the fact that the hero, Kormakr, does not travel abroad until relatively late in the history of his relations with Steingerðr, the woman with whom he is involved. Kormaks saga also resembles Bjarnar saga and Gunnlaugs saga but differs from Hallfreðar saga and Laxdæla saga in that its hero’s journey abroad does not lead to his marrying another woman. Kormaks saga nevertheless raises the question of whether the supernatural explanation of Kormakr’s failure to marry Steingerðr is to be seen as symbolic of an emotional ambivalence in his character, such as the heroes of the other four sagas all have, in greater or lesser degree.

Opinions have been divided as to whether these stories with the motif of the wavering hero owe more to European romances such as the story of Tristan and Isolde, a prose version of which was made in Norwegian in the thirteenth century as Tristrams saga ok Ísóndar, or to Germanic stories such as that of Þýrgerðr Fáfnisbani (‘the slayer of Fáfnir’), a relatively full version of which is preserved in Völsunga saga, a thirteenth-century Icelandic fornaldarsaga based largely on the heroic lays of the Poetic Edda. See Bjarni Einarsson, Skáldasögur (‘sagas of poets’, 1961; English summary, pp. 280–99). Kormaks saga is probably the oldest of the five Family Sagas listed above (see Paul Bibire’s review of Bjarni Einarsson’s To skjaldeþagaer (1976) in Saga-Book XX:3 (1980), 238–40, p. 239), and may have influenced the other four. All five are anonymous, but probably written in the west or north-west of Iceland.

There has also been disagreement about whether or not the verses of Kormaks saga were composed along with the prose by the author of the saga at the time of its composition, i.e. early in the thirteenth
Kormaks saga is preserved in its entirety in Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol.; = M), a mid fourteenth-century collection of Family Sagas. A small part of the saga (beginning half-way through chapter 3 and ending at a point corresponding to the end of line 56 of this extract) is also preserved on one of the three surviving leaves of the late fourteenth-century manuscript AM 162 F fol. (162; the other two leaves preserve parts of Bjarnar saga Híðælakappa). The saga has been edited from these manuscripts by Theodor Möbius (1886) and by Einar Ól. Sveinsson (ÍF VIII, 1939, 201–302), and it is in the latter edition that the full text of the saga is most readily available. The present extract is based mainly on the text of that edition, though it has been collated with that of M as edited in facsimile by Einar Ól. Sveinsson (in CCIMA V, ff. 121v–122r). The interpretations of the verses reflected in the present text differ in several respects from those of Möbius and Einar Ólafur, and indeed from those of Finnur Jónsson in his critical edition of the verses in Skj B I 73–74. The readings from 162 given in the textual notes are derived from those supplied in the two editions of Kormaks saga just mentioned, as well as from those given by Finnur Jónsson in his diplomatic edition of the verses in Skj A I 82–83. Readings from 162 are, however, given only in cases where the text of M is in one way or another problematic.
The spelling of Kormakr’s name with a short a (Kormakr as opposed to Kormákr), recommended by Einar Ól. Sveinsson in his article of 1966 referred to above, in preference to the long á spelling used in his 1939 edition of the saga, has been adopted here.

In this extract, which corresponds to chs 5–6 in ÍF, to a single chapter in M, Steingerðr’s father Fjorkell takes steps to end Kormakr’s visits to his daughter, of which he disapproves. A literal transcription of the text of M can be found in extract XVIII, and a facsimile of the two pages of the manuscript at http://vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/NION-2-facs.pdf.

Bibliography

IV: KORMAKS SAGA

Chapter 5: Fall Þorveigarsona


Þat var einnhvern dag er Kormakr kom í Tungu; var Steingerðr í stofu ok sat á palli. Þorveigarsynir sátu í stofunni ok váru búnir at veita Kormaki tilræði er hann gengi inn, en Þorkell hafði sett òðrum megin dyra sverð brugðit, en òðrum megin setti Narfr ljá í langorfi. En þá er Kormakr kom at skáladyrum, skaraði ofan ljáinn ok mœtti hann sverðinu, ok brotnaði í mikit skarð. Þá kom Þorkell at ok kvað Kormak mart illt gera ok var málöði; snýr inn skyndiliga ok kveðr Steingerði af stofunni. Ganga þau út um aðrar dyrr, ok lýkr hann hana í einu útibúri; kvað þau Kormak aldri sjásk skulu. Kormakr gengr inn ok bar hann skjótara en þá varði, ok varð þeim bilt.

Kormakr litask um ok sér eigi Steingerði, en sér þá bræðr er þeir stærðuku vápn sínn, snýr í brott skyndiliga ok kvað vísu:

Hneit við Hrungnis fóta
hallvitjǫndum stalli,
inn var ek Ilmi at finna,
engisax, of genginn;
vita skal hitt, ef hærir
hand-Viðris mér grandi,
— ne Yggs fyr lið leggjum —
lítiðs meira vítis.

Kormakr finnr eigi Steingerði, ok kvað vísu:

Braut hvarf ór sal sæta,
sunds erum hugr á Gunni,
hvat merkur nú, herkis,
holl þverligar alla?

21 engi sár M.  22 hann hættir M.
Rennda ek allt it innra
Eir ‹h›árgeirs at þeiri,
húns erum Hörn at finna,
hús brágeislum, fúsir.

Eptir þat gekk Kormakr at húsi‐nu er Steingerðr var í ok braut upp
húsit ok talaði við Steingerði.
Hon mælti, ‘Pú breytir óvarliga, sækir til tals við mik, því at
Þorveigarsynir eru ætlaðir til hófuðs þér.’ Pá kvað Kormakr:

Sitja sverð ok hvetja
sín andskotar mínir,
eins karls synir, inni;
erut þeir banar mínir.
En á víðum velli
vega tveir at mér einum;
þá er sem ær at úlfí
óræknum fjóðr sæki.

Þar sat Kormakr um daginn.
Nú sér Þorkell at þetta ráð er farit er hann hafði stofnat. Nú biðr hann
Þorveigarsonu at sitja fyrir Kormaki í dal einum fyrir útan garð sinn.
Þá mælti Þorkell: ‘Narfí skal fara með ykkr, en ek mun vera heima
ok veita yðr líð, ef þér þurfuð.’
Um kveldit ferr Kormakr í brott, ok þegar er hann kemr at dalnum,
sá hann menn þrjá ok kvað vísu:

Sitja menn ok meina
mér eina Gná steina;
þeir hafa víl at vinna
er mér varða Gná borða;
því meira skal ek þeiri
er þeir ala meira
ðfund um órar gongur
unna sölva Gunní.

Þá hljópu Þorveigarsynir upp ok sóttu at Kormaki lengi. Narfí skráði

33 hlíns erumk M. 42 erat M.
IV: Kormaks saga

um it ýtra. Þorkell sér heiman at þeim sækisk seint, ok tekr vápn sín. Í því bili kom Steingerðr út ok sér ætlan fóður síns; tekr hon hann høndum, ok kemsk hann ekki til liðs með þeim bræðrum. Lauk svá því máli at Oddr fell, en Guðmundr varð óvígr ok dó þó síðan. Eptir þetta fór Kormakr heim, en Þorkell sér fyrir þeim bræðrum.

Litlu síðar farr Kormakr at finna Þorveigu ok kvezk ekki vilja byggð hennar þar í fírðinum.
‘Skaltu flytja þík í brott at ákvæðinni stundu, en ek vil allra bóta varna um sonu þína.’

Þorveig mælti, ‘þat er líkast at því komir flú á leið at ek verða heraðflóta, en synir mínir óbættir, en því skal ek þér launa at þú skalt Steingerðar aldri njóta.’

Kormakr segir, ‘Því mantu ekki ráða, in vánda kerling.’

‘Chapter 6’

Síðan farr Kormakr at finna Steingerði jafnt sem áðr; ok eitt sinn, er þau tala um þessa atburði, lætr hon ekki illa yfir. Kormakr kveðr vísu:

Sitja menn ok meina
mér ásjánu þína;
þeir hafa lögðis Loddu
linna feetr at vinna,
því at upp skulu allar,
ólstafns, aðr ek þér hafna,
lýsigrund, í landi,
linns, þjóðár rinna.

‘Mæl þú eigi svá mikit um,’ segir Steingerðr. ‘Mart má því bregða.’

Pá kvað Kormakr vísu:

Hvern myndir þú, Hrundar,
Hlín, skapfrómuð, línu,
— líknsýnir mér lúka
ljós — þér at ver kjósa?

Steingerðr segir:

88 Grundar M.
Kormakr segir, ‘Nú kaustu sem vera ætti; opt hefi ek higat mínar kvámur lagðar.’

Nú biðr Steingerðr Kormak stunda til foður hennar ok fá hennar, ok fyrir sakir Steingerðar gaf Kormakr Porkatli gjafar. Eptir þetta eigu margir menn hlut í, ok þar kom um síðir at Kormakr bað Steingerðar, ok var hon honum foðstuð ok ákveðin brullaupstefna, ok stendr nú kyrðt um hríð. Nú fara orð á milli þeirra, ok verða í nokkur greinir um fjárfar, ok svá veik við breytiliga, at síðan þessum ráðum var ráðið, fannsk Kormaki fátt um, en þat var fyrir þá sók at Porveig seiddi til at þau skyldi eigi njótask mega.

Þorkell í Tungu átti son roskinn er þorkell hét ok var kallaðr tann-gnjóstr; hann hafði verið útan um stund. Þetta sumar kom hann út ok var með foður sínum.

Kormakr sekkir ekki brullaupit eptir því sem ákveðit var, ok leið fram stundin. Þetta þykkir frændum Steingerðar óvirðing er hann bregðr þessum ráðahag, ok leita sér ráðs.

93 Bráðr M. 100 gjofum M.
V: BJARNAR SAGA HÍTDŒLAKAPPA

Bjarnar saga Háithdelakappa, like Kormaks saga, belongs to the group of poets’ sagas which tell of the rivalry between men for a woman’s love. In the case of Bjarnar saga, the hero’s rival, Þórðr Kolbeinsson, is a historically-attested court poet, whose eulogistic verses are preserved in texts of the Kings’ Sagas; the more fictitious poetic reputation of the hero Björn Arngeirsson depends entirely on the frequently scurrilous verses preserved in his saga. The feud arises from competition for the love of Oddný Porkelsdóttir, originally betrothed to Björn but married instead to Þórðr, who treacherously spreads a false report of the hero’s death during his youthful adventures in Russia and England. On Björn’s return to Iceland his justifiable antagonism to Þórðr inaugurates a lifelong hostility, involving an adulterous relationship with Oddný and a series of slanderous exchanges between the two poets, reflecting the details of life in a farming community in Borgarfjarðr in the west of Iceland. Slander, especially in verse, was an offence heavily punished by law in Iceland, a law also breached by Björn’s erection of nið — a carved representation of Þórðr involved in a homosexual encounter. The sexual connotations of the insult correspond metaphorically to Björn’s sexual appropriation of Þórðr’s wife, as does the saga’s unusually negative representation of Þórðr as a paradoxical blend of coward and aggressor. The feud finally modulates into the physical violence conventionally found in the Sagas of Icelanders, culminating in the scene reproduced below, in which Þórðr, assisted by a host of minor characters who have been drawn into the feud — including Þórðr’s nominal son Kolli, who learns only in the course of battle that Björn is his real father — finally gets the better of the hero.

The saga is poorly preserved, mainly in the seventeenth-century paper manuscript AM 551 D a 4to (= 551). The first five chapters are missing, although a summary text survives in an expanded version of Snorri Sturluson’s separate Saga of St Óláfr. Two leaves survive of the medieval manuscript (AM 162 F fol., = 162; late fourteenth century) from which the seventeenth-century copy was made; the first part of the text below (to line 45) is found on the second of these leaves. The saga’s relatively unsophisticated structure and absence of overt influence from other sagas suggest an early date of composition, around 1220, although an attempt has recently been made to establish it as a
late and derivative work (Bjarni Guðnason 1994). The text refers to earlier traditions which served as its sources, and to the twelfth-century cleric Runólfr Dálksson, who may have written a short biography of Björn. Most of the verses cited must also be older than the prose.


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Chapter 32

Fið er sagt í òðru lagi frá Birni, at hann var snimma á fótum þann morgin ok mataðisk, en Sigmundr, húskarl hans, var farinn upp í dal. Birni þótti illar húsgöngur, er hann átti sökótt, ok þótti aldri örvænt á hverri stundu hann þurfti manna við, ok var hann nokkur brúnvölr ok sagði Þórdís, konu sinni, at hann myndi fara á Hvítingshjalla ok skera mön á hrossum Þorsteins, áðr hann sendi þau vestr;1 ok þó kvað hann heldr hafa harkat um draumana um nóttina ok kvazk þó ógörla vita fyrir hverju þat mun vera. Hann kvazk mjökk opt á þá leið dreyma sem nú ok kvað þó nú mest um vera.

Hon mælti, ‘Þat vilda ek at þú færir frá húsi í dag, ok ertu óværingi um þik, þar er fjándmenn þínir sitja umhverfum þik; eða hvat dreymði þik?’

‘Ekki læt ek drauma ráða fórum mínun,’ segir hann.

‘Eigi vilda ek at þú færir frá húsi, ok værir sem varaðr um þik ok hefir þat fyrir engum spillt; en mér virðisk sem raunillar hafi verit svefnfararnar í nótt, ok seg mér hvat fyrir bar.’ En Björn kvað vísu:2

Undr er, ef ekki bendir,
op vakir dreng at lengrum,
ógn hef ek fyrða fregna,
framvisar mér dísir,
því at armleggjar orma
Ilmr dagleygjar hilmis
heim òr hverjum draumi
hjalmfaldin býðr skaldi.

‘Þetta hefir mik opt dreymt,’ sagði hann, ‘ok nú með mestu móti í nótt.’

Hon latti hann frá húsi at fara, en hann lét ekki letjask. Húskarlar, þeir sem heima váru, fóru í skóg at höggva við, ok var Björn einn roskinna manna. Nú býr hann til hrossanna ok hefur manskæri mikil á linda ok hött á hofði ok skjöld á hlið; sverð hafði hann í hendi, er Þorfinnr Þvarason áttí.3 Björn var mikill maðr vexti ok vænn ok freknóttir, rauðskeggjaðr, skrofhárr ok dapreygðr ok manna bezt vígr.4

22 dagleggjar 162.
Sveinn fimmtán vetra gamall för með honum. Ok er þeir gengu ór túni, kvað Bjǫrn vísu:

Út geng ek með lið lítit,
lítt sé ek hers við víti;

sverð fylgir menmyrði³
mítt ok skjóldr enn hvíti;
en fyrir einum runni

ægis dýrs of Mýrar,
þöndr skal hjalts ór hendi
hrökkva, fyrð en ek stökkva.

Peir fóru þá gotu er liggr til Hvítingshjalla; en þeir eigu at fara yfir Hítará, skammt frá því er hon fellr ór vatninu. Ok er þeir hafa farit um hrið, þá sér sveinvinn sex menn fara í móti þeim frá stakkgarði af Hvítingshjalla. Bjǫrn spyrr sveininn ef hann sæi hrossin⁶ á hjöllunum, kvað auðsæ vera munu fyrir litar sakir. Hann kvazk sjá hrossin ok svá sex menn fara í móti þeim. Bjǫrn kvað þá enn vísu:

Tveir eru<m>, vördr,⁷ en várum,
vápn-Eirar, vel fleiri;
opt <v>ar <s>kald und skildi
skól<kinn>i<s> at jólum;
enn hraustgøði á hausti,
hoddlestis, kom vestan,
sveit vara seggja lítil
snarfengs, með lið drengja.

Bjǫrn hafði kyrtill góðan ok var í hosum ok vafit silkiræmu um fót sér, þeiri er hann hafði skipt um við inn helga Óláf konung.⁸ Hann brá sverðinu er Þorfinnr Þvarason átti, ok mælti:
‘Illt sverð á hér góðr drengr,’ segir hann.

Kálfr sér þá brátt, þar sem hann var kominn, ok heldr eptir þeim ok mælti:
‘Eigi er minni ván,’ segir hann, ‘at skipti með oss gefunni; þeir þóttusk mik hafa í hættu settan,⁹ en ek hygg at ek veiða nú þann bjǫrn, er vør vildum allir veiða.’

48 Tveir 551. 52 hraustgoði 551. 54 leggja 551.
‘Skammt eigu þeir nú hingat, Björn,’ segir sveinninn, ‘því at þeir fara hart.’

Björn svarar, ‘Því auðveldara mun okkr at taka hrossin sem fleiri beina at.’

Sveinninn mælti, ‘Ekki munu þetta fríðarmenn vera; þeir eru allir með vápnunum. Ok enn sé ek fleiri menn, því at sumir fara eptir okkr ok enn vápnadír.’

‘Eigi skyldir þú of mikit um gera,’ segir Björn; ‘kann vera, at þat sé réttamenn.’

Sveinninn mælti, ‘Ek sé enn fleiri menn, ok fara frá Hólmi; ok er okkr þat eitt ráð at snúa til Hellisdals, ok þörum síðan Klifsdal ok forðum okkr.’

Björn mælti, ‘Ekki hefi ek enn eltr verit hér til, ok svá mun enn, ok mun ek eigi aprtr hverfa; þörum eptir Klifsandi til Klífsjörva, ok gjarnan vilda ek fara til Grársteins ins mikla, ef vit mættim þangat komask.’

‘Eigi má ek þat vita,’ segir sveinninn, ‘hvé okkr má þat endask, því at menn sökja at okkr öllum megin, ok sé ek þat gorla, at sex eru hvar saman, þótt sumir eigi lengra til okkar en sumir; ok sé ek nú alls eigi færi menn en fjóra ok tuttugu.’

Björn spyrr, ‘Hvern veg er þeim mónnum varit, er okkr eru næstir?’

Sveinninn segir, ok þóttisk Björn kenna Kálf at frásögn hans. Kálf var maðr mikill ok svætr, ok átti skammt til þeira á bak þeim, er Kolli ok synir Eiðs kómu fyrir þá. Dálkr ferr at frá Hólmi ok er sýnu first þeim ok þeir er honum fylgja. Þeim við sveinninn;

‘Far þú nú upp í hjallann eptir hrossunum, en ek mun hér bíða; ekki mun stoða at fara lengra.’

Nú settisk Björn niðr, en sveinninn ferr at taka hrossin ok vildi víkja ok mätti eigi, því at þá haði tekizk fundr þeira.

Þeir koma fyrst at Bírni, Kálfur við séttta mann, Kolli ok synir Eiðs með honum við sex menn. Þorvaldr Eiðsson skytr spjótí at Bírni þegar er hann náir til hans. Björn tók spjótí á lopti ok sendi aprtr til eiganda. Þat kom á Þorvald miðjan, ok fell hann dauðr til jarðar. Þeir hofðu komisk á milli hans ok Grársteins, svá at Björn komsk eigi þangat. Þórðr vildi hefna bröður síns ok hjó til Bjarnar mikit hógg; en Björn helt á skildinum svá at handleggur hans var í mundriðanum, ok kom hóggit á skjöldinn ok varð svá mikit, at handleggur Bjarnar gekt í sundr, ok fell skjöldrinn niðr. Pá þreif Björn sporð skjaldarins hinni hendinni 93 fyrirmenn 551.
ok rak í hofuð Þórdý, svá at hann fekk þegar bana; en sumir menn segja at hann legði hann með söxunum til bana.13 Kolli sótti Björn fast, nær í mesta lagi einna manna í sífellu, þótt vér kunnim eigi at greina hvert sárafar hann veitti honum. Kálfr mælti, kvað honum nú fyrrir allt eitt koma, þótt hann felldi nokkura menn, ok kvað hann skyldu nú eigi undan ganga.

‘Er oss nú eigi mannfátt,’ segir hann.

Sumir mæltu at slá skyldi hring um Björn ok varðveita hann, at hann komisk hvergi í brott, ok bíða Þórdar Kolbeinssonar at vega at honum til lykða. Ok meðan þeir ræddusk þetta við, þá leysti Björn manskæri af línda sér, ok váru þau nýhvott er hann fór heiman, bæði mikil ok bitrilg. Nú kom Dálkr til með sex menn ok vill þegar sökja at Birni, því at hann var hraustr karlmaðr, ok þóttisk hann varla á nólmsøk við Björn, er hann átti sonan síns at hefna. En Björn bregð sverðinu Þorfinns, er hann hafði heiman haft, ok høggr á fót Dálki svá hart at fótrinn brotnaði, en eigi beit, ok varð Dálkr óvígr ok fluttur á brott þangat sem honum var óhætt.

Ok því næst kom Þórdýr Kolbeinsson; ok er Björn sá hann, þá mælti hann:

‘Seinn til síls móts, líttill sveinn.’

‘Sá skal flér fló nú nær standa í dag,’ segir Þórdýr, ‘ok høggva þik klækishøgg.’

‘Pau ein muntu høggva,’ segir Björn, ‘meðan þú lífir.’

Þórdý varð mismælt, ok vildi hann sagt hafa at sá skyldi hann høggva klámhøggvi þann dag.15 Björn grípr nú skærin, því at hann veit at sverðit dugir ekki, ok hleypur at Þórdý ok ættlar at reka á honum skærin. Þórdýr veiksk undan, en fyrrir varð húskarl Þórdar er Grímr hét, ok fekk þegar bana. Ok í því bili hjó Kálfr til Bjarnar ok veitti honum mikít sár, ok fell Björn nú, svá at hann stóð á knjám ok varðisk með skærunum af mikilli hugprýði, því at hann var inn mesti fullhugi, sem opt høfðu raunir á orðit, ok veitti þeim morg sár er hann söttu. Þeir söttu hann nú svá fast, ok engi meir en Kolli.


‘Eigi veit ek hverjum í er at pyrma,’ segir hann.

‘Svá er ok,’ segir Björn, ‘móðir þín mun þetta fyrrir þik hafa lagt at þú skyldir mér harðasta atgöngu veita; en sjá þykjumk ek at annat mun þér betr gefit en ættvísin.’16

Kolli segir, ‘Eigi þykkir mér þú þat snimma sagt hafa, ef mér er nokkur vandi á við þik.’
Ok þegar gengr Kolli brott ok hættir atsókninni.

Björn varðisk mjökk lengi með skærnum, svá at hann stóð á knjáum, ok allir undruðusk þeir hví hann mátti slika vörn veita, næsta vápnlauss maðr, svá margir sem þeir sóttu hann, ok þóttusk þó allir hafa fullleiksa, er honum urðu næstir. Nú er þat sagt at Þóðr hjó til Bjarnar, ok beit af honum þjóhnappana, ok fellr Björn þá. Þóðr vill þá eigi láta høggva á milli ok høggr af Birni høfuð í ðru høggvi ok gengr á milli bols ok høfuðs, ok þá kvað Þóðr vísu:

Láskat, snarr at snerru,
(segg flann bitu eggjar,
hinn er fyrir heiði sunnan
hugprýði mér frýði)
at, morðvandar, myndak,
meiðs hlutum rán af beíði
(bitu þann fyrir sök sanna
sverð) hans bani verða.

Þóðr tók høfuð Bjarnar ok batt við álir sér; lét þar hanga við söðul sinn. Kálfr kvazk vilja at þeir kæmi í Hólm ok lýsti þar víginu, ok lézk vilja fóra þeim men, er Björn hafði haft á sér. Dálkr svarar ok kvað þat óskylt vera ok kappsamligt, kvað þat betr sóma at sýna sik í yfirbótum við frændr Bjarnar eptir þetta verk heldr en auka vansemð við þá. Þóðr lagði þar hvártki til. Kálfr reið þegar af vetfangi. Ok er þeir riðu í brott ok várú komnir ofan yfir Klífsand, þá flugu móti þeim hrafnar nokkurir, ok þá oríð Þóðr vísu þessa:

Hvert stefni þér, hrafnar,
hart með flokk enn svarta?
Farið ljóst matar leita
landnorðr frá Klífsandi.
Þar liggr Björn, en Birni
blöðgægl of skør stóðu;
þollr hné hjalms á hjalla
Hvítings ofar lítlu.

152 kviða 551. 153 ek morðvandan 551.
Notes

1 The trimming of horses’ manes has aristocratic and heroic resonances. Prymr, lord of the giants, is said to trim his horses’ manes and twist golden collars for his dogs as he sits on his ancestors’ burial mound (Prymskvida 6); it is also named as one of the activities (along with making shafts for their spears and driving horses) which the murdered young sons of the great king Atli have not lived to perform (Atlaakiða 37). The horses are a gift from Björn to the influential chieftain, Þorsteinn Kuggason, who had attempted to bring about a settlement between Björn and Þórir.

2 The verse includes a strange blend of pagan and Christian symbolism. The helmeted woman who invites the poet home — that is, to his death — suggests the valkyrie, one of the supernatural ‘shield-maidens’ whose function was to help Óðinn in his task of choosing warriors doomed to die. The chosen heroes would join the god in Valhöll and engage in perpetual warfare in preparation for the final battle against the predestined enemies of gods and men. But this apparition is explicitly associated with the ‘ruler of day’s fire’, clearly a kenning for the Christian God, though it has been argued that the kenning may refer to Óðinn, or to a deity blending pagan and Christian conceptions. There is a parallel in a number of verses in Gísla saga in which the poet describes two women, one benign and one hostile, who appear to him in dreams; in one of these the expression bjóða heim ‘invite home’ is used, as in Björn’s verse. It has been argued that the ‘good’ dream-woman is the poet’s fylgja or protective spirit.

3 Þorfinnr Þvarason, Björn’s cousin, is said earlier in the saga to have borrowed Björn’s famous sword, though no reason is given. Þorfinnr has little role in the saga other than to account for the hero’s weaponless state.

4 It is not uncommon for sagas to include a description of the hero shortly before his death, a passage described by Theodore M. Andersson as a ‘necrology’ (1967, 60–62), and generally used to present him in a positive light. It has been suggested that skalds were stereotypically portrayed as dark and ugly; Björn does not conform to this type, but shares his red hair and freckled colouring with another hero with
poetic leanings, Grettir. There are some indications that red hair or beard was associated with shrewdness and wit; Snorri goði in *Eyrbyggja saga* is also red-bearded, and *Rauðgrani* ‘Red-beard’ was one of Óðinn’s names. The purpose of the reference to Björn’s poor sight must be to motivate the dialogue between him and the boy who describes the approaching attackers (lines 44–85).

5 The man-kenning *menmyrðir* must refer to Björn himself, although it seems inappropriate that the verse stresses his ownership of the sword and shield he is carrying (Björn’s own weapons have, according to the prose narrative, been borrowed by his father, and he is carrying the inadequate sword of his cousin Þorfinnr Þvarason). This has been cited as one instance of the disparity between verse and prose in this part of the saga (Vogt 1921, 54, 65); it would be more accurate, in fact, to refer it to the multiplicity of traditions, in both verse and prose, about Björn’s last battle and the weapons he carried to it.

6 At this point the text preserved in the second of the two surviving medieval manuscript fragments breaks off; the remaining text comes from the seventeenth-century paper copy of this manuscript which is the major source for the saga.

7 Again it is inappropriate, though not unprecedented, for Björn to address the boy accompanying him with a full-blown warrior kenning (*vápn-Eirar vorðr*). The author seems determined to push the idea of an unequal encounter to its extremity. Björn is attacked by no fewer than twenty-four, and while the saga’s presumed source, the verse, emphasizes the vulnerability of the warrior stripped of all but one of his supporters, the prose pares this down to the point where Björn’s companion, though adequate as an audience for his last verse, is negligible as a combatant, and in fact leaves the scene before the fight begins. The ‘bold man’ who ‘brought a band from the west in autumn’ may be Björn’s powerful ally Þorsteinn Kuggason.

8 Chapter 9 of the saga relates how Björn accidentally exchanges garters with King (later Saint) Óláfr of Norway as they dress after a communal bath; Björn continues to wear the garter all his life and is buried with it after his death. When his bones are later disinterred the garter is found
uncorrupted — a testimony to the king’s sanctity — and is claimed to be still in existence at the time of the saga’s writing, used as a belt on a set of mass vestments. Another version of this story exists in some manuscripts of Snorri’s Saga of St Óláfr.

9 í hættu: ‘in danger [of missing him]’. This must be the sense of Kálfr’s remark. It is improbable that he should be the first attacker to catch up with Bjǫrn in view of the detailed account of Þórðr’s disposition of forces, which places Kálfr not on the way to Hvítingshjalli, but in the opposite direction, towards Vellir. The subsequent narrative, however, makes it clear that Kálfr is overtaking Bjǫrn from behind; the six men the boy sees in front of them must be the sons of Eiðr, Kolli and their companions. Kálfr’s pun on the meaning of the name Bjǫrn, ‘bear’, is taken up later as the attackers encircle their disarmed opponent (line 109).

10 Bjǫrn’s insistence that the attackers are men of peace is clearly a heroic pretence, since he has already drawn his sword.

11 The names appear in this order in the manuscripts, but have apparently been mistakenly reversed, as the route to Hellisdalr lies through Klifsdalr.

12 For the literary convention of characters identified from a distance by their clothing, see Laxdœla saga ch. 63; Andersson and Miller (1989), 141 n. 38, 172 n. 90. See note 4 above.

13 This reference to two conflicting versions of the narrative is the strongest indication of the existence of differing traditions, presumably oral, about Bjǫrn’s life before the writing of the saga. In his examination of the relationship between verse and prose in the saga, Vogt (1921) suggests that the author was attempting to reconcile the testimony of the verse Út geng ek med lið þítit, lines 34–41, which says that Bjǫrn is carrying a sword and shield, with that of a narrative in which he is unarmed except for the mane-shears (his weapons having been borrowed by his father).

14 Bjǫrn’s slighting epithet lítill sveinn is also used of Þórðr in verses earlier in the saga.
Bo Almqvist, analysing this and other slips of the tongue in saga literature, argues that in folk-belief a slip of the tongue was a portent of death, and speculates that ‘it is not impossible that the folk tradition upon which the saga was based ascribed the slip of the tongue to Björn’ (1991, 248 note 30). But Almqvist also acknowledges that in literary manifestations of the theme, the person whose tongue slips is frequently made to reveal an accidental truth, in this case the cowardly strain in Þórðr’s own character. Þórðr intends to threaten Björn with a klámhögg, a blow struck from behind on the thighs or buttocks, shaming both because it implies that the victim was turning to flee, and also, as Meulengracht Sørensen argues, as ‘a symbolic action with a sexual component, corresponding to that of nið; the mutilated man was deprived of his manhood’ (1983, 68). The law-code Grágás includes klámhögg among injuries categorised as in meiri sár, ‘major wounds’. By involuntarily substituting the word klækishögg, ‘coward’s blow’, similar in sound and structure but opposite in meaning, Þórðr turns the shame upon himself.

This dramatic revelation to Kolli of his relationship with Björn concludes the ‘paternity theme’ (Dronke 1981) running through the saga. Once again traditional heroic motifs are called upon; in the Old High German Hildebrandslied, father and son fight to the death.

This phrase might conceivably have something to do with the ancient ritual of passing between a severed head and trunk in order to prevent the dead person from returning.

The cutting off of an enemy’s head as a trophy is frequently mentioned in the sagas. Orkneyinga saga tells of Jarl Sigurðr of Orkney tying the head of his defeated enemy, Melbrikta ‘Tooth’, to his saddle ‘for his own glory’, but wounding his leg on Melbrikta’s protruding tooth and eventually dying of the wound. The custom is thought to be of Irish origin.
VI: FAGRSKINNA

Fagrskinna is a history of Norway written in the early thirteenth century in Norway, possibly by an Icelander. It covers in a more compressed form the same time-span as Snorri Sturluson’s Heimskringla, excluding the legendary Ynglinga saga: the period from the reign of the ninth-century Hálfdan svarti to 1177. Whether Snorri knew Fagrskinna is uncertain, but Fagrskinna and Heimskringla certainly share many features and at times the wording is identical, though the author of Fagrskinna falls short of Snorri’s sophistication and skill. The author’s taste for set-piece battles is well illustrated in the extract reproduced here; he gives full value to the account of this climactic scene found in his source, but dispenses with its hagiographic dwelling on the missionary efforts of Óláfr Tryggvason and does not aspire to the psychological and political depth of Snorri’s account of the manoeuvrings preceding the battle.

The name Fagrskinna, ‘beautiful parchment’, was applied in the seventeenth century to a now lost manuscript of the work, which was apparently known in medieval times as Nóregs konunga tal, ‘Catalogue of the kings of Norway’. Compared with the earlier prose Latin and vernacular histories which were its sources, the work is a well-constructed and serious attempt at historical objectivity, avoiding excesses of piety and fantastic elements, as witness the measured treatment in this extract of the legend of Óláfr Tryggvason’s survival of the Battle of Svólðr. The high proportion of verses, many of them unknown elsewhere, which are interwoven with the prose text and drawn on for authenticating detail, shows this author as a pioneer of the historiographical techniques perfected by Snorri.

The text survives in two versions, both now existing only in seventeenth-century and later copies of two medieval manuscripts. The older version (B, c.1250) is the basis of the text edited in Bjarni Einarsson’s edition in ÍF XXIX and is that followed in this extract. This version, however, has numerous gaps which are filled by reference to the later version (A, c.1300); the latter third of the extract below follows the A version because of a lacuna in B. Although the surviving copies are Icelandic, the survival of many Norwegian word-forms reflects the origin of the text in Norway (see below).
The place of *Fagrskinna* in early Norse historiography

Histories of Norway and other Scandinavian topics were among the first texts to be written in Iceland, and provide important evidence of the transition from Latin to vernacular composition and of the shifting of the literary focus from continental Scandinavia to Iceland. The interrelationship of the various texts is difficult to disentangle, since some are completely lost, and others are now found only in later copies and reworkings that have often incorporated material from supposedly later works. The following is a summary account of historians and texts relevant to *Fagrskinna*:

Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*. The author was an eleventh-century canon who wrote (c.1073), in Latin, on matters of concern to the Archbishop of Bremen. Book 4 includes material, valuable because of its early date but sometimes of dubious accuracy, about the pre-Christian practices of the Scandinavian peoples.

Sæmundr Sigfússon ‘inn fróði’ (the Wise), an Icelandic scholar (d. 1133), is referred to as an authority in many historical texts. His lost work probably took the form of a chronological summary of the lives of the Norwegian kings. It is presumed to have been in Latin, since Ari, whose work was composed later, is referred to by Snorri Sturluson as the first writer of history in the vernacular.

Ari fiorgilsson is best known for his surviving short vernacular history of Iceland, now known as *Íslendingabók*; but the manuscript gives the surviving book a Latin title, *Libellus Islendorum*, and refers to an earlier, now lost, version as *Íslendingabók*, which it seems to say included lives of kings and genealogies. Whether these were in Latin or the vernacular, and whether they were more than brief regnal lists, is not known. The first version was written between 1122 and 1133 (see the introduction to VIII below).

Theodoricus monachus, *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium* ‘The Ancient History of the Norwegian Kings’. This is an account in Latin, brief but with many digressions, of the Norwegian kings from Haraldr hárfagri to Sigurðr Jórsalafari (d. 1130). Theodoricus (Pórir) was probably a Benedictine monk at Niðarhólmr in Trondheimsfjord in Norway who wrote the work for presentation to Archbishop Eysteinn (1161–88) of Niðaróss (modern Trondheim). Theodoricus claims to be the first to write down the material he records, naming as sources the memories preserved by Icelanders and in particular their poems, though he may not have known these directly. He may also have had access to regnal lists and chronologies such as those attributed to Ari and Sæmundr.
**VI: Fagrskinna**

*Historia Norwegiae*. A Latin text found only in a fragmentary manuscript from 1500 or later, but originally written probably in Norway before 1200. After a geographical preface, it deals briefly with the history of Norway down to 1015, and probably concluded with an account of its conversion to Christianity.

*Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum*. A short history (*ágrip* ‘summary’) in Norse, surviving, though incompletely, in an Icelandic copy (c.1230) of a Norwegian manuscript. The text was probably written sometime before 1200, and probably originally covered the reigns from Hálfdan svartí to 1177, though it now breaks off in the middle of the twelfth century. It is believed that the author made use of Theodoricus and of *Historia Norwegiae*, but the relative dating of the three texts is difficult to establish; it also incorporates vernacular poetry.

Oddr Snorrason, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*. Oddr Snorrason was a monk at Píngeyrar in the north of Iceland who wrote a Latin life of Óláfr Tryggvason c.1190 (according to some c.1170). It now survives only in three different redactions (one fragmentary) of an Icelandic translation. Oddr made use of the early Latin histories as well as oral traditions, including skaldic verse. It is clear that Oddr’s work is the main source for *Fagrskinna*’s account of Óláfr, though the relationship is made problematic by the late date of the surviving translation, some versions of which may in turn have been influenced by *Fagrskinna* itself, as well as other later texts.

Gunnlaugr Leifsson, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*. Gunnlaugr, also a monk at Píngeyrar, wrote another Latin life of Óláfr Tryggvason which probably used and expanded Oddr’s version. It is now lost, but some passages survive translated into Icelandic in the form of interpolations in *The Greatest saga of Óláfr Tryggvason* (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*). This early fourteenth-century work is based on a version of the saga of Óláfr Tryggvason in *Heimskringla*, expanded with material relevant to the king’s life from a variety of texts.

*Morkinskinna*. In its present state this history, covering approximately the years 1035–1177, is found in an Icelandic manuscript from about 1275, of which about a third is apparently missing. This version is considered to be a reworking, including interpolations from *Ágrip* and additional skaldic stanzas, of an older text written c.1220, which may have lacked the many digressive anecdotes or *þættir* about Icelanders abroad; some argue, however, that these are integral to the work. The early *Morkinskinna* was an important source for the latter parts of *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*.

*Heimskringla*. Snorri Sturluson is generally accepted as the author. He is believed to have written it c.1230, reworking his own earlier *Óláfs saga helga* as the centrepiece. It covers the same chronological range as *Fagrskinna*, with the addition of the largely legendary *Ynglinga saga*, but on a more ambitious scale, with the biographies of individual kings presented as self-contained
VI: Fagrskinna

sagas. Snorri made wide use of existing prose sources although they are rarely overtly acknowledged; his account of the battle of Svolðr depends as heavily as Fagrskinna does on Oddr’s Öláfs saga Tryggvasonar, but is more economically narrated, and more fully supported by Snorri’s account of the events preceding it.

Snorri famously articulated the importance of skaldic verse as historical source material and cites it extensively, though there is proportionately more in Fagrskinna. Scholars disagree as to whether Snorri knew Fagrskinna; it may not have been known in Iceland before the composition of Heimskringla, though Snorri could have encountered it during his first visit to Norway. There are many similarities of structure and wording, but these can often be attributed to common sources, such as Oddr’s Öláfs saga. It has been suggested that Snorri came to know Fagrskinna only at a late stage in the composition of Heimskringla.

The Battle of Svolðr

This extract (chapter 24 of the ÍF edition) tells of the defeat and death at Svolðr of King Óláfr Tryggvason in 999/1000, at the end of a five-year reign. He was celebrated as the bringer of Christianity to northern lands, as Fagrskinna relates: ‘He was the first of the kings of Norway to hold the true faith in God, and from his direction and power all the kingdom of Norway became Christian, and the Orkneys, Faroes, Shetland, Iceland and Greenland.’ This is an overstatement, since it was only the coastal areas of Norway that were touched by Óláfr’s proselytising; it was left to his more celebrated namesake, King Óláfr Haraldsson (the Saint) to complete the conversion. Hagiographic legends concerning both kings began to spring up almost immediately after their deaths, and there is considerable transference of material from one body of legend to another: for instance, the famous tale of the breaking of Einarr Þambarskelfir’s bow at Svolðr, found in Heimskringla but not in Fagrskinna, is told of Óláfr Haraldsson at the Battle of Nesjar in the early thirteenth-century Legendary Saga of St Óláfr.

Fagrskinna’s main source for the life of Óláfr was the hagiographic account by the Icelandic monk Oddr Snorrason, but Fagrskinna minimises the hagiographic element and heavily compresses the narration of the king’s life, though the account of the battle, with its colourful heroic and rhetorical devices, is more expansive. We know of the events leading up to the battle from a variety of contradictory sources and traditions, most of which the author of Fagrskinna ignores.
The language of *Fagrskinna*

Although the text exists in late Icelandic copies, its Norwegian provenance is clear from the prevalence of Norwegian spellings. These are found in both versions, though the distribution is somewhat different in the two. At the time of the settlement of Iceland, the language was that taken there by settlers mostly from the western districts of Norway; by the thirteenth century, significant dialectal divergences can be detected in manuscripts. The following are the most conspicuous Norwegian features, and are retained where they occur in the extract edited here:

- æy for ey. Where Icelandic ey is produced by *i*-mutation of *au*, the corresponding Norwegian form is æy or øy (*læypizk*, Icel. *hleypizk*; *læyniliga*, Icel. *leyniliga*).
- a for ø. The vowel produced by *u*-mutation of a, rendered in Old Icelandic by ø, often does not occur in Norwegian where the u is, or would normally be, retained; in this text the u is often lost (*faðr*, Icel. *fður*; *annt*, Icel. *ñnnur*). The absence of mutation (i.e. the spelling with a) is more consistent in the B version (compare frásögur, line 320, from A, with faðr, line 42, and hafud, line 76, from B).
- l, r, n for hl, hr, hn. The voiceless initial consonant groups hl, hr, hn, were voiced to l, r, n in Norwegian (*ló*, Icel. *hló*; *ræddr*, Icel. *hræddr*). In one of the verses attributed to Hallfreðr hnekkir is required for alliteration with *hertryggdr* and *hyggja*, so the h is added here to the manuscript form *nekkir* (line 178).
- ú for ó. The negative prefix, more commonly ó- in Icelandic, was more commonly ú- in Norwegian; see here úkristni alongside ókristni.
- sunr for son(r). The Icelandic form -son is probably a reduction, because of its frequent unstressed use in nominal compounds, of the form represented in Norwegian as sunr.
- hánum for honum. The Icelandic form honum derives from mutation of á to ó under the influence of a nasal consonant and following back vowel; the vowel was then reduced to o because it was frequently unstressed.
- meðr and viðr for med and við. These forms are more prevalent in the A version (the latter part of this extract).

Other Norwegianisms (frequent occurrence of æ for e, vowel harmony in unaccented syllables, y for i, gh for g) are also found in this text but are not represented in this extract.

Where the text is extant in both versions, the earlier (B) version has been followed, but some emendations have been adopted from the A version without annotation.
Bibliography


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Chapter 24: The Death of Óláfr Tryggvason

Sveinn Danakonungr þóttisk missa mikilla eigna þeira er vera skyldu í tilgjöf Gunnhildar konu hans, því at Þyri hafði eignir þær er Haraldr konungr, faðir hennar, hafði gefit henni. En Búrizleifr þóttisk þá mjók svikinn, þó at hann hefði tilgjöf þá er Þyri skyldi hafa, því at konan kom eigi til hans.1 Af atkalli Gunnhildar ok áeggjun sendi Sveinn konungr menn eptir Þyri ok lét fylgja henni nauðgri á Vinþland til fundar Búrizleifs konungs, ok gerði hann brullaup til hennar. En hon vildi eiga heіðinn mann þá heldr en fyrr, ok var hon svá nætr sjau með konunginum at hon þá at þeim hvárki mat né drykk, ok með ráðum fôstrföðr síns gat hon löypizk á braut á skóg einn ok svá til þess er hon kom til sjóvar, ok fengu þau þar eitt lítt skip ok þróu til Danmarkar. En hon þorði þar eigi at leggja, því at hon uggði at Sveinn konungr, bróðir hennar, mynd þegar láta fylgja henni til Vinþlands aprtr, ef hann vissi at hon væri þar komin. Hon fór þá löyniliga til Nóregs á fund Ólafþ konungs ok bað hann leggja til hjálpræði með sér. Hann tók við henni ok gerði sér at eignin konu án ráði Sveins konungs, bróður hennar.

Hon bað Ólaf konung opt at hann skyldi heimta fé hennar at Búrizleifi konungi á Vinþlandi, ok kallaðisk hafa lítt af því er hon áttí með réttu at hafa. Þá gerði konungr ferð sína ór landi, bauð út líði miklu ok hafði sex tigu skipa, fór austr til Vinþlands í gegnum Danakonungs ríki þyr útan hans þókk ok vilja. Óláfr konungr fær mikit fé, og allt eignaðisk hann þat er hann vildi, ok olli því mest líðveizla Ástríðar, döttur Búrizleifs konungs, er átti Sigvaldi jarl at Jómi.24

Þá er Óláfr konungr för af Vinþlandi, sigldi hann yfir til Danmarkar lítinn byr ok fагrt veðr, ok þróu þau skip þyrir er smæri váru, en þau sígðar er stærri váru, fyrir því at þau þurftu meira veðrit en þau er smæri váru. Við einn hólma þyrir Vinþlandi váru saman komnir margir stórir hoððingjar. Þessi hólmi heitir Svöldr.2 Í þessum flota var Sveinn Danakonungr, er miklar sakar þóttisk eiga við Óláfr konung. Sú var ein at Óláfr áttí Þyri, systur hans, ok fengi hennar at ólœyfi hans. Annr sök var at hann sagði at Óláfr hafði sezk í skattlönd hans, Nóregs ríki, er Haraldr konungr, faðir hans, hafði lagt undir sík.3 Sigvaldi jarl var þar með Danakonungi fyrir þá sök at hann var Danakonungs jarl. Í þessum flota var ok mikill hoððingi, Óláfr svænski Svíakonungr, er
hefna þóttisk eiga á Óláfi konungi mikillar svívírðingar. Hann hafði slitit festarmálum ok lostit með glófa sínum Sigríði, móður Óláfs konungs, dóttur Skóglar-Tósta.4 Þá samu Sigríði átti þá Sveinn Danakonungr, ok var hon mjók fýsandi at Sveinn Danakonungr gerði Óláfi konungi mein eða svívírðing. Ok í þessu liði var Eiríkr jarl Hákonarsunr, er mestar sakar þóttisk eiga við Óláf konung ok hans menn, er verit hafðu nær drápi faðr hans, Hákonar, ok flæmt ör landi alla sunu hans ok sezk í ríkit eptir.

Ástríðr hafði fengi Óláfi konungi ellifu skip, ok skyldi þetta lið fylgja konuninum til þess er hann kömi um Danmork. En þat var mest til at þau Búrizleifr ok Ástríðr töku svá vel við Óláfi konungi, at Geila hafði verit döttir Búrizleifs konungs ok systir Ástríðar, er Óláfr konungr hafði átta þá er hann var á Vinðlandi.5 Óláfr Tryggvasunr hafði alls eitt skip ok sjau tigu skipa, sem segir Halldórr ókristni:6

Œyna fór ok einu,
unnviggs, konungr sunnan,
sverð rauð meðr at morði
meiðr, sjau tigu skeiða,
þá er húlnagar hreîna
hafði jarl7 um krafða,
sætt gekk seggja áttar
sundr, Skánunga fundar.

Þessir hofðingjar hafðu úvígjan her ok lágu í höfn einni innan at hólmanum, en skip Óláfs konungs sigldu hit ýtra fyrir, þá er hofþing-jarnir váru uppi á hólmanum ok sá til er flótinn siglði austan. Þeir sá at þau skip siglðu fyrir. Nú sjá þeir eitt mikit skip ok mjók glæsiligt.

Pá mælti Sveinn konungr, ‘Farum til skipa sem tíðast, þar siglir nú Ormr enn langi austan.’8

Pá svaraði Eiríkr jarl, ‘Bíðum enn, fleiri hafa þeir stór skip en Orm enn langa.’

Ok svá var. Þetta skip átti Styrkárr af Gimsum. Pá sá þeir enn annat skip mikit ok vel búit, hofþaskip.
Pá mælti Sveinn konungr, ‘Nú man hér fara Ormr enn langi, ok verðum eigi of seinir í móti þeim.’

54 hanum MS. 55 skráðan, krafðan MSS. 56 ættar MS.
Pá svaraði Eiríkr jarl, ‘Eigi man þetta vera enn Ormr enn langi; fá hafa enn farit stór skip þeira, en morg munu til vera.’

Svá var þat sem jarlenn sagði. Ñökkur skip fóru þá um áðr en skip sigldi með stafaðu segli. Þat var skeið ok miklu meira en annr skip þau er siglt hafðu. Þá er Sveinn konungur sá at þetta skip hafði engi hafði, stóð hann upp, mælti ok ló við:

‘Ræddr er Óláfr Tryggvasunr nú, eigi þórir hann at sigla með hofðum dreka síns; farum nú ok leggjum at sem harðast.’

Pá svaraði Eiríkr jarl, ‘Eigi er þetta, herra, Óláfr konungur. Kenni ek þetta skip, opt hefi ek þat sét, þat á Erlingr Skjálgrssonr,9 ok er betr at vör leggim um skut hánan til þessar orrostu.10 Þeir drengir eru þar innan bórðs at vör megum víst vita ef vör hittum Óláf Tryggvasun. Betra er oss skarði í flota hans en skeið þessi svá búin.’

Pá mælti Óláfr Svíakonungur, ‘Eigi skyldum vér æðrask at leggja til bardaga við Óláf, þó at hann hafi skip mikit. Er þat skómm ok neisa, ok man þat spyrjask á òll lón, ef vör liggjum hér með óvígjan her, en hann siglir þjóðsleði fyrir útan.’

Pá svaraði Eiríkr jarl, ‘Herra, lát sigla þetta skip; ek man segja þér gód tíðendi, at eigi man Óláfr Tryggvasunr um oss hafa siglt, ok þenna dag munum vör kost eiga at berjask við hann. Nú eru hér margir hofðingjar ok væntir mek fleirar ríðar at allir vör skulum hafa ðerit at vinna fyrir en vör skiljumsk.’

Pá mæltu þeir enn, er fram kom eitt mikit skip, ‘Þetta man vera Ormr enn langi, ok eigi vill Eiríkr jarl,’ sagðu Danir, ‘berjask ok hefna faðr síns, ef hann vill eigi nú.’

Jarlenn svaraði reiðr mjökk, ok lét vera eigi minni ván at Danum myndi eigi vera ðleiðari at berjask en hánan eða hans mannun. Þá var eigi langt at þíða þess er þrjú skip sigla ok eitt miklu mest, ok hafði drekahafði gyllt.

Pá mæltu allir at jarlenn hafði satt sagt, ‘ok hér ferr nú Ormr enn langi.’

Eiríkr jarl svaraði, ‘Eigi er þetta Ormr enn langi,’ ok bað þá þó til leggja ef þeir vildi. Pá tók Sigvaldi jarl skeið sína ok rei út til skipanna, lét skjóta upp skildi hvítum.11 Þeir laða seglum ok þíða. Þetta et mikla skip er Tranan, er styrði Þorkell nefja, konungs frændi.12 Þeir spyrja Sigvalda hver eru tíðendi.

Hann sagði þeim þau tíðendi af Sveini Danakonungi, ‘þau er Óláfi Tryggvasyni er skylt at vita, ok þarf hann þess, at hann varisk.’

Pá létu þeir Þorkell fljóta skipen ok þíða. Því næst sá þeir Sveinn
konungr sigla fjögur skip ok eitt miklu mest ok á drekahafuð, þau er gull eitt várú á at sjá. Pá mæltu allir senn:
‘Furðu mikit skip er Ormr enn langi. Ekki langskip man jafnfrítt í veröldu vera, ok mikil rausn er at láta gera slíkan grip.’
Pá mælti Eiríkr jarl svá at fárir menn hæyrðu, ‘Þó at Óláfr Tryggvasunr hefði ekki meira skip en þat er nú má sjá, þá man Sveinn konungr við Danaher einn aldrigi þessu skipi stýra.’
Sveinn Danakonungr og Óláfr Svíakonungr hafðu gört

VI: Fagrskinna

Mankat ek nefna
— nær man ek stefna:
níðrbjúgt er nef
á níðingi —
þann er Svein konung
sveik ór landi,
en Tryggva sun
á tálar dró.

Sveinn Danakonungr ok Óláfr Svíakonungr ok Eiríkr jarl hafðu gört
VI: Fagrskinna

þat ráð á milli sín, ef þeir fældi Óláfr Tryggvasun, at sá þeira er þessu væri næstr skyldi eignask skip hans ok allt lutskipti þat sem fengisk í orrostu, en veldi Nóregskonungs skyldi hafa at þríðjungi hverr við annan.

Þá sá Óláfr konungr ok menn hans at þeir váru svíknir, ok at sjórr allr var þakðr í nánd þeim af herskipum, en Óláfr konungr hafði lýtit lið, sem segir Hallfröðr, er lið hafði siglt í fra hánnum:15

Þar hygg ek mjök til misstu — morg kom drótt á flótta —
gram þann er gunni framði,
gengis Þrænzkra drengja.
Nefr vá einn við þjótra
allvaldr tvá snjalla
— frægr er til slíks at segja
siðr — ok jarl enn þríðja.

Þá lagði í sinn stað hverr þeira þriggja høfdingja, Sveinn Danakonungr með sitt lið, Óláfr Svákonungr með Svíaher; þríðja stað bjó Eiríkr jarl sitt lið.

Þá mælti við Óláfr konung einn vitr maðr, Þorkell dyrðill:
‘Hér er ofrefli liðs, herra, við at berjask. Dragum upp segl vár ok siglum út á haf eptir liði váru. Er þat engum manni blæyði at hann ætli hóf fyrir sér.’

Þá svaraði Óláfr konungr hátt, ‘Leggi saman skipen ok tengið, herklæðisk menn ok bregðið sverðum. Ekki skulu mínir menn á flótta hyggja.’

Þetta orð váuttaði Hallfröðr á þá lund:

Geta skal máls þess, er mæla 
menn at vápna sennu 
dolga fangs við drengi 
dáðoflgan bör kváðu.
Baðat hertryggðar hyggja 
·h·nekkir sínar rekka
— þess lifa þjóðar sessa 
þróttar orð — á flótta.

160 frægð, frægt MSS.   161 þíðr, suðr MSS.   176 býr MS.
Pá spurði Óláfr Tryggvasunr menn sína, ‘Hverr er hofðingi fyrir þessu liði, er hér liggr næst oss?’

Þeir svaraðu, ‘Þat hyggjum véré at Sveinn Danakonungr sé.’

Pá mælti Óláfr konungr, ‘Eigi skulum vér öttask þat liði, því at aldrigi báru Danir sigr í orrostu, þá er þeir bardusk á skipum við Norðmenn.’

Enn spurði Óláfr konungr, ‘Hverir liggja þar út í frá ok hafa morg skip?’

Hánun var sagt at þar var Óláfr Sviákonungr. Óláfr konungr segir: ‘Ekki þurfum vér at öttask Svíía, rossæturnar. Þeim man vera blíðara at sleikja blótolla sína en ganga upp á Orm enn langa undir vápn ýðr.’

Pá spurði enn Óláfr Tryggvasunr, ‘Hverir eigu þau skip en stóru, er þar liggja út í frá flotanum?’

Hánun var sagt at þat var Eiríkr jarl Hákonarsunr með Járnbarðann, er allra skipa var mest. Þá mælti Óláfr konungr:

‘Mjók hafa þeir tíghum mannum í þenna her skipat í móti oss, ok af þessu liði er oss ván harðrar orrostu. Þeir eru Norðmenn sem vér ok hafa opt sét blóðug sverð ok margt vápnaskipti, ok munu þeir þykjkjask eiga við oss skaplignan fund, ok svá er.’

Þessir fjórir hofðingjar, tveir konungar ok tveir jarlar, leggja til orrostu við Óláf Tryggvasun, ok er Sigvalda lítt við orrostuna getit. En þó segir Skúli Þorsteinssunr í sínnum flokki at Sigvaldi var þar.

Fyglða ek Frísa dolgi, fekk ungr þar er spjór sungu
— nú finnr öld at eldumk —

aldrbót, ok Sigvalda,
þá er til móts við mæti
malmþings í dyn hjalma
sunnr fyrir Svölðrar mynn

sárlauk roðinn bárnum.

Þessi orrosta varð harðla snórð ok mannskæð. Fellu Danir mest, því at þeir váru næstir Norðmunn. Þeir heldusk eigi við ok leggja í frá ór skotmáli, ok för þessi herr, sem Óláfr Tryggvasunr sagði, meðr alls engan orðstír, en eigi at síðr var horgð orrosta ok þóng; fell af hvárum-tveggja mikit lið ok mest af Svium, ok þar kom at Óláfr svænski sá þat at bezta ráði fyrir sér ok sínu liði at vera sem fjarfok at léð siga á þumlur aptr undan, en Eiríkr jarl lág viðr síbyðt. Óláfr konungr Tryggvasun

207 munni, myðe MSS.
hafði lagt Orm enn langa í millum Orms ins skamma ok Trönnunnar, 216
en hin smæstu skipin ýzt. En Eiríkr jarl lét frá höggva hvert sem roðit
var, en lagði at þeim er eptir váru.

Nú er smæri skip Óláfs konungs ruðusk, stukku mennirnir undan
ok gengu upp á hin sterri skipin. Varð í því mikit mannspjall í hvárntveggja flokkenn. En svá sem liðit fell af skipum Eiríks jarls, þá kom
annat eigi minna í staðenn af Svíum ok Danum, en ekki kom í staðenn
þess liðs er fell af Óláfi konungi. Ruðusk þá skip hans úl þann nema
Ormr enn langi eigi, fyrir því at hann var borði hæstr ok bæzt skipaðr,
en meðan liðit var til, þá hafði þangat á gengit, ok hafði hann haldit
sinni fullri skipan at manntali, þó at sumir léttisk fyrir hánum. En þá er
roðinn var Ormr enn skammi ok Tranan, þá lét Eiríkr þau í frá höggva,
en síðan lagðisk Járnbardinn síbyrðr viðr Orm enn langa, sem segir
Halldórr úkristniv:22

Fjørð kom heldr í harða,
hnutu røy omar dreyra,
tungl skørusk þá tingla
tangar, Ormr enn langi,
þá er borðmikinn Barða
brynflagðs reginn lagði
— jarl vann hjalms und holmi
hríð — við Fáfnis síðu.23

Gerðsk snapr sverða,
slitu drengir fríð lengi,
þá er gullin spjör gullu,
gangr um Orm enn langa.
Dolgs kváðu fram fylgja
fráns leggbita hánum
svænska menn at sennu
sunnr ok danska runna.

Hykkat ek vægð at vígi
— vann drótt jofur sóttan,
fjørð kom skjarl at jórðu —
ógnharnðan sik spórðu,

234 borðmikill MS. 245 í MS.
þá er fjærðmýils færðuð
folkharðr á tróð Barða
— lítt var Sifjar sóti
svangr — viðr Orm enn langa.

Pessi orrosta var svá hörð, fyrrst af sókn drengiligri ok þó mest af
vörnenni, er alla vega lögðu skip at Ormenum, en þeir er vörduskr
gengu svá í mótt at þeir stigur niðr af börðunum ok í sjóinn ok sukkur
niðr með vápnum sínnum ok gættu eigi annars en þeir berðisk á landi
ok vildu æ fram.24 Svá kvað Hallfróðr:25

Sukku niðr af Naðri,
naddfárs í boð sárir,
baugs, gerðut við vægjask,
verkendr Heðins serkjar.
Vanr man Ormr, þótt Ormi
alldýr konungr stýri,
þar er hann skráðr meðr lið lýða,
lengr slíkra drengja.

Pá fellu menninir fyrrst um mitt skipit, þar sem börðen váru lægst, en
fram um stafnenn ok aprtr í fyrirrúminu helduskr menninir lengst viðr.
Pá er Eiríkr jarl sá at Ormrinn var auðr miðskipa, þá gekk hann upp
meðr fimmtanda mann, ok er þat sá Úlfr enn rauði ok aðrir stafnbúar,
þá gengu þeir ör stafninum framan ok svá hart at þar er jarlenn var at
jarlenn varð undan at røkkva ok aprtr á skip sitt, ok þá er hann kom á
Barðann, þá eggjaði jarlenn sína menn at sætti at vel, ok gengu þá upp
í annat sinn meðr miklu liði. Var þá Úlfr ok allir stafnbúarnir komnir
at lytingunni, en roðit var allt skipit fram. Sótti þá lið Eiríks jarls
allumveginn at þeim Óláfi konungi, svá sem Halldórr úkrístnir segir:26

Hét á heiptar nýta
hugreifr — með Óleifi

aprtr stökk þjóð um þoptur —
þengill sínas drengi,
Þá er hafvita hófðu
hallands um gram snjallan
— varð um Vínða myrði
vápnreið — lokit skeiðum.

Þá sótti Eiríkr jarl aprtr at fyrrirrúminu meðr sína menn ok var þar hörð viðtaka. Óláfr konungr hafði verit þann dag allan í lyptingunni á Orminum. Hann hafði gylltan skjöld ok hjálm, þunga ringabrynju ok svá trauta at ekki festi á henni, ok er þó svá sagt at ekki skorti vápnaburðenn at lyptingunni, fyrir því at allir menn kenndu konungenn, af því at vápn hans váru auðkennd ok hann stóð hátt í lyting. En í hjá konunenum stóð Kolbjörn stallari meðr þvílíkan vápnabúnað sem konungrenn hafði. Nú fór þessi orrosta sem líkligt var, þar sem hvártveggja hófðu raustir á hizk, at þeir léttusk þó er fámennari váru, ok þá er allt var fallit liði Óláfs konungs, þá ljóp hann sjálfr fyrir borð, ok brá skildinum upp yfir hafuð sér ok svá Kolbjörn stallari, en hans skjöldur varð undir honum á sjónum, ok kom hann sér eigi í kafit, ok þeir menn er váru á smám skipum tóku hann ok hugðu at konungrinn væri sjálfr. Hann fekk þó grið af jarlenum. En eptir þat, þá ljópu allir fyrir borð, þeir er eptir lífðu ok þó flestir sárir, ok þeir er griðin fengu váru af sundi teknir. Þat var Þorkell nefja, Karlshauð ok Þorsteinn ok Einarr þambarskelfir.27

En eptir þat er orrostunni var lokit, þá eignaðisk Eiríkr jarl Orm enn langa ok önnr skip Óláfs ok margs manns vápn, þeira er drengiliga hafðu borit til dauðadags. Þat hefri Hallfrœðr vattat, at Þorkell nefja flýði svá at þll váru skip Óláfs konungs roðin:28

Ógrœðir sá auða
armgrjótís Tranu fljóta
— hann rauð geir at gunni
gláðr — ok báða Naðra,
áðr en hjaldrporinn heldi,
hugfram í böð ramri,
snotr á snéricvitni
sunds Þórketill29 undan.

Þessi orrosta hefur frægust verit á Norðrlandum, af því at sagt er um 311 æ MS.
vørn drengiliga, þar næst af atsókn ok sigrenum, er þat skip varð unnit á djúpum sæ er engi maðr ætladí vápnum sótt verða, en þó mest fyrir sakar þess er þvílíkr hofðingi fell er þá var frægastr á danska tungu. Svá mikit gerðu menn sér um at vingask í allri umrœðu við Óláf konung at mestr lutr manna vildi eigi hæyra at hann myndi fallit hafa, nema létu at hann var í Vinðlandi eða í Suðríki, ok eru margar frásögur um þat görrvar. En hans ástinir ræddusk at þat myndi logit vera, ok lýsti Hallfrøðr því vandráðaskáld, sá maðr er svá mikit hafði unnt konungenum at menn segja at eptir fall konungsins fekk hann vanheilsu af harmi, þá er hánnum vannsk til dauðadags.30 Þetta vitni bar Hallfrøðr:31

Veit ek eigi hitt, hvár-þ Heĩta 
hungdréyfi skal ek løyfa 
dynsæðinga dauðan 
dýrblíks eða þó kvikvan, 
alls sannliga segja 
— sárr mun gramr at hváru, 
hætt er til hans at frétta — 
hvártveggja mér seggir.

Samr var árr um ævi 
oddflagð-s hinn er þat sagði, 
at lofða gramr lifði, 
laestyggs burar Tryggva. 
Vera kveðr ǫld ór éli 
Óláf kominn stála; 
menn geta máli sönnum — 
mjök er verr en svá — ferri.

Ok enn kvað hann þetta:

Mundut þess, er þegnar 
þróðtharðan gram sóttu, 
— fer ek meðr lýða líði 
landherður — skôp verða,

325 hætta MS. 344 lifi MS, líði Heimskringla.
at mundjökuls myndi
margdýrr koma stýrir
— geta þykkjat mér gotnar
glíkliðs — ór her slíkum.

Ok enn kvað hann:

Enn segir auðar kenni
austr ór malma gnaustan
seggr frá sárum tyggja
sumr eða brott of komnum.
Nú er sannfregit sunnan
siklings ór styr miklum,
kann ek eigi margt at manna,
morð, veifanar ortí.

Ok enn sagði hann:32

Norðmanna hygg ek nenninn
— nú er þengill fram genginn,
dýrr hné dróttar stjóri —
dróttin und lok sóttan;
grams dauði brá göði
góðs úfárar þjóðar.
Allr glepsk fóðið af falli
flug∂styggs sunar Tryggva.

351 kennir MS.
Notes

1 Fagrskinna, ch. 19, outlines the abortive betrothal of Þyri, arranged by Jarl Sigvaldi of Jómsborg as part of a peace settlement between King Sveinn of Denmark and Búrizleifr, King of the Wends:

Next Sigvaldi sent word to his father-in-law, King Búrizleifr, and said that King Sveinn had come to Jómsborg, and that he himself was willing to arbitrate between them or else allow King Sveinn to go back to Denmark. In turn, he persuaded King Sveinn to make peace with King Búrizleifr according to the settlement that Sigvaldi decided between them. If he was not willing to do that, then he would come into the presence and power of King Búrizleifr. They came to terms in this way, that each of the kings agreed to Jarl Sigvaldi’s judgement, and when they had settled this by a binding agreement between them, the jarl pronounced the terms of their settlement, saying first that King Sveinn should marry Gunnhildr, daughter of King Búrizleifr, and her dowry should be that part of Wendland which the Danes had conquered in the realm of the king of the Wends. On the other hand, King Búrizleifr was to marry Þyri, daughter of King Haraldr and sister of King Sveinn. She had previously been married to Styrbjorn, son of King Óláfr of the Swedes; her father, King Haraldr, was still alive then. He had given her extensive estates on Fyn and south in Falster and Bornholm. Jarl Sigvaldi made a division in this way: Búrizleifr was to keep that part of Wendland which had previously been apportioned to the estates of Gunnhildr, Búrizleifr’s daughter, whom King Sveinn was to marry, and King Haraldr’s daughter Þyri was now to have that; and Gunnhildr Búrizleifsdóttir was now to possess all those estates in Denmark which Þyri had owned, and receive all her bridal gift in Denmark, and Þyri all her bridal gift in Wendland, except that the jarl reserved from the division Jómsborg and all the districts that he specified. Then King Búrizleifr and Jarl Sigvaldi prepared a great feast in Jómsborg, and at that feast the wedding of King Sveinn and the betrothal of King Búrizleifr were celebrated.

After that, King Sveinn went home to his kingdom with his wife Gunnhildr. They later had two sons, the elder called Knútr ríki (the Great), the younger Haraldr.

When King Sveinn came back from Wendland, he sent word to his sister Þyri, and told her everything he had agreed in Wendland with King Búrizleifr. Þyri was not pleased at this news, for she was Christian, and said that she would rather die among Christians than come into the power of a heathen king and violate her Christianity. She stayed on her estates and looked after her property for some years after that.

2 The site of the battle is uncertain. Fagrskinna and Heimskringla agree
in locating it by an unidentified island, Svølør, in the southern Baltic, while Ágríp and Adam of Bremen say that it took place in Øresund, between Sjælland and Skåne.

3 Sveinn’s father, Haraldr Gormsson, had seized power in Norway in alliance with Jarl Hákon, after the death in battle of King Haraldr gráfeldr (976). Óláfr Tryggvason established himself as king on the death of Jarl Hákon (995).

4 Heimskringla (Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar, ch. 61) relates Óláfr Tryggvason’s breach of his betrothal to the pagan Sigríðr (mother of King Óláfr of Sweden), on her refusal to accept Christianity, calling her hundheiðin ‘absolutely heathen, ?heathen as a dog’ and slapping her face with his glove. The words med glófa sínum occur only in the A version of Fagrskinna.

5 Óláfr’s marriage to Geila during his early Viking adventures is mentioned only briefly in Fagrskinna, but Heimskringla, in which she is called Geira, gives a probably fictitious account of the marriage and of Geira’s death three years later.

6 This verse is also cited in Heimskringla and Oddr Snorrason’s saga of Óláfr. Nothing is known of the poet Halldórr ókristni other than the verses cited in the Kings’ Sagas, four of them in Fagrskinna; some or all of these belong to a poem in honour of Jarl Eiríkr, to which Snorri refers. This verse supports the timing of the battle during Óláfr’s return from Wendland (sunnan), rather than on his way south as Adam and Ágríp assert, and is the source for the statement in the prose that Óláfr commanded 71 ships. This is contradicted in other sources; Historia Norwegiae assigns the 71 ships to Óláfr’s opponents, and according to Theodoricus, ‘it is said that with only eleven ships he engaged in battle against seventy’. Fagrskinna is vague about the size of the úvígr herr opposing Óláfr, although he is still overwhelmed by force of numbers, presumably because the actual battle involves only the small number of Óláfr’s ships lured into Sigvaldi’s trap.

7 It is unclear whether this jarl is Eiríkr Hákonarson — referred to elsewhere in Halldórr’s verses, as here, as jarl without further qualification — or the treacherous Sigvaldi. The verse is also cited in Heimskringla (ÍF XXVI, 352), where Snorri explicitly uses it as a source.
for his account of Sigvaldi’s apparent support for Óláfr: ‘This verse says that King Óláfr and Jarl Sigvaldi had 71 ships when they sailed from the south.’ See note 14 below.

8 Fagrskinna (ch. 23) recounts the building of Ormr inn langi, Óláfr’s famous ‘Long Serpent’:

King Óláfr had a ship built at Hlaðahamrar. It was much larger and more splendidly built than other longships. It had thirty-four rowing-benches. On it were placed dragon-heads decorated with gold, and that ship was called Ormr inn langi (the Long Serpent). On this ship there was to be no man younger than twenty and none older than sixty. Many things were forbidden to the men who were to be on the Ormr, and none was to be on it unless he was an impressive man in some way, and many examples show that on that ship were only heroes, and no cowards or weaklings.

9 Erlingr Skjálgsson was Óláfr Tryggvason’s brother-in-law.

10 leggim um skut hánun til þessar orrostu: go into this battle round his stern, that is, after he has sailed on, avoiding a confrontation with him.

11 lét skjóta upp skildi hvítum: showing a white shield was a token of peaceful intentions.

12 Þorkell nefja was Óláfr Tryggvason’s half-brother, according to Heimskringla (Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar, ch. 52).

13 The long, tension-building scene in which the leaders wrongly identify one ship after another as the Long Serpent is an obvious literary device, and has been traced to the ninth-century De Gestiis Karoli Magni by the Monk of St Gall, where it occurs in an account of the approach of Charlemagne’s army against the Langobards. Its treatment in Fagrskinna is somewhat confused and repetitive. In the more succinct version of Heimskringa, there are four rather than six false alarms; the sightings help to identify two of the leaders serving with the king, as well as his two lesser named ships, the Trana ‘Crane’ and Ormr inn skammi ‘the Short Serpent’, both of which were introduced earlier in the narrative of Óláfr’s reign. Fagrskinna mentions both these ships here for the first time, and is undecided whether Þorkell nefja commands the Trana or Ormr inn skammi. According to Heimskringla, Ormr inn skammi was commanded by Þorkell nefja, the Trana by Þorkell dyrðill, the king’s uncle (mentioned in Fagrskinna simply as ‘a wise man’).
This fornyðislag verse, attributed to the poet Stefnir Þorgilsson, is also found in Oddr Snorrason’s saga, which also quotes a Latin version of it said to have been composed by Oddr. Heimskringla does not cite the verse but, like Oddr’s saga, gives a clearer account of Sigvaldi’s treachery. He is sent by the alliance against Óláfr to lure him from Wendland, assuring him that there is no army lying in wait for him. Fagrskinna presents him less ambiguously as a subordinate of King Sveinn of Denmark, and Skúli Þorsteinsson’s verse (below) associates him with Eiríkr’s force. The allusion in the verse to Sigvaldi’s tricking Sveinn into leaving his country is to the story recorded in ch. 19 of Fagrskinna (see note 1 above) of Sigvaldi feigning sickness in order to capture King Sveinn and carry him off to an enforced settlement with the Wends.

Hallfreð vandræðaskáld (‘troublesome poet’) was an Icelandic poet who composed extensively in honour of King Óláfr, and also, paradoxically, for the king’s enemies, the jarls Hákon and Eiríkr. Hallfreðar saga records his conversion to Christianity by Óláfr, who agreed to act as his godfather, and his probably fictitious love affairs. This and the subsequent verse are also found in Oddr Snorrason’s saga and Heimskringla, and these and the other verses of Hallfreð’s in this extract are believed to belong to the erfidrápa ‘memorial lay’ composed by Hallfreð after the king’s death. Hallfreðar saga relates his composition of another poem in Óláfr’s honour during his lifetime; nine surviving verses or half-verses about the king’s early viking adventures, preserved in Fagrskinna and elsewhere, are attributed to this poem.

These are conventional gibes at the stereotypically pagan Swedes. A verse in Hallfreðar saga includes a similar taunt (ÍF VIII, 188):

heldr mun hæli-Baldri
hraevinns fyr því minna,
vón erumk slíks, at sleikja
sinn blóttrygil innan.

[The boastful Baldr of the carrion-maker (god of the sword = warrior, man) will find it less trouble — so I expect — to lick out the inside of his sacrifice-bowl (than to fight).]

Eiríkr’s ship Járnbarðinn (‘the Iron-Beak’) or Barði (as the ship is named in Halldórr’s next verse), is mentioned earlier in Fagrskinna,
but without description. The related neuter noun *barð* was used of a ship’s prow and of the edge of a steep hill.

18 Skúli Þorsteinsson was an Icelandic poet, grandson of Egill Skalla-Grímsson. *Egils saga* ends with a reference to his presence at Svǫlðr: ‘hann var stafnbúi Eiríks jarls á Járnlárðanum, þá er Óláfr konungr Tryggvason fell’ (ÍF II, 300). Little is known of him in historical sources, and of his poetry only this verse and a number of half-stanzas preserved in *Snorra Edda* survive, most of them probably belonging to the *flokkr* referred to here, about the poet’s deeds.

19 *Frísa dolgr* ‘enemy of Frisians’ is presumably Eiríkr.

20 *Svǫlðrar mynni* ‘mouth’ suggests that Svǫlðr may actually have been a river; Icelandic authors, presumably unfamiliar with the topography, seem to have interpreted the references to it in verse sources as the name of the island referred to in the subsequently cited verse of Halldórð (line 236).

21 At this point a lacuna begins in the older (B) text. The remainder of this extract follows the A version, and some changes in the spelling conventions are noticeable: *viðr*, *meðr* instead of *við*, *með*, and definite article forms with *i* rather than *e* (*inn* for *enn*); on the other hand, the mutated vowel *ǫ* before *u* occurs more frequently.

22 The next three verses are also found in Oddr Snorrason’s saga and the first two of them also in *Heimskringla*.

23 *Fáfnir*, the name of the legendary dragon killed by Sigurðr, refers to Ormr inn langi.

24 The suggestion that the defenders fought so furiously that they stepped overboard as if they were fighting on land is presumably an over-literal interpretation of Hallfreðr’s following verse, ‘sukku niðr af Naðri’.

25 Also in Oddr Snorrason’s saga and in *Heimskringla*.

26 Also in Oddr Snorrason’s saga and in *Heimskringla*.

27 MS *þambaskelmir*, emended in accordance with *Heimskringla* and
other texts. *Heimskringla*, following Oddr’s saga, includes a colourful anecdote in which the breaking of Einarr the master-archer’s bow by an enemy arrow signals Óláfr’s downfall:

‘Hvat brast þar svá hátt?’ Einarr svarar, ‘Nóregr ór hendi þér, konungr.’

[‘What broke so loudly there?’ Einarr answered, ‘Norway, out of your hands, King.’]

The story may be inspired by a misinterpretation of the element *þpbmb* ‘belly’, which could also mean ‘bowstring’, in the nickname *þambahar-skelfir* (see VII B:2, note 12). As recorded here, Einarr survives the battle to become a significant figure in the histories of Óláfr Haraldsson and his successors (cf. *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* in *Heimskringla*, extract VII B below).

28 This verse is also in *Heimskringla* and Oddr Snorrason’s saga.

29 *Pórketill* is an archaic form of *Þorkell*, its trisyllabic form necessary to preserve the metre of the verse. The use of such archaic forms tends to confirm the authentic age of the verse, although they are common enough to be imitated by later poets.

30 Legends of Óláfr’s survival and possible future return to Norway are widespread, and sprang up almost immediately after the battle, as the reference in Hallfreðr’s verse testifies. According to Theodoricus, ‘some say that the king then escaped from there in a skiff, and made his way to foreign parts to seek salvation for his soul.’ Oddr Snorrason’s saga records a tradition that he ended his life as a monk in Syria or ‘Girkland’, i.e. the Byzantine empire. The author of *Fagrskinna* more sceptically sees in the rumours evidence for the sense of loss suffered by the king’s followers.

31 The next four verses are also found in *Heimskringla*. Only the first half-verse is found in Oddr Snorrason’s saga.

32 This verse is found only in *Fagrskinna*, except for the last two lines, which are quoted as the second half of the poem’s *stef* ‘refrain’ in *Hallfreðar saga* and Oddr Snorrason’s saga.
Snorri’s cycle of sixteen sagas about Norwegian kings is often regarded as supreme among the konungasögur ‘Kings’ Sagas’. Works such as Morkinskinna, Fagrskinna and sagas of individual kings including Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr Haraldsson have chronological precedence, and they provided Snorri both with material and with literary models (see the list of historiographical antecedents in the introduction to extract VI above). Nevertheless, Heimskringla is outstanding for its scope, balance, literary verve, and shrewd penetration of human nature and political motive.

Heimskringla may be seen as a triptych, in which the great saga of Óláfr Haraldsson (St Óláfr), adapted from Snorri’s earlier separate saga, is flanked by sagas about his predecessors and successors. Extract A, from the concluding saga of the first ‘third’ of Heimskringla, shows something of the variety of the work. The narrative follows the adventures of Óláfr Tryggvason in the British Isles before his coming to power in Norway c.995, as he engages in routine raiding and acquires, through a mix of supernatural influences and his own practical flair, a new religion, a distinguished wife and a famous dog. Many of the plot motifs have a distinctly folkloristic tinge — test, assumed identity, prophecy, rivalry in love and a ‘helpful animal’ — and can be paralleled, for instance, in I. Boberg’s Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature (1966). The theme of Icelandic independence under threat — of contemporary interest to Snorri writing probably in the years around 1230 — is then dramatised in the famous landvættir incident (ch. 33). Extract B, from the racy Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar, is set in the mid eleventh century. It illustrates on a small scale Snorri’s gift for constructing powerful narrative, as he builds an expectation of treachery through skilful disposition of information and through manipulation of viewpoint as we follow the jealous gaze of Haraldr watching his rival from a balcony, and enter the darkened chamber with the doomed Einarr. Within Haralds saga as a whole the episode contributes to the portrayal of the power-hungry monarch who so well deserved his nickname hardráði ‘the hard-ruler, the ruthless’, and it explores themes which run throughout Heimskringla: law, leadership, and the precarious balance of power between the royal descendants of Haraldr hárfagri, the dynasty of the Hlaðajarlar, the lendir menn and the free farmers. Both extracts also illustrate the construction of prose
narratives from the suggestions of skaldic verses, of which Snorri cites over six hundred in the work as a whole.

Most of the events told in the two extracts appear in others of the Sagas of Kings, but never with the same literary or ideological emphasis. There is, for instance, a strongly clerical flavour to the account of Óláfr’s baptism in Oddr Snorrason’s Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar and The Greatest Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason (Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta; this is partly dependent on Heimskringla). The Morkinskinna account of the death of Einarr Þambarskelfir contains some of the same fine dramatic strokes as Snorri’s, including Einarr’s words, Myrkt er í málstofu konungs, ‘it is dark in the king’s council-chamber’, but the circumstances leading up to his killing are quite different, and, as in Fagrskinna, the narrative is much more favourable to King Haraldr. Snorri’s account bears a strong resemblance to that in the fragmentary Hákonar saga Ívarssonar (an unusual early thirteenth-century Icelandic biography of an eleventh-century Norwegian chieftain who was neither a king nor a saint), but being more streamlined it has greater dramatic impact.

Snorri Sturluson had much experience of the world, which to some extent conditioned his view of the past. An ambitious Icelandic magnate honoured with office at the Norwegian court, lawyer, poet and mythographer, he lived at a time when struggles between the leading Icelandic families, tensions between ecclesiastical and secular powers and pressure from Norway were opening the way for Iceland’s formal submission to the Norwegian crown in 1262–64. His fascination with the complexities of political and social relationships is as apparent in Heimskringla as it is in Snorri’s own life as glimpsed through Sturlunga saga and other prose works (see further Bagge 1991; Whaley 1991).

The present text is based on the manuscript readings presented in Finnur Jónsson’s four-volume Heimskringla (1893–1901, I 307–18 and III 132–37), supplemented by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson’s edition (Íslenzk fornrit XXVI 264–72 and XXVIII 122–26). Of the manuscripts, Kringla, a thirteenth-century vellum of which only one leaf survives, is considered to have, in general, the text closest to Snorri’s original; and it is from its opening words Kringla heimsins ‘the circle of the world’, that the grandiose modern title of the work derives. The text of Kringla is preserved in seventeenth-century copies, especially AM 35, 36 and 63 fol. (which cover the three parts of
Heimskringla respectively and are referred to in the notes as K), and
18 fol. in the Royal Library Stockholm (Stock. papp. fol. nr 18). The
‘K’ readings have been adopted except where an alternative is clearly
superior. The manuscripts most closely related to K are AM 39 fol.
(= 39) and Codex Frisianus or Fríssbók (= F), while a second group is
formed by Jöfraskinna (surviving mainly in two paper copies known
as J1 and J2) and AM 47 fol. (= 47), known as Eirspennill, which
contains little more than the final third of Heimskringla.

Chapter headings are taken from 18; most are supported in at least
one other manuscript, often J2.

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Chapter 30: Hernaðr Óláfs konungs

Síðan helt Óláfr Tryggvason til Englands ok herjaði víða um landit. Hann sigldi allt norðr til Norðimbralands ok herjaði þar. Þaðan helt hann norðr til Skotlands ok herjaði þar víða. Þaðan sigldi hann til Suðreyja ok átti þar nokkurur orrostur. Síðan helt hann suðr til Manar ok barðisk þar. Hann herjaði ok víða um Írland. Þá helt hann til Bretlands ok herjaði víða þat land, ok svá þar er kallat er Kumraland. Þaðan sigldi hann vestr til Vallands ok herjaði þar. Þá sigldi hann vestan ok ætlaði til Englands. Þá kom hann í eyjar þær er Syllingar heita, vestr í hafit frá Englandi. Svá segir Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld:1

Gerðisk ungr við Engla
ofvægr konungr bægja.
Naddskúrar röð neirir
Norðimbra sá morði.
Eyddi ulfa greddir
ógnblíðr Skotum víða
(gerði seims) með sverði
(sverðleik í Món skerðir).

— Týr var tjörva dýrra
türar gjarn — ok Íra.
Barði brezkrar jarðar
byggvendr ok hjó tyggi
— gráðr þvarr geira hríðar
gjóði — kumrskar hjóðir.

Óláfr Tryggvason var fjóra vetr í hernaði síðan er hann fór af Vinðlandi til þess er hann kom í Syllingar.

22 týjar K; most manuscripts have tírar.
Chapter 31: Skírðisk Óláfr konungr í Syllingum

Óláfr Tryggvason, þá er hann lá í Syllingum, spúrði hann at þar í eyjunni var spámaðr nokkur, sá er sagði fyrir órðna hluti, ok þótti mör gum mönnum þat mjók eptir ganga. Gerðisk Óláfi forvitni á at reyna spáðóm manns þess. Hann sendi þann af mönnum sínum er friðastr var ok mestr, ok bjó hann sem vegligast, ok bað hann segja at hann væri konungur, því at Óláfr var þá frægr orðinn af því um Ól í þann lónd at hann var friðari ok gefugligri ok meiri en allir menn aðri. En síðan er hann fór or Garðaríki hafði hann eigi meira af nafni sínu en kallaði sik Óla ok kvazk vera gerzkr.

En er sendimaðr kom til spámannsins ok sagðisk vera konungr, þá fekk hann þessi andsvör:

‘Ekki ertu konungr, en þat er ráð mitt at þú sér trúr konungi flínum.’

Ekki sagði hann fleira þessum manni. Fór sendimaðr aprtr ok segir Óláfi, ok fýsti hann þess at meir at finna þenna mann er hann heyði slík andsvör hans, ok tók nú íf af honum at hann væri eigi spámaðr.

Fór þá Óláfr á hans fund ok átti tal við hann ok spúrði eptir hvat spámaðr segði Óláfi fyrir, hvernug honum myndi ganga til ríkis eða annarrar hamingju.

Einsetumaðrinn svaraði með helgam spáðómi:

‘Þú munt verða ágætr konungr ok ágæt verk vinna. Þú munt mör gum mönnum til trúar koma ok skímar. Muntu þær hjálpa í því ok mör gum ðór um. Ok til þess at þú ífir eigi um þessi mín andsvör, þá máttu þat til marks hafa: þú munt við skip þín svikum meta ok flokkum, ok mun á bardaga rætask, ok muntu týna nokkuru liði ok sjálfr sár fá, ok muntu af því sári banvænn vera ok á skildi til skips borinn. En af þessu sári muntu heill verða innan sjau nátta ok brátt við skírn taka.’

Síðan fór Óláfr ofan til skipa sinna, ok þá metti hann þar ófriðar-mönnum þeim en hann vildu drepa ok lið hans. Ok fóru þeira viðskipti svá sem einsetumaðr hafði sagt honum, at Óláfr var sárri borinn á skip út, ok svá at hann var heill á sjau nóttum. Þóttisk þá Óláfr vita at þessi maðr myndi honum sanna hluti sagt hafa ok þat, at hann var sannr spámaðr, hvaðan af sem hann hefði þann spáðóm.

Fór þá Óláfr annat sinn at finna þenna mann, talaði þá mart við hann, spurði vendiliga hvaðan honum kom sú speki er hann sagði fyrir órðna hluti. Einsetumaðr segir at sjálfr Guð kristina manna lét hann vita allt þat er hann forvitnaðisk, ok segir þá Óláfi mörg stórmerki
Guðs. Ok af þeim fortölum jätti Óláfr at taka skírn, ok svá var at Óláfr var skírðr þar ok allt foruneyti hans.² Dvalðisk hann þar mjök lengi ok nam rétt trú, ok hafði þaðan með sér presta ok aðra lærða menn.

Chapter 32: Óláfr fekk Gyðu

Óláfr sigldi ór Syllingum um haustit til Englands, lá þar í hófn einni, fór þá með friði, því at England var kristit ok hann var ok kristinn. En þar fór um landit þingboð nökkt, ok allir menn skyldu til þings koma.

En er þing var sett, þá kom þar dróttning ein er Gyða er nefnd, systir Óláfs kvárans er konungr var á Írlandi í Dyflinni. Hon hafði gipt verit á Englands jarli einum ríkum. Var sá þá andaðr, en hon helt eptir ríkinu. En sá maðr var í ríki hennar er nefndr er Alvini, kappi mikill ok hólmþongumaðr. Hann hafði beðit hennar, en hon svaraði svá at hon vildi kjör af hafa, hvern hon vildi eiga af þeim mönnum er í hennar ríki váru, ok var fyrir þá sök þings kvatt at Gyða skyldi sér mann kjósa. Var þar kominn Alvini ok búinn með inum beztum klaðum, ok margir aðrir váru þar vel búnir. Óláfr var þar kominn ok hafði vásklæði sín ok loðkápu ýzta, stóð með sínna sveit út í frá ogrum mönnum.

Gyða gekk ok leit sér á hvern mann þann er henni þótti nökkt mannmót at. En er hon kom þar sem Óláfr stóð, ok sá upp í andlit honum ok spyrr hverr maðr hann er, hann nefndi sik Óla.

‘Ek em útlendr maðr hér,’ segir hann.

Gyða maðli, ‘Viltu eiga mik, þá vil ek kjósa þik.’

‘Eigi vil ek neita því,’ segir hann.

Hann spurði hvort nafn þessarar konu var, ætt eða øðli.


Hon var ung kona ok fríð. Tala þau síðan þetta mál ok semja þat sín á milli. Festir Óláfr sér Gyðu.

Alvina líkar nú ákafliga illa. En þat var síðr á Englandi, ef tveir menn keptusk um einn hlut, at þar skyldi vera til hólmanga. Býðr Alvini Óláfi Tryggvasyni til hólmþongu um þetta mál. Þeir leggja með sér stefnulag til bardaga, ok skulu vera tólf hvýrir. En er þeir finnask, mælir Óláfr svá við sína menn at þeir geri svá sem hann gerir. Hann
hafði mikla óxi. En er Alvini vildi höggva sverði til hans, þá laust hann sverðit ór hóndum honum ok annat högg sjálfan hann, svá at Alvini fell. Síðan batt Óláfr hann fast. Fóru svá allir menn Alvina at þeir váru barðir ok bundnir ok leiddir svá heim til herbergja Óláfs. Síðan bað hann Alvina fara ór landi brott ok koma eigi aprtr, en Óláfr tók allar eigur hans. Óláfr fekk þá Gyðu ok dvalðisk á Englandi en stundum á Írlandi.

Þá er Óláfr var á Írlandi, var hann staddr í herferð nokkurri, ok fóru þeir með skipum. Ok þá er þeir þurftu strandhöggva, þá ganga menn «að land» ok reka ofan fjölda búsmala. Pá komr eptir einn bóndi ok bað Óláfr gefa sér kýr þar, er hann átti. Óláfr bað hann hafa kýr sínar, ef hann mætti kenna.

‘Ok dvel ekki ferð vára.’

Bóndi hafði þar mikinn hjarðhund. Hann vísaði hundinum í nautaflokkana, ok váru þar rekin morg hundruð nauta. Hundrinn hljóp um alla nautaflokkana ok rak brott jafnmorg naut sem bóndi sagði at hann ætti, ok váru þau öll á einn veg morkuð. Póttusk þeir þá vita at hundrinn myndi rétt kennt hafa. Þeim þótti hundr sá furðu vitr. Þá spyrr Óláfr ef bóndi vildi gefa honum hundinn.

‘Gjarna,’ segir bóndi.

Óláfr gaf honum þegar í stað gullhring ok hét honum vináttu sinni. Sá hundr hét Vígi ok var allra hunda beztr. Ætti Óláfr hann lengi síðan.3

Chapter 33: Frá Haraldi Gormssyni

Haraldr Gormsson Danakonungr spurði at Hákon jarl hafði kastat kristni en herjat land Danakonungs víða. Pá bað Haraldr Danakonungr her út ok för síðan í Noreg. Ok er hann kom í þat ríki er Hákon jarl hafði til forráða, þá herjar hann þar ok eydði land allt ok kom liðinu í eyjar þar er Sólundir heita. Fimm einir bærir stóðu öðrennir í Sogni í Læradal, en fólki allt flýði á fjöll ok markir með þat allt er komask mátti.

Þá ætlaði Danakonungr at sigla liði því til Íslands ok hafna niðs þess, er allir Íslendingar hofðu hann níðan. Þat var í lögum haft á Íslandi, at yrkja skyldi um Danakonung niðvísu fyrir nef hvert er á var landinu.4 En nú var sók til, at skip þat, er íslenskrí menn átti, braut í Danmörk, en Danir tóku upp fé allt ok kölluðu vágrek, ok réð fyrir
bryti konungs, er Birgir hét. Var níð ort um þá báða. Þetta er í níðinu:5

138
139
140
141
142
143
144
145

Haraldr konungr bauð kunngum manni at fara í hamførum til Íslands ok freista hvat hann kynni segja honum.8 Sá för í hvalslíki. En er hann kom til landsins, þá för hann vestr fyrir norðan landit. Hann sá at fjöll óll ok hólar váru fullir af landvétum, sumt stórt en sumt smátt.9 En er hann kom fyrir Vápnafjǫrð, þá för hann inn á fjörðinn ok ætlaði á land at ganga. Þá för ofan ór dalnum dreki mikill ok fylgðu honum margir ormarr, þöddur ok eðlur ok blésu eitri á hann. En hann lagðisk í brott ok vestr fyrir land, allt fyrir Eyjafjǫrð. Fór hann inn eptir þeim firði. Þar för móti honum fugl svá mikill at vængirnir tóku út fjóllin tveggja vegna, ok fjólði annarra fugla, bæði stórir ok smáir. Braut för hann þaðan ok vestr um landit ok svá suðr í Breiðafjörð ok stefndi þar inn á fjörð. Þar för móti honum gríðungri mikill ok ódð á sæinn út ok tók at gella ógurliga. Fjólrí landvétta fylgði honum. Brott för hann þaðan ok suðr um Reykjanes ok vildi ganga upp á Víkarsskeiði. Þar kom í móti honum bergrisi ok hafði jarnstaf í hendi, ok bar hófuðit hæra en fjóllin, ok margir aðrir jótningar með honum.10

Paðan för hann austr með endlongu landi.

‘Var þá ekki,’ segir hann, ‘nema sandar ok örófei ok brim mikit fyrir útan, en haf svá mikit millum landanna,’ segir hann, ‘at ekki er þar fcört langskipum.’

Þá var Brodd-Helgi í Vápnafirði, Eyjólfr Valgerðarson í Eyjafirði, Þóðr gellir í Breiðafirði, Þóroddr goði í Ólfusi.11

Síðan snøri Danakonungr liði sínu suðr með landi, för síðan til Danmerkr, en Hákon jarl lét byggva land allt ok galt enga skatta síðan Danakonungi.

Notes

1 The following two stanzas belong to a sequence of verses about Óláfr’s viking exploits which also appears in Oddr Snorrason’s Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar and in Fagrskinna and is edited by Finnur Jónsson in Skj A I 156–59, B I 148–50, where the two are printed as stanzas 8 and 9. Oddr Snorrason and the Fagrskinna author quote 8a and 9b as a single stanza, then 8b (lines 7–8 then 5–6) and 9a as another. Bjarne Fidjestøl suggests that Snorri’s ordering and his prefatory prose represent a rearrangement in the interests of greater geographical coherence (Det norrøne fyrstediktet, 1982, 106–09).

2 According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (E and F versions), Óláfr (Anlaf) was confirmed at Andover in 994, with King Æthelred as his sponsor.

3 The faithful Vígi is portrayed as pining to death after his master’s fall in Oddr Snorrason’s saga and The Greatest Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason.

4 One verse per head (literally ‘nose’) of the population would of course have resulted in an impossibly long poem, unless only the chieftains were meant; but it is likely that each person was supposed to contribute a single free-standing verse (lausavísa). As Almqvist (1965, 164–65 and 232) suggests, this may be a play on the idea of a poll-tax.

5 This verse is also quoted in AM 291 4to, a manuscript of Jómsvíkinga saga. Almqvist (1965, 119–85 and 221–35) gives a full discussion of the verse and the whole episode.

6 Almqvist (1965, 182–84) suggests that Vinða myrðir ‘slayer of Wends’ and morðkunnr ‘battle-famed’ may be ironic, taunting the Danes for their lack of success against the Wends.

7 Birgir is fyrir ‘in front’, and í . . . jöldu líki ‘in a mare’s form’ neatly parallels í ham faxa ‘in the shape of a horse’, hence implying a jibe about passive homosexuality of the sort common in níð ‘slander’. The association of horses with sexual energy is also traditional.

8 The following episode is virtually unique to Heimskringla. Elsewhere Snorri frequently prefers more rational explanations to supernatural ones, but here he vividly dramatises the hazards of sailing a fleet to a land whose coast is unfamiliar and inhabitants hostile. In The Greatest Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason these are merely presented in the form of
sober arguments which dissuade Haraldr from his intended invasion.

9 The *landvættir* (or *landvéttir*: ‘land-beings’ or ‘land-spirits’) appear in other sources, including *Landnámabók*, as supernatural guardians or rulers of the land.

10 The resemblance of the four main creatures — a dragon, a huge bird, an ox and a giant — to the Evangelist symbols of Christian iconography has been pointed out, e.g. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson in *Minjar ok Menntir, Afmælisrit helgað Kristjáni Eldjárns* (1976), 117–29, but Almqvist (1965, 136–47 and 225–27) argues for origins in the native concepts of fetches, shape-shifters and dream figures. Whether or not these four are to be counted among the *landvættir* is unclear. The case against is put by Almqvist (1965, 147–50 and 227–28), who is supported by Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, ‘Landvættir, verndarvættir lands’, in *Skæðagröðs* (1997), 83. The four figures were adopted to support the armorial bearings of Iceland in 1919.

11 The neat representation of all four quarters of Iceland by fabulous defenders and a parallel set of prominent chieftains is characteristic of Snorri’s often systematic approach. Almqvist points out (1965, 146–47 and 227) the match of Þórór gellir’s nickname, which means ‘bellower’ and is recorded as a name for an ox, with the bellowing ox of Breiðafjörðr.
VII B: HARALDS SAGA SIGURÐARSONAR

Chapter 40: Frá Einari þambarskelfi

Einarr þambarskelfir var ríkastr lendra manna í Þrándheimi.12 Heldr var fátt um með þeim Haraldi konungi. Hafði Einarr þó veizlur sínar, þær sem hann hafði haft meðan Magnús konungr lífið. Einarr var mjök stóraúðigr. Hann átti Bergljótu, dóttr Hákonar jarls, sem fyrr var ríta.13 Einrdriði var þá alroskinn, sonr þeira. Hann átti þá Sigríði, dóttr Ketils kálfs ok Gunnhildar, systurdóttur Haralds konungs. Einrdriði hafði fríðleik ok fegrð af módurfræendum sínum, Hákonjarli eða sonum hans, en vóxt ok af hafði hann af þóður sínum, Einari, ok alla þá atgær við Einarr hafði um fram aðra menn. Hann var inn vinsældst maðr.14

Chapter 42: Frá Haraldi konungi

Haraldr konungr var ríklundaðr, ok óx flat sem hann festisk í landi,12 ok kom svá at flestum munnar dugði illa at mæla í móti honum eða draga fram annat máli en hann vildi vera láta. Svá segir Þjóðólfr skáld:15

Gegg skyli herr sem hugnar
hjaldrvitjaðar sitja
dolgstæranda dýrum
dróttinvandr ok standa.
Lýtr folkstara feiti
(fátt er til nema játta
þat sem þá vill gotnum)
þjóð óll (konungr bjóða).

Chapter 43: Frá Einari þambarskelfi

Einarr þambarskelfir var mest forstjóri fyrir bóndum allt um Þrándheim.24 Helt hann upp svörum fyrir þá á þingum er konungs menn sóttu. Einarr kunni vel til laga. Skorti hann eigi dirfð til at flytja þat fram á þingum, þó at sjálfr konungr væri við. Veittu honum líð allir bændr. Konungr reiddisk því mjök, ok kom svá at lykðum at þeir þreyttu kappmæli. Segir Einarr at bændr vildu eigi þola honum ólog, ef hann bryti landsrét á þeim. Ok för svá nokkurum sínnum milli þeira. Þá tók Einarr at hafa fjölmanni um sik heima, en þó miklu fleira þá er hann fór til
býjar svá at konungr var þar fyrir. Þat var eitt sinn at Einarr fór inn til
býjar ok hafði lið mikit, langskip átta eða nú ok nær fimm hundruðum
manna. Ën er hann kom til bejar, gekk hann upp með lið þat. Haraldr
konungr var í garði sínum ok stöð út í í loptsvöulum ok sá er lið Einars
gekk af skipum, ok segja menn at Haraldr kvað þá:16

Hér sé ek upp enn ðrúva
Einarr, þann er kann skeina
þjalf/a, þambarskel/fí,
þangs, fjölmennan ganga.
Fullaflí bíðr fyllar
(finn ek opt, at drífir minna)
hilmis stóls (a hæla
húskarla lið jarli).

Rjóðandi mun ráða
randa bliks ór landi
oss,17 nema Einarr kyssi
òxar munn enn þunna.

Einarr dvalðisk í býnum nokkura daga.

Chapter 44: Fall Einars ok Eindriða

Einn dag var átt mótt, ok var konungr sjálfr á mötinu. Hafði verit tekinn
í býnum þjótr einn ok var hafðr á mötinu. Måðrinn hafði verit fyrr
með Einari, ok hafði honum vel getizk at mannum. Var Einari sagt.
Pá þóttisk hann vita at konungr myndi eigi maninn láta undan ganga
fyrir því at heldr þótt Einari þeitti þat máli skipta. Lét þá Einarr vápnask
lið sitt, ok ganga síðan á mötit. Tekr Einarr maninn af mötinu með
valdi. Eptir þetta gengu at beggja vinir ok báru sáttað milli þeira.
Kom þá svá at stefnulagi var á komit. Skyldu þeir hittask sjálfir.
Málstofa var í konungsgarði við ána niðri. Gekk konungr í stofuna
við fá menn, en annat lið hans stóð úti í garðinum. Konungr lét snúa
fjóð yfir ljórrann, ok var lítt opit á. Þá kom Einarr í garðinn með sitt
lið. Hann mælti við Eindriða, son sinn:
‘Ver þú með liðinu útí, við engu mun mér þá hætt.’

39 þjalma K, þjalfa Hulda, Hrokkkinsknna, Flateyjarbók; -skelmi K, -skelfi
39, Fagrskinna (B), Hulda.
Eindríði stóð úti við stofudyrrin. En er Einarr kom inn í stofuna, mælti hann:

‘Myrkýt er í málstofu konungsins.’

Jafnskjót hljópu menn at honum, ok lögðu sumir en sumir hjoggu. En er Eindríði heyrði þat, brá hann sverðinnu ok hljóp inn í stofuna. Var hann þegar felldr ok báðir þeir.

Pá hljópu konungsmenn at stofunni ok fyrir dyrrin, en bóndum fellusk hendr, því at þeir hófðu þá engan forgongumann. Eggjaði hvern annan, segja at skómm var er þeir skyldu eigi hefna hófðingja síns, en þó varð ekki af atgöngunni. Konungr gekk út til liðs síns ok skaut á fylking ok setti upp merki sitt, en engi varð atganga bóandanna. Pá gekk konungr út á skip sitt ok allt lið hans, röri síðan út eptir ánni ok svá út á fjöðr leið sína.

Bergljót, kona Einars, spurði fall hans. Var hon þá í herbergi því er þau Einnarr hófðu haft út í bœnum. Gekk hon þegar upp í konungsgarð, þar sem bóndalíðit var. Hon eggjaði þá mjöck til orrostu, en í því bili röri konungr út eptir ánni. Pá mælti Bergljót:

‘Missum vér nú Hákonar Ívarssonar, frænda míns. Eigi mundu banamenn Eindríða róa hér út eptir ánni, ef Hákon stœði hér á árbakkanum.’

Síðan lét Bergljót búa um lík þeira Einars ok Eindríða. Váru þeir jarðaðir at Óláfskirkju hjá leiði Magnúss konungs Óláfsssonar.

Eptir fall Einars var Haraldr konungr svá mjöck óflokkað af verki þessu at þat einu skorti á, er lendir menn ok bœndr veittu eigi atferð ok heldu bardaga við hann, at engi varð forgongumaðr til at reisa merki fyrir bóandaherinum.
Notes

12 Einarr þambarskelfir Eindriðason’s adult life spans the first half of the eleventh century, and he plays a prominent role in the sagas of several rulers of Norway (see the Fagrskinna extract in this volume). The meaning of his nickname has been debated, but ‘bow-string trembler’ or ‘paunch-shaker’ are among the possible interpretations (B. Fidjestøl argues for the former in Nordica Bergensia 14 (1997), 6–8). Lendir menn, literally ‘landed men’, were powerful royal officers who had been granted rights to revenues and entertainment from farms in a certain territory. Veizla, literally ‘grant, allowance’, hence ‘feast’, was applied to the entertainment of the lendr maðr and his followers, and extended to encompass broader rights and the farms from which they were extracted. According to Óláfs saga helga ch. 21 in Heimskringla, Einarr’s veizlur in firándheimr go back to the reign of the earls Eiríkr and Sveinn at the beginning of the eleventh century, as does his marriage to their sister Bergljót.

13 See Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar (in Heimskringla) ch. 19.

14 Ch. 41, an account of Ormr jarl and other descendants of the earls of Hlaðir, still a notable force in Norway at this time, is omitted here.

15 The stanza is from Sextefja ‘Poem with six refrains’; its second half comprises the only one of these that is preserved. It is also quoted in Hákonar saga Ívarssonar p. 7 and in the manuscripts Hulda and Hrokkskinna.

16 The next stanza is also in Hákonar saga Ívarssonar p. 8, Fagrskinna (manuscripts B, A), Hulda, Hrokkskinna and Flateyjarbók; in Snorra Edda the second half (only) is quoted to illustrate the use of húskarlar to refer to hirðmenn ‘king’s followers, retainers’. The following half-stanza is also in Hákonar saga Ívarssonar p. 9, Fagrskinna (manuscripts B, A), Hulda, Hrokkskinna and Flateyjarbók.

17 The pronoun oss ‘us’ seems to be used here for sg. ‘me’ — perhaps an instance of the ‘royal we’, though such use of pl. personal pronouns for sg. is common in skaldic poetry. Alternatively, the sense could be ‘me and mine’.

18 Bergljót was the daughter of Earl Hákon inn ríki (‘the mighty’) Sigurðarson. Her fleeting appearance as a ‘female inciter’ figure here
is emphasised in manuscripts 39, F and 47, where this sentence begins a new chapter, headed Frá Bergljót (39), Frá Bergljótu H. dóttur (47; untitled in F). On this figure, see J. M. Jochens, ‘The female inciter in the Kings’ Sagas’, Arkiv för nordisk filologi 102 (1987), 100–19. Bergljót’s scene is absent from Morkinskinna and Fagrskinna.
This section offers a brief introduction to the techniques of skaldic poetry as illustrated by a stanza from VII A above. It was composed, according to medieval sources, by Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld ('troublesome poet') in praise of King Óláfr Tryggvason at the end of the tenth century. It has been chosen here because it typifies in so many ways the court poetry which is the best-known application of the skaldic art. The text follows the Heimskringla version (see VII A above, and Glossary and Notes; also Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning, ed. Finnur Jónsson (1912–15), A I 158–9 for text in manuscript spelling with variant readings).

†

Stanza re-ordered as if prose:

Ωgir ýdrógar lét øgir eyverskan her deyja.
— Týr var tjórra dýrra týrar gjarn — ok Íra.
Barði brezkrar jarðar byggvendr ok hjó tyggi,
— grádr þvarr geira hríðar gjóði — kumrskar þjóðir.

Translation:

The foe of the bow-string [warrior] caused the island army and the Irish to die.
The Týr of precious swords [warrior] was eager for glory.
The prince beat the inhabitants of the ‘British’ land and felled the Cumbrian peoples.
Hunger diminished for the osprey of the storm of spears [battle > raven].

Metrical features:

The metre is dróttkvætt ‘court metre’, that of some five-sixths of the skaldic corpus. Its main features, setting aside certain licences, variations and complications, are these:
The stanza (vísa) consists of eight lines (vísuord). The two half-stanzas (vísuhelmingar or helmingar, sg. helmingr) are metrically independent and often syntactically so. (In some cases they are also preserved as separate entities.)

Each line has six syllables.

Each line ends with a trochee (– x, i.e. heavy, stressed syllable followed by an unstressed one).

Lines are linked in pairs by alliteration, shown here in bold: two alliterating sounds (stuðlar) in each odd line and one (the hofuðstafr ‘chief stave/post’) in the first stressed syllable of each even line. Any vowel or diphthong alliterates with any other, though preferably an unlike one (as in lines 1–2 of the stanza above, where it will also be noted that the pattern of alliteration helps to mark the clause boundaries).

Individual lines contain pairs of internal rhymes or hendingar, indicated here by italics. These link the sounds in stressed syllables, the second rhyme in the line always falling on the penultimate syllable. The rhyme involves the vowel (or diphthong) in each syllable and one or more postvocalic consonant(s), but where there is no postvocalic consonant belonging to the same syllable, the rhyme consists of vowel only. There are two types of internal rhyme. Odd lines normally have half-rhyme (skothending) in which the vowels are different but one or more of the postvocalic consonants are identical. Even lines have full rhyme (aðalhending ‘chief rhyme’) in which vowels and one or more postvocalic consonant(s) are identical. Quite frequently an aðalhending is introduced into an odd line, as in lines 3 and 5 of the stanza above.

There are further constraints on the patterns of stress within the line, and on the distribution of alliteration and internal rhyme.

Clause arrangement and word order:

The highly inflected nature of the Old Norse language means that syntactic relations can usually be made clear by grammatical endings and are less heavily dependent on word order than they are in languages such as modern English; and the skalds exploit this potential flexibility to an often quite extraordinary extent. Within clauses there are frequent departures from the ‘normal’, ‘prose’ order, though because the syntax is usually quite straightforward this rarely causes real difficulties. It is in the arrangement of clauses within the helmingr that skaldic style differs most from the everyday. Although skalds frequently use a
straightforward sequential pattern, each clause finishing before the next starts (pattern \(ab\), or \(abc\) etc.), they also play with clause boundaries, suspending a clause while interrupting with another and hence making what can be termed ‘frame’ patterns (as in the first helmingr of the specimen stanza, where the clauses form a pattern \(aba\)) or ‘interlace’ patterns (\(abab\) etc.). Combined patterns are also possible, as in the second helmingr of the specimen stanza. This could be analysed in two ways: i) as ‘sequence’ and ‘frame’ in the pattern \(abcb\), since the \(a\) clause \(barði\) . . . byggvendr could be understood as complete, with an understood ‘he’ as subject of \(barði\); or ii) as ‘frame’ and ‘interlace’ in the pattern \(abacb\), since once \(tyggi\) in line 6 has been reached, it can be taken as subject of \(barði\) in the \(a\) clause as well as of \(hjó\) in the \(b\) clause. This is the analysis represented above in ‘Stanza re-ordered as if prose’. By breaking the linear flow of language, the skalds can allow phrases to float free, resonating with more than one clause in the helming, and they can also produce special effects, for instance mimicking simultaneous actions or expressing the brokenness of intense emotion.

**Content:**

The stanza promotes a general military ideology and the reputation of a specific, though unnamed, viking leader, who is grammatical subject of four out of the five verbs. The defeated enemy is always referred to by collective terms, and is always the grammatical and conceptual object. The claims about the slaughter of these enemies are extremely generalised, as are the intercalated clauses about the hero’s desire for glory and the waning of the raven’s hunger (because, it is understood, the hero provides carrion), and all these belong to an informal repertoire of motifs which are constantly deployed, and ingeniously varied, by skalds.

**Diction:**

Much of the skalds’ virtuosity goes into expressing recurrent key concepts such as ‘man, ruler, battle, ship, sword, gold, woman’ by means of

i. Poetic appellations known as *heiti*, such as *tjør(r)* ‘sword’ (or possibly ‘spear’), and *tyggi* ‘ruler, prince’ in the stanza by Hallfreðr. *Heiti* are words which are rare or non-occurring in prose, and often redolent with connotations in addition to the main concepts to which they re-
fer. Thus *hilmir* ‘ruler, prince’ has etymological associations with *hjalmr* ‘helmet’ and therefore may hint at a ‘helmet-provider’, ‘helmet-bearer’ or ‘defender’, while *huginn* ‘raven’ contains a mythological allusion since it is a generalised application of a proper name referring to one of Óðinn’s two raven scouts.

ii. Kennings, stereotyped and more or less figurative periphrases consisting of at least two elements, usually *heiti*, one functioning as the ‘base word’ and the other as the ‘determinant’ or qualifier. The base word is in whatever grammatical case is required by the syntax, while the determinant is either in the genitive case and separate from the base word, as in *grœ›is hestr* ‘ocean’s horse’ = ship, or is compounded with the base word, as in *skýrann* ‘cloud-hall’ = sky. Some kennings, including one in the Hallfre›r stanza, are ‘double’ (*tvíkennt*) since the determinant of a kenning is itself a kenning. Where this device is repeated, the kenning is ‘extended’, ‘driven’ or perhaps ‘inlaid’ (*rekit*).

The kennings in the specimen stanza are:

*‡drógar œgir*: ‘bow-string’s terrifier / foe’ = warrior.
*T‡r tjƒrva d‡rra*: ‘T‡r (god) of precious swords = warrior’: the adj. *d‡rra* ‘precious’ is not essential to the working of the kenning.
*geira hrí›*: ‘spears’ storm’ = battle, its *gjó›r* ‘osprey’ = raven; a *tvíkennt* expression.

The elements are juxtaposed according to certain stereotyped patterns which are almost infinitely variable. Here battle is ‘spears’ storm’, but almost any word for weather could be substituted, and any word for weapons or armour.

*The difficulty of skaldic poetry:*

Skaldic poetry has a reputation for tortuous and riddling complexity, and some poems, for example the best of the tenth-century pagan compositions, are indeed extremely challenging to the textual skills, mythical knowledge and historical imagination of modern readers. Verses such as the specimen here, however, are (local textual problems aside) readily interpretable. Although the skalds liked to surprise by novelty and by ingenious variation on themes, their art is very much based on the fulfilment of expectations, grammatical and poetic. In the verse above, for example, the past tense *lét* ‘caused’ is extremely likely to be completed by an infinitive, so that although *deyja* is separated from
it by three words, the audience will be listening or looking for such a completion. The god-name Týr similarly sets up the expectation of a ‘warrior’ or ‘man’ kenning with a term for battle, weapon, ship or treasure as its determinant, and this is fulfilled almost immediately by tjörva ‘of swords’ (cf. Meissner 1921, 259–63, 273–79). Again, since many skaldic battle poems refer to the beasts of battle (raven, eagle or wolf) being fed or cheered (since the hero makes carrion of his enemies), gráðr ‘hunger, greed’ triggers anticipation of a motif of this kind. It is therefore fully possible for modern readers, like the original early Nordic audiences, to acquire a set of frameworks for interpretation, above all by gaining experience of the poetry, but also by consulting reference works on poetic diction such as Snorri Sturluson’s Edda, the medieval pulur or lists of heiti (printed in Skj A I 649–90; B I 656–80), LP, or Meissner 1921, though in all these cases we should beware of a too normative approach, and in the last two cases the examples are sometimes based on heavily emended texts.

Preservation:

On the preservation of skaldic poetry in general, see p. xxv above. The specimen stanza, together with others in praise of Óláfr, is preserved in the Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar by Oddr Snorrason ch. 82, Fagrskinna ch. 23, Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar ch. 30 in Heimskringla, and Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta ch. 77 (cf. note 1 on p. 87 above; on these sources see p. 60 above). In the first two sources, this and others of Hallfreðr’s verses about Óláfr are cited continuously, whereas in the last two they are punctuated by prose narrative and are in a somewhat different order. The two helmingar of the specimen above do not form a single stanza in Oddr’s saga and Fagrskinna but are the second helmingar of two different stanzas.
Ari Þorgilsson was probably born in 1068 on the Snæfellsnes peninsula of Iceland and died in 1148. He lost his father and grandfather while still a boy and at the age of seven went to live with a maternal relative, Hallr Þórarinsson of Haukadalr (cf. line 184) in the southwestern part of the country. At Haukadalr he must have come into contact with some of the most prominent, learned and travelled Icelanders of the time, in particular various members of the great Mosfellingar family (cf. note 35 below) to which belonged the first bishops of Iceland, Ísleifr Gizurarson and his son, Gizurr Ísleifsson, who would have resided at Skálaholt some 25 km. away. And Ísleifr’s son Teitr (cf. line 8) actually lived in Haukadalr where he ran a small school. Ari became one of Teitr’s pupils and he refers to him as his fóstri ‘fosterer’ and the wisest man he knew. It must have been at Haukadalr and under the influence of men like Teitr and Hallr that Ari developed his interest in history and related subjects. Ari tells us in ch. 9 of Íslendingabók that he spent fourteen winters at Haukadalr, which means he must have quit the place in about 1089. We have no precise knowledge of how and where he spent the remaining years of his long life. But he was an ordained priest and it can reasonably be inferred that he lived for some of this time at least in his ancestral area of Snæfellsnes. He could well have held a chieftaincy (gōðorð) there.

Ari’s only preserved work, the second version of his Íslendingabók, covers less than twenty pages in its main manuscript. Its contents may be summarised as follows.

The Prologue (= lines 1–6) tells us of the circumstances surrounding the writing of the first (now lost) version of the work and, in rather unclear terms, of the changes made in producing the second version. There follows a genealogy (which may well be a later interpolation) of Haraldr hárfagri going back to the Swedish king Óláfr trételgja. Then comes a list of contents of the book’s ten chapters. Chapter 1 (lines 7–34) deals with the settlement of Iceland, presenting Ingólfr as the first settler. Chapter 2 names four main settlers of the east, south, west and north of the country and tells (lines 35–43) how a Norwegian called Úlfljótr first ‘brought law’ out to Iceland. Chapter 3 (lines 44–63) deals with the establishment of the Alþingi. Chapter 4 gives an account of certain changes made in the Icelandic calendar (see HOIC, 44–45). Chapter 5 describes the events which led to the division of the
country into quarters (see HOIC, 49–52). A short chapter 6 (lines 64–74) and a lengthier chapter 7 (lines 75–149) cover respectively the discovery and settlement of Greenland by Eiríkr enn rauði and the formal acceptance of Christianity by the Icelandic Alþingi. Chapter 8 tells of the so-called ‘foreign’ or ‘missionary’ bishops who visited Iceland in the tenth and eleventh centuries (see HOIC, 138–44) and of events during the long lawspeakership of Skápti Þórðarson (1004–30), including the establishment of the so-called Fifth Court (see HOIC, 70–74; Laws I, 83–88, 244–45). Ísleifr Gizurarson, the first man to be formally consecrated as bishop of Iceland (1056–80), is the subject of Chapter 9 (see HOIC, 144–46). And the final chapter 10 (of which lines 150–97 form a major part) deals with Gizurr Ísleifsson (bishop of Iceland from 1082 to 1106; bishop of Skálholt from 1106 to 1118). Although the last words of ch. 10 are Hér lýsk sjá bók (‘This book ends here’), two further items follow in both the extant manuscripts: (i) genealogies from original settlers of Iceland down to these five bishops: Ísleifr Gizurarson and his son Gizurr, Jón Ógmundarson (cf. line 191), Þorlákr Rúnólfsson (cf. line 1) and Ketill Þorsteinsson (cf. also line 1); (ii) a genealogy from the mythical Yngvi Tyrkkakonungr down to Ari himself, ending with the words en ek heitik Ari, ‘and I am called Ari’.

As noted, Ari’s information in his Prologue on the changes he made in the first version of his work to produce the second is rather unclear and there has been much modern scholarly discussion on the matter. This has led to only uncertain and differing conclusions. The primary issue to be addressed in this context is whether the second version of Íslendingabók represents an abridgement or an expansion of the first (cf. notes 1 and 3 below).

It is normally assumed that Ari had virtually no written sources about the early history of Iceland. But he may well have used Sæmundr Sigfús-son’s now lost work on the Norwegian kings which, it is assumed, was written in Latin (see p. 56 above; cf. line 145). And there is evidence to suggest that he knew such written works on non-Icelandic matters as Adam of Bremen’s Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum (cf. again p. 56), various works by the Venerable Bede and, quite clearly, a life of the martyr King Edmund, whoever its author (cf. lines 12–14). But it was primarily oral sources that he relied on for information about Icelandic history. He obviously learnt a great deal from acquain-
tances from his time at Haukadalr: Teitr Ísleifsson would have been of particular importance to him in this respect (cf. lines 8–9, 36, 144), as well as Hallr Þórarinsson, Sæmundr Sigfússon (cf. lines 2, 145) and bishop Gizurr Ísleifsson himself. He also received information from people from his home area in the west of Iceland, his uncle Þorkell Gellisson (cf. lines 10, 73–74) and Þóriðr Snorradóttir (cf. line 11). At least two lawspeakers, Markús Skeggjason (cf. line 152) and Úlfheðinn (cf. line 55) would have been his informants (cf. note 51 below).

The preserved version of Íslendingabók was, then, based on an earlier one which Ari says he wrote for the bishops Þorlákr Rúnólfsson and Ketill Þórsteinsson and subsequently showed to them and to the priest Sæmundr Sigfússon. From the wording of his statement and other factors it is clear that the first version must have been written between 1122 (when Ketill became bishop) and 1133 (when both Þorlákr and Sæmundr died). The preserved version of Íslendingabók refers to the lawspeakership of Goðmundr Þorgeirsson (lines 170–71) which ran from 1123 to 1134. If this reference is original to the second version, then it must, of course, have been written in or after 1134. But there are good reasons for assuming that it is a later interpolation. Further there are reasons for thinking that Ari wrote his first version fairly early on in the period 1122–33 and produced the second version within four or five years of it.

Ari’s work has great importance for the study of Icelandic history and literature. It is, in effect, the oldest original prose work in Icelandic and decades passed before other works of historiography were written in that language. Íslendingabók exercised considerable influence on later Icelandic literature, as did Landnámabók, the original (and now lost) version of which is probably also from his hand. Snorri Sturluson, writing some hundred years later, makes particular reference to him in the prologue to his Heimskringla. It is Ari’s specific mention of his oral sources and his careful attention to chronology in Íslendingabók that give his work such value. It is true that he does not always tell his story well. For example, his description of the foundation of the Alþingi (lines 44–55) is somewhat inconsequential. But his account of the conversion of Iceland shows him as an excellent narrator. And however desultory Ari’s narrative may occasionally seem, the value of his whole book can hardly be overestimated.

Although there are various minor witnesses, we have to rely mainly
on two seventeenth-century paper manuscripts written by Jón Erlendsson (died 1672) for our text of the second version of Íslendingabók. AM 113 b fol. (the better of the two) and AM 113 a fol. both go back directly to a lost original probably written about 1200 or perhaps a little earlier (and thus, of course, not Ari’s original). AM 113 a fol. was written in 1651, AM 113 b fol. probably rather later. The text of the selections here is based on AM 113 b fol. (designated ‘A’) as follows: (a): f. 1r2–11; (b): ff. 1v4–2r14; (c): ff. 2r23–3r9; (d): f. 4r25–v13; (e): ff. 4v14–6v10; (f): ff. 8r17–9v2. Most of the emendations are from AM 113 a fol. (designated ‘B’).

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G. Turville-Petre, Origins of Icelandic Literature (1953), 88–108.
Íslendingabók gørða ek fyrst byskupum órum, Þorláki ok Katli, ok sýndak bæði þeim ok Sæmundi presti. En með því at þeim líkaði svá at hafa eða þar viðr auka, þá skráfaða ek þessa of et sama far, fyr útán áttartöl u ok konungævi, ok jökkr því er mér varð síðan kunnara ok nú er garr sagt á þessi en á þeirri. En hvatki es mís-s sagt es í frœðum þessum, þá er skylt at hafa þat heldr, er sannara reynisk . . .

(b) The settlement of Iceland

Chapter 1

Íslan byggðisk fyrst úr Norvegi á dógum Haralds ens hárfigra, Hálfdanar sonar ens svarta, í þann tíð — at ætlun ok þolu þeira Teits fóstra mín, þess manns er ek kunna spakastan, sonar Ísleifs byskups; ok Þorkels fóðurbróður mín Gellisonar, er langt munði fram; ok Þóríðar Snorra dóttur goða, es bæði vas margspók ok óljúgfróð — es Ívarr, Ragnars sonr loðbrókar, lét drepa Eadmund enn helga Engla-konung. En þat vas sjau tegum <vetra> ens núnda hundraðs eptir burð Krista, at því es ritit es í súgu hans.

Ingólfr hét maðr nórönn, es sannliga er sagt at færi fyrst þaðan til Íslands, þá es Haraldr enn hárfigri var sextán vetru gamall, en í annat sinn fám vetrum síðarr. Hann byggði suðr í Reykjarvík. Þar er Ingólfs-höfði kallaðr fyr austan Minþakseyri, sem hann kom fyrst á land, en þar Ingólfsfell fyr vestan Olfossá, es hann lagði sína eigu á síðan. Í þann tíð vas Íslan viði vaxit á miðlí fjalls ok fjóru.

Þá váru hér menn kristnir, þeir er Norðmenn kalla papa. En þeir fóru síðan á braut, at því þeir vildu eigi vesa hér við heiðna menn, ok léttu eptir bækr írskar ok bjóllur ok bagla; af því mátti skilja at þeir váru menn írskir.

En þá varð för manna mikil mjók út hingat úr Norvegi til þess unz konungrinn Haraldr bannaði, af því at honum þótti landauðn nema. Þá sættusk þeir á þat, at hverr maðr skyldi gjalsa konungi fimm aura, sá er eigi væri frá því skilflr ok þaðan færi hingat. En svá er sagt at
Haraldr væri sjau tegu konungr ok yrði áttriðr. Þau hafa upphöf verit at gjaldi því es nú er kallat landaurar.\textsuperscript{17} Ën þar galzk stundum meira en stundum minna, unz Óláfr enn digri\textsuperscript{18} gördi skyrt at hvern maðr skyldi gjalsa konungi hálfa mörk, sá er færi á miðli Norvegs ok Íslands, nema konur eða þeir menn es hann næmi frá. Svá sagði Þorkell oss Gellissonr.

(c) The establishment of the Alþingi\textsuperscript{19}

Chapter 2

... Ën þá es Ísland vas viða byggt orðit, þá hafði maðr austreiðn fyrst log út hingat úr Norvegi sá er Úlfiljötr hét — svá sagði Teitr oss — ok váru þá Úlfiljótslog kölluð — hann var faðir Gunnars er Dújpdeiðr eru komnir frá í Eyjafirði\textsuperscript{20} — en þau váru flest sett at því sem þá váru Golaþingslog eða ráð Porleifs ens spaka Hörða-Kárasonar\textsuperscript{21} váru til, hvar við skyldi auka eða af nema eða annan veg setja. Úlfiljótr var austr í Lóni. Én svá es sagt at Grímr geitskór væri fóstbróðar hans, sá er kannaði Ísland allt at ráði hans, áðr Alþingi væri átt. Én honum fekk hverr maðr penning til á landi hér, en hann gaf fé þat síðan til hofa.\textsuperscript{22}

Chapter 3

Alþingi vas sett at ráði Úlfiljóts ok allra landsmanna þar er nú es. Ën áðr vas þing á Kjalarnesi, þat es Þorsteinn Ingólfs sonr landnáma-manns, faðir Þorkels mána logsogumanns, hafði þar, ok höfðingjar þeir es at því hurfu.\textsuperscript{23} Ën maðr hafði sekr orðit of þræls mörð eða leysings, sá er land átti í Bláskógum; hann es nefndr Pórir kroppinskeggi; en döttursonr hans es kallaðr Þorvaldr kroppinskeggi, sá es för síðan í Austfjörðu ok brendi þar inni Gunnar, bróður sinn. Svá sagði Hallr Órœkjasonr.\textsuperscript{24} Én sá hét Kolr es myrðr var. Við hann es kennd gjá sú es þar es kolluð síðan Kolsgjá, sem hræin fundusk. Land þat varð <síðan> allsherjafé, en þat logðu landsmenn til Alþingis neyulu. Af því es þar almenning at viða til Alþingis í skógum ok á heiðum hagi til hrossa hafnar. Pat sagði Úlfheðinn oss.

Svá hafa ok spakir menn sagt at á sex tegum vetra yrði Ísland albyggt svá at eigi væri meirr síðan.
The settlement of Greenland

Chapter 6

...and þat es kallat es Grœnland fannsk ok bygg›isk af Íslandi. Eiríkr enn rauði hét maðr breiðfirzkr es fór út heðan þangat ok nam þar land er síðan es kallaðr Eiríksfjörðr. Hann gaf nafn landinu ok kallaði Greenland ok kvað menn þat myndu fýsa þangat farar, at landit ætti nafn gott.

...Þeir fundu þar manna vistir bæði austr ok vestr á landi, ok keiplabrot ok steinsmiði þat es af því má skilja at þar hafði þess konar þjóð farit es Vínland hefð byggt ok Grœnlendingar kalla Skrælinga. En þat vas, es hann tók byggva landit, fjórtán vetrum eða fimmtán fyrr en kristni kvæmi her á Ísland, at því er sá talði fyrir Þorkeli Gellißyni á Grœnlandi er sjálfri fylgði Eiríki enum rauða út.

The Alþingi accepts Christianity

Chapter 7

...Óláfr rex Tryggva sonr, Óláfs sonar, Haralds sonar ens hárfagra, kom kristni í Nóreg ok á Ísland. Hann sendi hingat til lands prest þann er hét þangbrandr ok hér kenndi mǫnnum kristni ok skírði þá alla es við trú tóku. En Hallr á Síðu, Þorsteins sonr, lét skírask snimhendis, ok Hjalti Skeggjasonr úr Þjórsárdali ok Gízurr enn hvíti Teits son, Ketilbjarnar sonar, frá Mosfelli, ok margir hofðingjar aðrir. En þeir váru þó fleiri es í gegn mæltu ok neittu. En þá er hann hafði hér verit einn vetr eða tvá, þá für hann á braut ok hafði vegit hér tvá menn eða þrá þá er hann hofðu nítt. En hann sagði konunginum Óláfi es hann kom austr allt þat es hér hafði yfir hann gingit, ok lét orvænt at hér mundi kristni enn takask.
En hann varð við þat reiðr mjökk ok ætlæði at láta meiða eða drep ossa landa fyrir, þá es þar váru austr.

En þat sumar et sama kvámu útan heðan þeir Gizurr ok Hjalti, ok þágu þá undan við konunnginn, ok hétu honum umbýsðlu sinni til á nýja leik at hér yrði enn við kristinni tekit, ok létu sér eigi annars ván en þar mundi hlýða. En et næsta sumar eptir fóru þeir austan, ok prestr sá es þormóðr hét, ok kvámu þá í Vestmannaeyjar es tíu víkur váru af sumri, ok hafði allt farizk vel at. Svá kvað Teitr þann segja es sjálfr var þar. Þá var þat mælt et næsta sumar ádr í lögum at menn skyldi svá koma til Alþingis es tíu víkur væri af sumri, en þangat til kvámu líkum þýr.

En þeir fóru þegar inn til meginlands ok síðan til Alþingis ok gátu at Hjalta at hann vas eptir í Laugardali með tólfta mann, af því at hann hafði ádr sekr orðið fjörðuðsmáðr et næsta sumar á Alþingi of göðgá.

En þat vas til þess haft, at hann kvað at Lögbergi kviðling þenn:41

Vil ek eigi göð geyja;
grey þykir mér Freyja.42

En fleir Gizurr fóru unz þeir kvámu í stað þann í hjá Ólfossvatni, es kallaðr es Vellankatla, ok göðu orð þaðan til þings, at á móþ þeim skyldi koma allir fulltinsmenn þeira, af því at þeir höfðu spurt at andskotar þeira vildi verja þeim víg í þingvellinn. En fyrir en þeir færi þaðan, þá kom þar ríðandi Hjalta ok þeir er eptir várú með honum. En síðan ríðu þeir á þingit, ok kvámu ádr á móþ þeim frændr þeira ok vinir, sem þeir höfðu æst. En enir heiðnu menn hurfu saman með alvæpni ok hafði svá nær at þeir myndi þýr jask at <eigi> of sá á miðl.41

En annan dag eptir gengu þeir Gizurr ok Hjalti til Lögbergs ok baru þar upp erindi sín. En svá er sagt, at þat bæri frá, hvé vel þeir mæltu. En þat göðisk af því, at þar nefndi annarr maðr at ôðrum váttta, ok sogðusk hvárir úr lögum við aðra, enir kristnu menn ok enir heiðnu, ok gingu síðan frá Lögbergi.

Pá báðu enir kristnu menn Hall á Síðu at hann skyldi lög þeira upp segja, þau es kristnni skyldi fylgja. En hann leystisk því undan við þá, at hann keypti at Porgeiri lögsgóumanni, at hann skyldi upp segja; en hann vas enn þá heiðinn.43 En síðan er menn kvámu í búðir, þá

106 þingvellinn A. 110 eigi | a space is left for this word in A.
lagðisk hann niðr Þorgeirr ok breiddi feld sinn á sik ok hvíldi þann dag allan ok nóttna eptir ok kvað ekki orð. En of morguninn eptir settisk hann upp ok görði orð at menn skyldi ganga til Logbergis.

En þa hóf hann tölu sína upp, es menn kvámu þar, ok sagði at honum þótti þá komit daganna í ónýtt efni ef menn skyldi eigi hafa allir log ein á landi hér, ok talði fyrir mönnnum á marga vega at þat skyldi eigi láta verða, ok sagði at þat mundi at því ósætti verða, es vísaván vas at þær barsmíðir gørðisk á miðli manna es landit eyðdisk af. Hann sagði frá því, at konungar úr Norvegi ok úr Danmorku høððu haft ófríð ok orrostur á miðli sín langa tíð, til þess unz landsmenn gørðu frið á miðli þeira, þótt þeir vildi eigi. En þat råð gørðisk svá, at af stundu sendusk þeir gersemar á miðli; enda helt fríðr sá meðan þeir lifðu.

‘En nú þykkir mér þat ráð,’ kvað hann, ’at vérer látim ok eigi þá råða er mest vilja í gegn gangask, ok miðlum svá mál á miðli þeira, at hváritveggju hafi nakkvat síns máls, ok høftum allir ein log ok einn sið. Þat mon verða satt, es vérer slísum í sundr löginn, at vérer monum slíta ok fríðinn.’

En hann lauk svá máli sínu at hváritveggju játtu því, at allir skyldi ein log hafa, þau sem hann réði upp at segja.

Þá vas þat melt í lögum at allir menn skyldi kristnir vesa ok skírn taka, þeir er áðr várú óskírðir á landi hér. En of barna útburð skyldu standa en fornu log ok of hrossakjöts át. Skyldu menn blóta á laun, ef vildu, en varða fjørbaugsgardr ef váttum of kvæmi við. En síðar fám vetrum var sú heiðni af numin sem önnur.

Þenna utburð sagði Teitr oss at því er kristni kom á Ísland.

En Óláfr Tryggvason fell enda sama sumar at ségu Sæmundar prests. Þá barðisk hann við Svein Haraldsson Danakonung ok Óláf enn sœnska Eiríks son at Uppsþulm Svákonungs, ok Eirík, es síðan vas jarl at Norvegi, Hákonarson. Þat vas þremr tegum vetra ens annars hundraðs eptir dráp Eadmundar, en þúsundi eptir burð Krists at alþýðu tali.

(f) Events during Gizurr’s episcopacy

Chapter 10

. . . Gizurr byskup vas ástsælli af öllum landsmönnum en hvet maðr annar þeira es vér vitím hér á landi hafa verit. Af ástsæld hans ok af

148 vetrum A. 151 vitam A.
tölum þeira Sæmundar með umbráði Markúss lógsögumanns51 vas þat í lög leitt, at allir menn tölðu ok vírðu allt fé sitt ok sóru at rétt virt væri, hvárt sem vas í lóndum eða í lausaaurum, ok göðu tíund af síðan.52 Þat eru miklar jarðegnir, hvat hlýðnir landsmenn váru þeim manni, es hann kom því fram at fé allt vas virt með svardögum þat es á Íslandi vas, ok landit sjálftr at fóður af gorvar ok lög á lögð, at svá skal vesa, meðan Ísland es byggt. Gizurr byskup lét ok lög leggja á þat, at stóll byskups þess es á Íslandi væri skyldi í Skálaholti vesa, en aðr vas hvergri, oklógði hann þar til stólsins Skálaholtisland ok margra kynja auðøfi þonnur, bæði í lóndum ok í lausum aurum.53 En þá es honum þótti sá staðr hafa vel at auðøfum þróazk, þá gaf hann meir en fjórðung byskupsdóms sínis til þess at heldr væri tveir byskupsstólar á landi hér en eindi, svá sem Norðlendingar æstu hann til.54 En hann hafði aðr látit telja búendr á landi hér, ok váru þá í Austfirðingafjörðungi sjau hundrudó heil, en í Rangæingafjörðungi tíu, en í Breið-firð-ingafjörðungi núu, en í Eyfirðingafjörðungi tólf, en ótaldir váru þeir es eigi áttu þingfararkaupi at vegna of allt Ísland.55

Úlfheðinn Gunnars sonr ens spaka tók lógsögug eptir Markús ok hafði nú sumur; þá hafði Bergþórr Hrafnoðssonr sex, en þá hafði Godmundr Þorgeirssonr tólf sumur.56 Et fyrsta sumar es Bergþórr sagði lög upp vas nýmæli þat gort at lög ör skyldi skrifa á bók at Hafiða Mássonar of vetrinn eptir at sögu ok umbráði þeira Bergþórs ok annarra spakra manna þeira er til þess váru teknir.57 Skyldu þeir gørva nýmæli þau òll í lósum er þeim litisk þau betri en en fornú lög. Skyldi þau segja upp et næsta sumar eptir í lógrétu ok þau òll halda es enn meiri hlutur manna máelt þá eigi gegn. En þat varð at fram fara, at þá vas skrifaðr Vígslóði ok margt annat í lósum ok sagt upp í lógrétu af kennimönnum of sumarit eptir.58 En þat líkaði òllum vel, ok máelt því manngi í gegn.

Pat vas ok et fyrsta sumar es Bergþórr sagði lög upp, þá var Gizurr byskup óþingfær af sótt. Pá sendi hann orð til Alþingis vinum sínnum ok hóðingjum at bíðja skyldi Þorláki Rúnólfss son Þorleiks sonar, bróður Halls í Haukadali,59 at hann skyldi láta vígjask til byskups. En þat gerðu allir svá sem orð hans kvámu til, ok fékkss þat af því, at Gizurr hafði sjálftr fyrir mjökk beðit, ok för hann útan þat sumar en kom út et næsta eptir ok vas þá vígðr til byskups.

Gizurr vas vígðr til byskups þá es hann var fertøgr.60 Pá vas Gregórúss septimus páfi.61 En síðan vas hann en næsta vetr í Danmörku ok kom
of sumarit eptir hingat til lands. En þá es hann hafði verit fjóra vetr ok
tuttugu byskup, svá sem faðir hans, þá vas Jóan Ógmundarsonr vígðr
til byskups fyrstr til stóls at Hólum;62 þá vas hann vetri miðr en hálf-
sextøgr. En tólf vetrum síðar, þá es Gizurr hafði alls verit byskup
sex vetr ens fjórða tegar, þá vas Þorlákr vígðr til byskups; hann lét
Gizurr vígja til stóls í Skálaholti at sér lifanda. Þá vas Þorlákr tveim
vetrum meir en þríttøgr, en Gizurr byskup andaðsk þremr tegum náttta
síðar í Skálaholti á enum þriðja degi í viku <quinto> kalendas Junii63

193 hálfsettøgr A. 196 náttum A.
Notes

1 On the Prologue to Íslendingabók and the difficulties it presents, see Turville-Petre 1953, 88–102; Jón Jóhannesson 1956, xiv–xxiii. The problems revolve around: (a) the meaning of fyr útan; (b) what the words áttartala and konungaævi refer to; and to some extent (c) the meaning of of et sama far. On these problems see note 3 below and NION III, s.v. far.

2 Sæmundr Sigfússon was a member of the Oddaverjar family, with its ancestral home at Oddi, just east of where the River Rangá in Ýtri flows into Þverá (south-western Iceland) (cf. HOIC 231–32, 362). He studied on the Continent and is credited with a now lost synoptic work about the kings of Norway believed to have been written in Latin. After his death, he became a legendary figure in Icelandic folklore and, for example, the poems of the Elder Edda were wrongly attributed to him (cf. Jónas Kristjánsson 1988, 25–26). Like Ari Porgilsson, he was nicknamed inn fróði, ‘the Learned’. Cf. p. 56 above; Turville-Petre 1953, 81–87; MS, s.v. Sæmundr Sigfússon inn fróði.

3 of et sama far: ‘on the same subject’; or ‘covering the same ground’ (so ION 207); or possibly ‘in the same way’.

The majority of scholars understand fyr útan to mean ‘without’, i.e. that áttartala and konungaævi, which were to be found in the earlier version of Íslendingabók, have been omitted in the second, preserved, version. But others have suggested that they mean ‘apart from’ and that the áttartala and konungaevi are an addition to the earlier version and are to be found in the preserved version.

áttartala is formally singular but is probably used here in a collective sense; the element -ævi in konungaævi is plural. The first word may be roughly translated ‘genealogies’, the second ‘lives of kings’. Precisely what are referred to here is less certain and depends to some extent on the interpretation fyr útan in line 3. If fyr útan is taken to mean ‘apart from’ and the items referred to are assumed to be present in the preserved version of Íslendingabók, then the word áttartala might refer (for example) to the genealogies of the bishops following ch. 10 (referred to by Ari himself as kyn byskupa Íslendinga ok áttartala), and konungaævi might refer to various chronological statements in the present Íslendingabók relating events in Icelandic history to the
lives of foreign kings (cf. lines 7–14, 145–49). If the items in question were in the earlier version but have been removed in the preserved one, then this matter becomes a much more speculative one, and one which has received much scholarly attention (cf. note 20 below).

4 On the discovery and settlement of Iceland, see BS; Jones 1986, especially 27–72; MS, s.v. Iceland; HOIC 1–34.

5 While it is not possible to give exact dates, Haraldr hárfagri probably lived from about 855 to about 935. He is said to have been descended from the Swedish Yngling dynasty and his father, Hálfdan inn svarti, was king of Vestfold. Haraldr succeeded to the throne as a young man and, partly in alliance with the earl of Hlaðir, Hákon Grjótgarðsson, extended a hegemony widely in Norway. Sometime in the 890s he won a decisive sea-battle at Hafrsfjorden (near Stavanger) and in so doing established control of the south-western part of the country. He may, to a certain extent, therefore, be regarded as the first ruler of all Norway, though when written sources represent his tyranny as a major cause of emigration by Norwegian chieftains to Iceland, there is doubtless some exaggeration involved. Cf. MS, s.v. Haraldr hárfagri (“fair-hair”) Hálfdanarson.

6 Teitr, a son of Ísleifr Gizurarson, was Ari’s main mentor and teacher (cf. fóstri). It is he whom Ari refers to most frequently as an informant (cf. lines 36, 93, 144). He seems to have had several other pupils as well as Ari. He died in 1110.

7 Þórður Gellisson is also mentioned in Laxdæla saga. He is said to have lived at the important farm of Helgafell on Snæfellsnes. See also note 31 below.

8 Þórðr died in 1112 at the age of 88. Her father, Snorri goði Þorgrímsson (d. 1031), appears in Eyrbyggja saga as a major character and in several other sources.

9 Ívarr was a prominent Viking chieftain of the second half of the ninth century. The sources about him include, in addition to Icelandic ones, The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Irish annals, Adam of Bremen’s
Gesta (cf. p. 56 above) and Saxo Grammaticus’s Gesta Danorum. He was presumably a leader of the large Danish army which invaded East Anglia in 865 (cf. note 10 below). He also took part in an attack on York at about the same time in which the rival English kings Ælla and Osbert were killed. The Annals of Ulster describe him as the ‘king of the Northmen of all Ireland and Britain’. He died in about 873. The legendary Ragnarr loðbrók could well represent a combination of two different historical figures, one of whom is likely to have been a parent of the historical Ívarr. However this may be, Ari probably conceived loðbrók as a nickname for Ragnarr and then in some such sense as ‘shaggy breeches’. Cf. Rory McTurk, Studies in Ragnars saga loðbrókar and its major Scandinavian analogues (1991).

10 Edmund the Martyr, king of the East Angles, resisted the Danish invasion of his kingdom, was taken prisoner and, when he rejected Ívarr’s demands for tribute and allegiance, was put to death (20th November 869) by being shot with arrows. On the apparent discrepancy between the date of Edmund’s death in 869 and that given by Ari in lines 13–14 (i.e. 870), see note 49 below.

11 It is uncertain what written work about St Edmund is referred to. De miraculis Sancti Eadmundi, written shortly before 1100 by the English cleric Hermannus, is perhaps the most likely, though Abbo of Fleury’s Passio Sancti Eadmundi (written c. 988) is another possibility. Cf. Strömbäck 1975, 19 note 1.

12 Ingólfr is traditionally regarded as the first Scandinavian settler in Iceland and founder of modern Reykjavík. Ari gives no name for his father but some later sources refer to him as the son of Þrn, others of Bjórnólfr, the latter perhaps more correctly. Cf. HOIC 13 footnote 35.

13 Modern research supports the suggestion here that, at the time of its settlement, Iceland was much more extensively wooded than in Ari’s own. In the intervening period, over-exploitation by man and overgrazing by livestock led to deforestation. The birch continues to be the main type of tree in Iceland, but various kinds of willow, as well as the rowan and juniper, are also found quite widely.
14 *papar* (the word goes back ultimately to Latin *papa*, ‘father’) were Irish anchorite monks who had found their way to the Scottish islands, the Faroes and Iceland. Their presence in these places is suggested by place-names containing the element *pap-* (e.g. *Papa Stour* in Shetland, *Papey* off eastern Iceland). The Irish monk *Dicuil*, writing about 825, gives an account of an island in the far north he calls *Thile* which was visited by clerics some thirty years earlier. Most scholars have identified this with Iceland and Irishmen would thus have been first to set foot in Iceland, as early as the beginning of the ninth century. See *Dicuili Liber de mensura orbis terrae*, ed. and tr. J. J. Tierney (1967), 75–77; *HOIC* 3–7; Strömbäck (1975), 60–67; *A History of Norway and The Passion and Miracles of the Blessed Óláfr*, tr. Devra Kunin, ed. with introduction and notes by Carl Phelpstead (2001), 8 and 84–85.

15 It is not certain that books actually written in Irish are meant; books which were ‘Irish’ in their appearance, style and decoration may rather be intended. Cf. Ian McDougall, ‘Foreigners and Foreign Languages in Medieval Iceland’, *Saga-Book* XXII (1986–89), 180–82. The Irish monks would doubtless have counted their books great treasures. *Bagall* is a loan-word probably either from Old Irish (*bachall*) or Old English (cf. Middle English *bag* (*h*)el), both words themselves being ultimately derived from Latin *baculus*. The Icelandic word is often translated ‘crozier’ but may refer rather to the long stout walking-sticks (Latin *cambutta*) used by Irish monks. For illustrations of medieval croziers (though of a later date) found in Iceland, see *HOIC* 398 and Björn Porsteinsson 1987, 52. *Bjöllur* probably means small hand-bells. Such items have been found in Iceland and some of them, though they must derive from a date later than any Irish presence there, may have associations with the British Isles. See further P. W. Joyce, *A Social History of Ancient Ireland* (1903), I 343, 352–54, 372–78.

16 An ounce (*eyrir*) was a weight of about 27 g, and while basically used of silver as a medium of exchange, was also transferred to measure other media (homespun in ells, for instance) by a system of equivalences. There were eight ounces (*aurar*) to a mark (*mørk*) (cf. line 32 below). Cf. *HOIC* 328–35; *Laws* II 386, 389–90.
Landaurar, ‘land dues’, were primarily a toll which Icelanders were obliged to pay the king of Norway on arrival in that country. It was abolished by Gamli sáttmáli, ‘the Old Pact’, of 1262–64 which brought Iceland under Norwegian rule. But the word is also used in some sources of a tax imposed on those leaving Norway for other places. See HOIC 109–17, 282–87; Laws II 211 note 100.

Óláfr enn digri or Óláfr helgi Haraldsson is one of the most important figures of the Viking Age and the sources about him are numerous and diverse. He was a great-great-grandson of Haraldr enn hárfagri, born in Norway in about 995. He appears to have participated in wide-ranging Viking raids at an early age which took him to places as far apart as Finland and Spain. He was involved in the Danish attacks on England in the years 1009–1014 and was baptised in Rouen in Normandy at about this time. He returned to Norway in 1015 and established himself as the first effective ruler of the whole country. During his reign, Óláfr consolidated his power by the elimination of various petty chieftains and strengthening the civil administration of the country. He also continued the process of the conversion in which Óláfr Tryggvason had earlier played such an important part (cf. note 33 below). Because of external threats, primarily from Canute the Great, he was forced to seek asylum with Yaroslav in Russia in 1028 but returned two years later with a small army only to be defeated and killed at the Battle of Stiklarstaðir (modern Stiklestad) in Trøndelag on 29th July 1030. Although never officially canonised, Óláfr became the object of a considerable cult after his death and is regarded as patron saint of Norway. His shrine in the cathedral at Trondheim became a place of pilgrimage and a number of churches (not least in Britain) are dedicated to him. See MS, s.v. Óláfr, St.; Óláfs saga helga.

On Ari’s account of Úlfljótr’s Law and the establishment, site and institutions of the Alþingi, see HOIC 35–93; Laws I 1–6, 53–138; Björn Þorsteinsson 1987; MS, s.v. Alþingi. Some scholars take Ari’s statements about Úlfljótr’s Law as historically suspect (see note 21 below). Certainly the clauses found in various sources purporting to be from Úlfljótr’s Laws (cf. Halldór Hermannsson in Ari Thorgilsson 1930, 76–77) are probably most reasonably regarded as antiquarian reconstructions from the twelfth or thirteenth century.
20 Certain critics who think that Ari omitted the áttartala found in the earlier version of Íslendingabók when he made his second version (see note 3 above) have pointed to the words in this parenthesis as a possible vestige of material he unwittingly left behind when otherwise removing genealogical material (see Jón Jóhannesson 1956, xxi).

21 Golaþingslög was the law for western and southern Norway (cf. MS 385–86). It has been argued that Golaþingslög was not established until about 950, i.e. at a time later than the events here described. Further, the fact that the preserved Golaþingslög and laws of the Icelandic Commonwealth are so different makes it seem improbable that the former influenced the latter at an earlier stage of the development of both.

Fiorleifr is a shadowy figure who appears in a number of Kings’ Sagas. Some sources make him a relation of Úlfljótr or connect him with the establishment of Golaþingslög.

22 What Ari says of Grímr’s mission here is not entirely clear. The purpose of his search may have been to find a suitable meeting-place for the Alþingi. But it may have been to collect views on the very establishment of the assembly. The statement that each man gave Grímr a penny is also problematic. If he indeed gave the money to the temples (hof), this would suggest a close association between these institutions and the political administration of Iceland in heathen times. Cf. HOIC 38–39, 54–55.

23 It is disputed whether the reference is to a local assembly or to some sort of forerunner to the Alþingi. For a review of the arguments, see Halldór Hermannsson in Ari Thorgilsson 1930, 78; HOIC 35–40. A local assembly called Kjalarnessþing certainly existed during the Commonwealth period (see HOIC 76–77).

24 Little or nothing is known of this informant of Ari’s. He may have hailed from eastern Iceland.

25 The lawspeaker of the medieval Icelandic Commonwealth was elected for a period of three years, though he could always be re-elected. It was his duty to recite all sections of the law at Logberg (see note 41 below) during his term of office and the Assembly Procedures
Section (þingskaparmót) every year. He received a fee and half of the fines imposed by judgments at the General Assembly. Cf. Strömbäck 1975, 15 and note; HOIC 47–49; Laws I 187–88, 249–50; II 384–85.

26 On the discovery and settlement of Greenland by Scandinavians, see BS 48–50; HOIC 98–101; Krogh 1967; Gad 1970; Jones 1986, 73–114; MS, s.v. Greenland, Norse in.

27 The main sources for Eiríkr the Red and his family are Íslendingabók, Landnámabók, Grænlendinga saga and Eiríks saga rauða (cf. Jones 1986, 142–235). Eiríkr is said to have lived in the inner part of Eiríksfjörður at Brattahlíð (Qassiarsuk), where extensive Norse archaeological remains have been found. Eiríksfjörður, together with Einarsfjörður immediately to the south of it, formed the central part of Eystribyggð (‘Eastern Settlement’), the more southerly of the two medieval Scandinavian settlements in Greenland. The other settlement, Vestribyggð (‘Western Settlement’), lay in the area to the east of Greenland’s present-day capital, Nuuk. Both settlements were on the southern part of the west coast of Greenland. See the map in ÍF IV.

28 It is easier to understand the reasoning attributed to Eiríkr here if we remember that, as well as denoting the colour green, Old Norse grænn can mean ‘good; hopeful; advantageous’, where no notion of physical colour is present (cf. C–V 218). Thus in Finnboga saga ch. 6 (ÍF XIV 262), the superlative of the adjective is used with an understood noun kostr, the expression meaning ‘the best alternative’: sá mun grænstr at segja satt. Further, the noun kostr is used in the compound land(s)kostr, ‘quality, potential of (a) land for settlement’ (cf. Eiríks saga rauða ch. 11 (ÍF IV (1985), 430); Vatnsdæla saga ch. 15 (ÍF VIII 40–41).

29 austr ok vestr á landi is probably a reference to the two Scandinavian settlements in Greenland, Eystribyggð and Vestribyggð (cf. note 27 above).

30 The first element of the compound keiplabrot appears to be genitive plural of keipull, attested otherwise only in SnE, Skáldskaparmál 128. Different etymologies have been suggested for keipull: it may be a
loan-word (cf. Latin caupulus, Old English cuopel, ‘small ship’; Welsh ceubol, ‘ferry-boat’). Or it may be a diminutive of keipr, ‘boat’. It is not certain that the word keipull by itself necessarily denoted a skin boat, though doubtless it was remains of skin boats of some kind that Eiríkr and his men found. But for these, the word húðkeipr was the most precise term (e.g. in Flóamanna saga ch. 23 (ÍF XIII 289), and was used of the vessels of the Skrælingar in Grænlendinga saga ch. 4 (ÍF IV (1985), 255–56 — also keipr) and Eiríks saga rauða ch. 11 (ÍF IV (1985), 428).

The artefacts referred to by Ari in this paragraph were probably left behind by some early culture of Inuit, most probably the Dorset culture, which had visited and moved on from the areas of Greenland in question centuries before the arrival of the Scandinavians. Certainly vestiges of Dorset-culture settlement have been found in both the Eastern and Western Settlements by modern archaeologists. Vínland (literally ‘Wine-land’) refers to some area on the eastern side of the North American continent visited by Scandinavians from about AD 1000 onwards. The name is also known to us from Adam of Bremen’s Gesta (see p. 56 above) and e.g. Grænlendinga saga and Eiríks saga rauða. Although we do not know its exact definition, it may have included Newfoundland, on the northern tip of which island a Scandinavian site has been discovered at L’Anse aux Meadows. While there is archaeological evidence to suggest that there may have been contacts between Scandinavians and Dorset-Inuits in Newfoundland, we have no need to assume that in using the word Skrælingar here Ari is referring specifically to Dorset-Inuits. The word seems to have been applied indiscriminately by medieval Scandinavians to any non-Scandinavian people they encountered in Greenland or North America. Moreover, it is perfectly possible that the Scandinavians had not met with the Inuit in Greenland at the time from which Ari has his information; the Thule-Inuit (ancestors of the Inuit of modern Greenland) probably did not enter the northern part of the country from the Canadian islands until about AD 1100 at the earliest.

31 Porkell’s visit to Greenland, which must have taken place in the period c.1050–70 (cf. ÍF I 14 note 3), is mentioned only here. For another example of Ari mentioning his informants’ own sources, see lines 93–94 below and note 39.
On the conversion of Iceland, see Turville-Petre 1953, 48–69; HOIC 118–38; Strömbäck 1975; MS, s.v. Conversion. In addition to this account by Ari, the chief primary sources are Theodoricus monachus’ 

*Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium*, *Historia Norwegiae*, Ágrip, Oddr Snorrason’s Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar, Snorri Sturluson’s *Heimskringla*, *Njáls saga*, Kristni saga and Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta. The account in Kristni saga is particularly detailed.

At an early age (he was born c.968) Óláfr Tryggvason took part in Viking expeditions and The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells of his attacks on England in the early 990s (which involved the extortion of Danegeld). According to some sources, he was baptised in the Isles of Scilly (cf. pp. 83–84 above). He became king of Norway in 995 and during his short reign strove to further the cause of Christianity not only in Norway itself but also in the Scandinavian colonies in the west. In Norway his success was only partial. He died fighting King Sveinn Haraldsson (see lines 145–49 below and Text VI above). Cf. Strömbäck 1975, 31–37; MS, s.v. Óláfr Tryggvason; Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar.

Ari uses a number of Latin words (such as rex instead of konungr) and Latinisms in Íslendingabók (cf. line 197 below). This he may have done under the influence of specific Latin sources.

Pangbrandr (also known as Theobrand(us)) is mentioned in a number of sources (cf. note 32 above), some of which cite what are ostensibly contemporary verses about him. He appears to have been of either Flemish or Saxon origin. The element Pangbrand- appears in a number of Icelandic place-names, suggesting perhaps that he travelled widely in the country; see HOIC 128–31; Strömbäck 1975, 25–26.

Hjalti Skeggjason was Gizurr enn hvíti’s son-in-law, and plays an important part in Njáls saga. Gizurr belonged to what was perhaps one of the most distinguished Icelandic families of the Commonwealth period, the descendants of Ketilbjörn the Old, the original settler of a large part of south-western Iceland which included Mosfell, Skálaholt and Haukadalr. As seen here, he played an important part in the introduction of Christianity into Iceland and is a major figure in Njáls
saga. Among his descendants were his son Ísleifr, first bishop of Iceland (1056–80), Gizurr, second bishop of Iceland (1082–1106) and first bishop of Skálaholt (1106–18), and Gizurr Þorvaldsson (1208–68), who played an important part in the history of Iceland leading up to the end of the Commonwealth (see extract III above). The family (or parts of it) are sometimes referred to as the Mosfellingar, sometimes as the Haukdœlir.

36 pá er hann høfðu nítt, ‘who had insulted him’; probably more specifically ‘who had composed scurrilous verses about him’ The noun níð has roughly the sense of ‘defamation’, often of a sexual character; cf. Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, The Unmanly Man. Concepts of Sexual Defamation in Early Northern Society, tr. Joan Turville-Petre (1983), 28–32, 79–81; Laws II 197 note 16. Some of the verses said to have been composed about Þangbrandr have been preserved.

37 I.e. Óláfr Tryggvason.

38 The first day of summer was Thursday, 9th–15th April (cf. Laws II 15 note 84). Gizurr and Hjalti’s arrival in Iceland must have been 18th–24th June and thus more or less coincided with the beginning of the Assembly (Alþingi) (cf. Laws I 57).

39 Strömbäck (1975, 19) cites this sentence as an instance of how meticulous Ari could be in referring to his informants and their sources: ‘We may note, for example, that he establishes the fact that the two chieftains who were to bring Christianity to Iceland first landed in mid-June . . . in Vestmannaeyjar by referring to one of his best-informed source-men [i.e. Teitr; cf. lines 8–9, 36, 144], who had himself been told this by a man who was there on the islands at the time.’

40 Fjørbaugsgarðr, ‘lesser outlawry’, involved banishment from Iceland for three years (see Laws I 250). Under the laws of the Commonwealth, the penalty for reciting shaming slander (níð; see note 36 above) about another person was full outlawry (skóggangr); see Laws II 197–99.
On Logberg, see Laws I 251; HOIC 41–44; Björn Þorsteinsson 1987, 41–42 and passim. It was at Logberg that the recital of the laws by the lawspeaker took place (cf. note 25 above).

At geyja god probably means ‘to blaspheme (the) gods’; cf. the word godgá (line 99) which must mean ‘blasphemy’ (the second element of this word comes from the same root as geyja). The verse is ironical: ‘I do not wish to blaspheme the gods; (but) Freyja seems to me to be a bitch.’ It is in the metre málaháttr with internal and end-rhymes (cf. ION 317; SnE, Háttatal st. 83, or, in some versions, st. 80, 81, 85, 88, and p. 87). On the voluptuous fertility-goddess Freyja, see MRN 175–79; MS, s.v. Freyr and Freyja. In OddrÓT, Njáls saga (ch. 102) and Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta two further lines are added: Æ mun annat tveggja / Óðinn grey eða Freyja, ‘One of the two, either Óðinn or Freyja, will always be a bitch.’ Cf. Strömbäck 1975, 13–14.

It seems probable that Hallr was simply bribing Þorgeirr; OddrÓT says that Óláfr Tryggvason had given Gizurr and Hjalti a substantial sum of money before they left Norway ‘to make friends with chief-tains’. Cf. Strömbäck 1975, 30–31.

búðir were the temporary shelters used by those attending the Alþingi at Þingvellir and assemblies elsewhere in Iceland. Their walls would have been made of turf and stone and when in use they would have been roofed with awnings of canvas or homespun. See Björn Þorsteinsson 1987, 32–34.

Þorgeirr’s exemplum cited here is not historical and no real events are referred to. In Kristni saga the names of the two fictitious kings are given as Tryggvi (of Norway) and Dagr (of Denmark).

The exposure of unwanted infants (especially females) after birth (barna útburðr) appears to have been practised in heathen Iceland and is referred to in the sagas (e.g. Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu ch. 3). There was general Christian opposition to the consumption of horse-meat (hrossakjots át) in the Middle Ages, probably due to its association with heathen ritual rather than to the Mosaic Law, and, as Ari

47 The location of the battle is disputed. It may have taken place off the German island of Rügen (cf. p. 58 above and *Svølør* in *NION* III).

48 Sveinn Haraldsson (Sven Forkbeard) revolted against his father, Haraldr Gormsson, to ascend the throne of Denmark in about 986. In the 990s he was involved in attacks on England, one of them together with Óláfr Tryggvason. He also laid claim to Norway and after his defeat of Óláfr Tryggvason recorded here had control of much of that country. In 1013 he led a speedy invasion of England. Ethelred the Unready was driven into exile and Sveinn was king of the country for a few months until his death at Gainsborough on 3rd February 1114. Cf. *MS*, s.v. *Sven Haraldsson (Forkbeard)*.

Óláfr enn sønski (known in Swedish as Olof Skötkonung), son of King Erik the Victorious, ruled from c.995 and died c.1021. He is probably the first king who could be said to have ruled all Sweden, though only for a limited time. He embraced Christianity himself and attempted to impose it on his subjects, but was eventually frustrated by the heathen faction.

Eiríkr Hákonarson was son of Hákon Sigurðarson Hlaðajarl who had ruled Norway c.970–95. After the fall of Óláfr Tryggvason, Eiríkr and his brother Sveinn had control of parts of the country, though as subordinates of Sveinn Haraldsson. After Eiríkr was summoned to England by Canute in 1015, Óláfr Haraldsson (digri) returned to Norway and defeated Sveinn at the Battle of Nesjar. Eiríkr died in England as earl of Northumbria in about 1024.

49 Modern chronological investigations suggest that Christianity was in fact accepted at the Alþingi in June 999, and that Óláfr Tryggvason fell in battle in the September of that same year. The apparent discrepancy arises from the fact that Ari began his year on 1st September, as was not uncommon at the time. Cf. Strömbäck 1975, 2 note 1.

By the expression *at alþýðu tali* Ari refers to the system (now common) of dating historical events from the birth of Christ. This was introduced by Dionysius Exiguus (*fl. AD* 500) and fostered by the Venerable Bede (d. 735). Systems using other dates for Christ’s birth
were known in medieval Iceland, including that connected with Gerlandus of Besançon (fl. AD 1100) which assumes that Christ was born seven years later than Dionysius and Bede reckoned.

50 On Bishop Gizurr Ísleifsson, see HOIC 147–53; Turville-Petre 1953, 79–82. He was son of Ísleifr, first bishop of Iceland, and grandson of Gizurr enn hvíti who played such a notable role in the introduction of Christianity to Iceland (see lines 80, 88, 111 above). He was born in 1042, consecrated in 1082 (cf. note 60 below) and died in 1118. On laws of tithe, see Laws II 221–35, 398–99 and references; HOIC 147–50, 169–78. On the writing down of the secular laws, cf. HOIC 89–93; Laws I 9–16. And on Jón Ógmundarson and the foundation of the see of Hólar, see Turville-Petre 1953, 109–42, 197–99; HOIC 153–56; MS, s.v. Jóns saga ens helga. Cf. note 62 below and section XIV.

51 Earlier in chapter 10 of Íslendingabók, Ari mentions Markús as his informant for the terms of office of all the lawspeakers before his own time and gives Markús’s sources for the lawspeakers before his (Markús’s) time. Markús was a poet and composed, for example, a memorial poem in honour of King Eirik Ejegod of Denmark (d. 1103).

52 Iceland was the first of the Scandinavian countries to introduce tithes, at the Alþingi in 1096 or 1097. The amount was one per cent of a man’s unencumbered possessions; one quarter was sent to the bishop, a second quarter to the priest, a third to the local church and a fourth to the poor.

53 The land at Skálaholt had originally been part of Gizurr’s family estate (cf. note 35 above). After the death of his mother, Gizurr had it established by law that the bishop of Iceland should live at Skálaholt. Before that, no particular place of residence had existed.

54 The diocese of Skálaholt was to cover the eastern, southern and western quarters, while that of Hólar (established in 1106) was to cover the northern quarter. But the northern quarter was the largest and most populous, so Gizurr was giving up claim to more than one fourth of the tithes he had previously received. See HOIC 151.
For the boundaries of the four quarters of medieval Iceland, see the map in *Laws I* 280. Rangæingafjörðungr is often called Sunnlendingafjörðungr, Breiðfjörðungafjörðungr, Vestfjörðungafjörðungr and Eyjafjörðungr. Most (but not all) scholars regard the word *hundrað*, ‘hundred’, used here as referring to the so-called ‘long’ or ‘duodecimal’ hundred (i.e. 120) rather than the ‘decimal’ hundred (i.e. 100) (cf. C–V 292–93; *Gr* 3.4.1). If this is right, then the total number of farmers who paid assembly attendance dues in Iceland was about 4,560, otherwise about 3,800. These figures have been used to calculate the total population of Iceland at the end of the eleventh century and have produced estimates as high as 80,000.

*Pingfararkaup* was paid by every householder with means above a prescribed level if he or a proper substitute did not attend the General Assembly and was received by those who did attend (cf. *HOIC* 61; *Laws II* 366 and references; Björn Þorsteinsson 1987, 25).

The words *en þá hafóa Þorgeirssonr tílf sumur* are probably not original to the second version of *Íslendingabók*, that is, they were very likely added to it later, either by Ari himself or by someone else. Cf. p. 101 above.

Haflíði Másson (d. 1130) lived at Breiðabólstaðr (in modern Vestur-Húnavatnssýsla). He was one of the most powerful chieftains of his time. His feud with Þorgils Oddason over the years 1117–21 is the subject of *Þorgeirssonr tílf sumur* are probably not original to the second version of *Íslendingabók*, that is, they were very likely added to it later, either by Ari himself or by someone else. Cf. p. 101 above. *Sturlunga saga* (cf. p. 23 above). The text written at Breiðabólstaðr in the winter of 1117–18, referred to by modern scholars as ‘Haflíðaskrá’, is mentioned in the Konungsbók version of *Grágás*, the laws of the Icelandic Commonwealth, where it is said that ‘everything in the book which Haflíði had made is to be accepted unless it has since been modified, but only those things in the accounts given by other legal experts which do not contradict it, though anything in them which supplies what is left out there or is clearer is to be accepted’; cf. *Laws I* 190–91, 4–5, 9–16.

It was probably read out by clerics rather than the lawspeaker, Bergþórr, because the latter could not read.
59 It was at Hallr’s home in Haukadalr that Ari was brought up (cf. p. 99 above). Hallr has been referred to as ‘one of the main channels through which tradition flowed from ancient to medieval Iceland’ (Turville-Petre 1953, 89). He died at the age of ninety-four in 1089. Although he could neither read nor write, he had an excellent memory and could, for example, remember his baptism by the missionary Pangbrandr. He had been in the service of King Óláfr Haraldsson of Norway and was renowned for his good works.

60 Gizurr’s consecration was attended with certain difficulties. Gizurr would normally have been consecrated by the archbishop of Hamburg–Bremen, under whose authority the church in Iceland came. In the Investiture Controversy between the papacy and the German Empire (cf. DMA VI, 498–500 and references), however, the archbishop of the time, Liemarus, had allied himself with the Emperor (Henry IV) against Pope Gregory VII (see note 61 below) who had then suspended and excommunicated him (1074). Gizurr, who supported the Pope, was therefore forced to travel to visit Gregory to seek advice, and it was at his bidding that Gizurr was consecrated by archbishop Hartwig of Magdeburg (on 4th September 1082). It was partly these circumstances which were the cause of the relatively long interval between Ísleifr’s death (5th July 1080) and Gizurr’s consecration. Cf. HOIC 147.

61 Gregory VII (originally Hildebrand) is regarded as one of the great reforming popes of the Middle Ages. His letters attest to his concern for the fortunes of the Church in places as far apart as Spain, Norway and Hungary.

62 Jón Ógmundarson was born about 1052 and was first bishop of Hólar from 1106 until his death in 1121. Haflíði Másson may have been involved in the choice of Hólar as a suitable location for the centre of the northern see (cf. HOIC 153). As bishop, Jón established a school at Hólar and also planned the foundation of the first Icelandic monastery at Pingeyrar, though this was not established until 1133. He strove against the remnants of heathen practice and belief which were still alive in his diocese. For example, he forbade the naming of the days of the week after the pagan gods and this prohibition is reflected in present-day Icelandic (see XIV:79–82 below). The Alþingi
officially endorsed the cult of Jón as a saint in 1200. See references in note 50 above.

63 *quinto kalendas Junii* is short for *quinto die ante kalendas Junii*, ‘the fifth day before the calends of June’. According to the Roman calendar, the calends (*kalendae*) of a month was its first day. The ordinal numeral *quintus* is inclusive, counting the days at both ends (i.e. the day referred to and the day of the calends). The date is, therefore, 28th May. The addition of the word *quinto* is made on the basis of *Hungrvaka*, a synoptic history of the early bishops of Iceland. On the Roman calendar, see e.g. Benjamin Hall Kennedy, *The Revised Latin Primer*, ed. and revised by James Mountford (1962), 215–17.
IX: FÐRÝMSKVIÐA

Prymskviða, an eddic poem in which the god Þórr, disguised as the goddess Freyja, recovers his hammer from the giant Prymr, who has refused to give it back unless he is granted Freyja in marriage, is preserved only in the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda, Gks 2365 4to. This manuscript dates from the second half of the thirteenth century, but gives clear signs of having been copied from an older exemplar. Few scholars would now accept E. V. Gordon’s view (ION, 136) that Prymskviða ‘was probably composed about 900’; compelling reasons have been adduced for regarding it as much younger than that, perhaps even from the first half of the thirteenth century. One of these is the fact that it departs occasionally from the traditional rules of Old Norse alliterative poetry; in its first two lines it uses end-rhyme, and in line 112, which echoes line 104, it appears to sacrifice alliteration for an effect of near-repetition. With its frequent use of repetition, indeed (most notably at lines 10, 35 and 45), it may show the influence of European ballad poetry, Scandinavian examples of which are not reliably attested until the thirteenth century. Furthermore, the fundamentally comic tone and subject-matter of Prymskviða strongly suggest that, in the many cases where it shows close similarity of wording to other eddic poems, it is more likely to have been the borrower than the lender, since the contexts in which the relevant words occur in the other poems are mostly serious, and the borrowing of a serious passage for comic purposes in a poetic tradition is a more likely development than the reverse process. This at least suggests that Prymskviða is relatively late among the surviving eddic poems, even if it does not tell us much about its precise date. Examples are Prymskviða line 5 (repeated at lines 10, 35 and 45), which is word for word the same as the line in Brot af Sigurðarkviðu (st. 6) introducing Guðrún Gjúkadóttir’s question to her brothers about the whereabouts of her husband Sigurðr, whom they have slain; Prymskviða line 23 (echoed at line 25), which is identical with the sybil’s rhetorical question about the end of the world in Völuspá (st. 48); Prymskviða lines 53–55, which are identical with the lines in Baldrs draumar (st. 1) describing the debate among the gods and goddesses as to the reason for Baldr’s ominous dreams; and Prymskviða lines 108–09, which recall the description in Guðrúnarkviða I (st. 27) of how Brynhildr Buðladóttir’s eyes flashed fire at the sight of Sigurðr’s dead body. In at least one
case, rather than placing a serious passage from an earlier eddic poem in a comic context, *Prymskviða* may be building on a situation in such a poem where elements of comedy are already present. It is especially tempting, for example, to regard Loki’s words to Þórr in line 69, *þegi þú*, as an echo of *Lokasenna*, where the phrase occurs altogether sixteen times, and is four times used by Þórr in addressing Loki with the accompanying insult *rög vætr* ‘effeminate creature’ (*Lokasenna*, st. 57, 59, 61, 63); in *Prymskviða* it is used by Loki in addressing Þórr at the very moment when Þórr is afraid of being accused of effeminacy himself, as a result of having to dress up as a bride. The comic tone of *Prymskviða* does not in itself justify the view that the poem is of late, post-pagan date. ‘It does not follow that those who told humorous tales about the gods had ceased to believe in them’ (Turville-Petre 1953, 19). On the other hand, the fact that virtually no record is found outside *Prymskviða*, either in Snorri Sturluson’s Prose Edda or elsewhere, of a myth of Þórr’s loss and recovery of his hammer, might suggest, together with the tone of the poem, that *Prymskviða* was composed as a relatively late, comic, literary response to pre-Christian Scandinavian mythology, and that the story it tells was largely the product of literary invention.

It was considerations of this kind that led Peter Hallberg (1954, 51–77) to argue that Snorri Sturluson (died 1241) was the author of *Prymskviða*. Snorri, with his vast knowledge of Old Norse mythology and poetry, would certainly have been well equipped to compose a convincing pastiche of a mythological eddic poem. In doing so in the case of *Prymskviða*, according to Hallberg, Snorri invented the ‘myth’ of Þórr’s loss and recovery of his hammer, but was too conscientious a scholar to include any reference to it in his Prose Edda, which was intended as, among other things, a compendium of ancient myths. Taking the view that Snorri was especially fascinated by the idea of an awe-inspiring glance of the eye, Hallberg compared lines 108–09 of *Prymskviða* to the description of Þórr hoding his eyes in *Gylfaginning* 37/18–21 and to the description of King Eiríkr Bloodaxe’s piercing gaze in *Arinbjarnarkviða* (st. 5), a poem attributed in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, of which Hallberg believed Snorri was the author, to the tenth-century poet Egill Skallagrímsson, the saga’s hero (see *ÍF* II 259). It has recently been argued by Baldur Hafstað (1994) that Snorri was the author of *Arinbjarnarkviða* itself, as well as of *Egils saga*. 
This view, if it can be accepted, might lend some slight support to Hallberg’s argument.

Those who wish to argue for a late date for *Prymskviða* cannot afford to ignore (as Hallberg seems to do) the fact that it makes frequent use of the particle *um* (or *of*) before verbs, whether in the past tense (as in lines 2, 5, etc.), the past participle (as in lines 26, 81, 93, 128, etc.) or the infinitive (as in line 101, cf. line 109). In *Prymskviða* this particle occurs in contexts where, in Primitive Norse, the verbs in question would have had a prefix; in the case of *um komit*, line 93, for example, the prefix would have been *ga-*, cognate with the prefix *ge-* found in certain circumstances in verbs and other parts of speech in Old English and Modern German. Whereas in Old Norse, as the Glossary confirms, the *oflum* particle is meaningless, the prefixes it has replaced would in the prehistory of Old Norse have modified to a greater or lesser extent the senses of the words in which they occur; the prefix *ga-*, for example, might have imparted a perfective aspect or perhaps the sense of ‘together’ to the verb in which it occurred, so that the primitive Norse equivalent of *um komit* in *Prymskviða* line 93 might have meant ‘come together’, ‘assembled’. The fact that, from a historical-linguistic point of view, the *oflum* particle seems to be used ‘correctly’ in *Prymskviða*, i.e. in positions where, in Primitive Norse, a prefix would have occurred, strongly suggests that the poem is considerably older than Hallberg (for example) would claim. On the other hand, while it is uncertain how knowledgeable Old Norse speakers were of ancient forms of their language (see Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1966, especially 38–42), the possibility that the *Prymskviða* poet was using the particle as a deliberate means of archaising his style should not be discounted (though see Fidjestøl 1999, 228); and John McKinnell has recently argued (2000, 2, 14; 2001, 333, 335) that the poet has here been influenced by the use of the prefix *ge-* in late Old English verse. These considerations may not weigh heavily enough to allow for a date of as late as the thirteenth century for the composition of *Prymskviða*, however, and Hallberg’s view that the poem dates from that century, and particularly his view that it was composed by Snorri Sturluson, should be treated with caution.
Bibliography

Stanza numbers of Eddic poems correspond to those in *PE* (1962).


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IX: Ærýmskviða


G. Turville-Petre, Origins of Icelandic literature (1953).


The notes below are highly selective. Entries for mythical and legendary figures and locations mentioned in the poem will be found in Rudolf Simek, Dictionary of Northern Mythology, tr. Angela Hall (1993), in Andy Orchard, Dictionary of Norse Myth and Legend (1997), and in John Lindow, Handbook of Norse Mythology (2001). Although it has entries for only the major mythological figures, much useful information, including an entry on Ærýmskviða itself (by Alfred Jakobsen), will be found in MS. John Lindow’s descriptive bibliography, Scandinavian Mythology: an Annotated Bibliography, Garland Folklore Bibliographies 13 (1988), supplied as it is with a 90-page Index, will also be found helpful. Readers of German will find indispensable the commentary on Ærýmskviða in Klaus von See et al., Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda II: Götterlieder (Skírnismál, Háðbarðsljóð, Hymiskviða, Lokasenna, Ærýmskviða) (1997), 508–75.
IX: ÞRYMSKVIÐA

Reiðr var þá Ving-Þórr er hann vaknaði
ok síns hamars um saknaði;
skegg nam at hrista, skør nam at dýja,
réð Jarðar burr um at þreifask.

Ok hann þat orða alls fyrst um kvað:
‘Heyrðu nú, Loki, hvat ek nú mæli, 
er engi veit jarðar hvergi 
né upphimins: Áss er stolinn hamri!’

Gengu þeir fagra Freyju túna,
ok hann þat orða alls fyrst um kvað: 
‘Muntu mér, Freyja, fjadrhams lý, 
ef ek minn hamar mættak hitta?’

Freyja kvað:
‘Þó mynda ek gefa þér, þót ór gulli væri, 
ok þó selja, at væri ór silfri.’

Fló þá Loki, fjadrhamr dunði, 
unz fyr útan kom Ása garða 
of fyr innan kom þotna heima.

Þrymr sat á haugi, þursa dróttinn, 
greyjum sínum gullbænd snøri 
ok mørum sínum mœn jafnaði.

Þrymr kvað:
‘Hvat er með Ásum? Hvat er með álfum? 
Hví ertu einn kominn í Jóttunheima?’

‘Ilit er með Ásum, illt er með álum; 
hefir þú Hlórriða hamar um fólginn?’
'Ek hefi Hlórriða hamar um fólginn áttar röstum fyr jörð neðan; hann engi maðr aprtr um heimtir, nema færi mér Freyju at kvæn.'

Fló þá Loki, fjaðrhamr dunði, unz fyr útan kom jötna heima ok fyr innan kom Ása garða; møtti hann Þór miðra garða, ok þat hann orða alls fyrst um kvað:

‘Hefir þú erindi sem erfiði? Segðu á lopti löngr tíðindi; opt sitjanda sågor um fallask ok liggjandi lygi um bellir.’

‘Hefi ek erfiði ok örindi; Þýmr hefir þinn hamar, þursa dróttinn; hann engi maðr aprtr um heimtir nema hánun færi Freyju at kván.’

Ganga þeir fagra Freyju at hitta, ok hann þat orða alls fyrst um kvað: ‘Bittu þik, Freyja, brúðar líni. Vit skulum aka tvau í Jötunheim.’

Reið varð þá Freyja ok fnasaði; allr Ása slár undir bifðisk; stókk þat it mikla men Brísinga. ‘Mik veiztu verða vergjarnasta, ef ek ek með þér í Jötunheim.’

Senn váru Æsir allir á þingi ok Ásynjur allar á máli, ok um þat réðu ríkir tívar hvé þeir Hlórriða hamar um sötti.
Pá kvað þat Heimdallr, hvítastr Ása —
vissi hann vel fram, sem Vanir aðrir. —
‘Bindu vér Þór þá brúðar líni;
hafi hann it mikla men Brísinga.

Látum und hánum hrynja lukla
ok kvennváðir um kné falla,
en á brjósti breiða steina,
ok hagliga um hófuð typpum.’

Pá kvað þat Þórr, þrúðugr Áss:
‘Mik munu Æsir argan kalla,
ef ek bindask læt brúðar líni.’

Pá kvað þat Loki Laufeyjar sonr:
‘Þegar munu jótnar Ásgarð búa,
nema þú þinn hamar þér um heimtir.’

Bundu þeir Þór þá brúðar líni
ok inu mikla meni Brísinga;
létu und honum hrynja lukla,
ok kvennváðir um kné falla,
en á brjósti breiða steina,
ok hagliga um hófuð typpu.

Pá kvað þat Loki Laufeyjar sonr:
‘Mun ek ok með þér ambót vera;
vit skulum aka tvau í Jötunheima.’

Senn váru hafrar heim um reknir,
skyndir at sköklum, skyldu vel renna.
Bjǫrg brotnuðu, brann ǫrð loga,
ók Óðins sonr í Jötunheima.
Þá kvað þat Þrymr, þursa dróttinn:
‘Standið upp, jötnar, ok stráðið bekki!
Nú færð mér Freyju at kván,
Njarðar dóttur ör Nóatúnum.

Ganga hér at garði gullhyrndar kýr,
þöxn alsvartir jötni at gamni;
Þjóð á ek meiðma, þjóð á ek menja,
einnar mér Freyju ávant þykkr.’

Var þar at kveldi um komit snimma,
ofer jötna þol fram borit;
einn át oxa, átta laxa,
krásir allar þær er konur skyldu;
drakk Sifjar verr þald þrjú mjóðar.

Þá kvað þat Þrymr, þursa dróttinn:
‘Hvar sátta brúðir bíta hvassara?
Sáka ek brúðir bíta in breiddara,
né in meira mjóð mey um drekka.’

Sat in alsnotra ambót fyrrir,
er ord um fann við jötuns máli:
‘Át vætr Freyja átta nóttum,
svá var hon öðfús í Jötnheima.’

Laut und línu, lysti at kyssa,
en hann útan stókk endlangan sal.
‘Hví eru þondót augu Freyju?
Þykki mér ör augum þeldr um brenna.’

Sat in alsnotra ambót fyrrir,
er ord um fann við jötuns máli:
‘Svaf vætr Freyja átta nóttum,
svá var hon öðfús í Jötnheima.’
Inn kom in arma jótna systir,\textsuperscript{10} hin er brúðfjár\textsuperscript{11} biðja þorði.
‘Láttu þér af höndum hringa rauða,
ef þú呕吐ask vill ástir mínar,
ástir mínar, alla hyll.’

Pá kvað þat Prymr, þursa dróttinn:
‘Berið inn hamar brúði at vígja;
leggið Mjöllni í meyjar kné;
vígið okkr saman Várar hendi.’\textsuperscript{12}

Hló Hlórríða hugr í brjósti
er harðhugaðr hamar um þekði.
Prym drap hann fyrstan, þursa dróttinn,
ok ætt jótnuns alla lamði.

Drap hann ina öldnu jótna systur,
hin er brúðfjár of beðit hafði;
hon skell um hlaut fyr skillinga
en hogg hamars fyr hringa fjöld.
Svá kom Óðins sonr endr at hamri.
Notes

1. *fjaðrhams*: what seems to be involved here is a flying suit which can be worn without the wearer himself (or herself) changing into the form of a bird. While the motif of transformation into a bird for purposes of flight is common enough in Old Norse mythology and elsewhere, the idea of a detachable and transferable flying apparatus is relatively rarely attested. See McKinnell 2000, 2, 14, and McKinnell 2001, 335–36.

   *ljá*: if four is taken as the minimum number of syllables per half-line in the metre to which *Prymskviða* conforms, i.e. *fornyrðislag* (cf. *ION* §180), the monosyllable *ljá*, following here the disyllable *fjaðrhams*, means that the half-line in which it occurs is of the ‘short’ type, having only three syllables. Such ‘short types’ are also known as ‘reduced’ half-lines (see *ION* §178), since they reflect a reduction in syllable number resulting from various sound changes that took place in the course of the development of Old Norse from Primitive Norse. While reduced half-lines were apparently regarded as ‘permissible variants’, there can be little doubt that the metre of the poem would have sounded more regular if, in this line, the older (disyllabic) form *léa* had been employed in recitation. This consideration may be used together with the one involving the *ofum* particle (see the introduction above) as an argument either for the poem’s antiquity or, alternatively, for the view that the poet was making deliberate use of archaism. See also the notes to lines 65, 69 and 115 below.

2. *Prymr sat á haugi*: E. V. Gordon, in his note to this line (*ION*, 241), emphasises the royal and chieftainly associations of mounds. It may also be worth noting here that in the eddic poem *Hlǫðskviða* (*PE* 302–12), st. 14, Hlǫðr, the illegitimate son of King Heiðrekr, is referred to as sitting on a mound by one of the other characters in the poem in what appears to be a disparaging statement; this at any rate was the view of G. Turville-Petre, who in commenting on this stanza acknowledged that a king’s authority might be symbolised by his sitting on a mound, but mainly emphasised that ‘it was the practice of herdsmen to watch their stock from a mound, and there was no trade more deeply despised than that of the herdsman’ (see *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* 1956, 87).

   *þursa dróttinn*: this phrase, which is repeated in lines 41, 85, 98, 119 and 125, also occurs in the Canterbury and Sigtuna runic charms,
dating probably from the eleventh and tenth centuries respectively, where it is used in each case as a hostile term of address with reference to the disease or infection against which the charm is directed. On these see John Frankis 2000 and Jonna Louis-Jensen 2001. On the possible significance of this usage for the interpretation of Prymskviða, see note 12 below.

3 It is not clear whether it is Þórr or Loki who is speaking here. For a compelling argument that it is Þórr, see Perkins 1988. The view that it is Þórr is apparently also accepted by McKinnell 2000, 5; see further note 9 below.

4 *men Brísinga*: Freyja’s necklace. From parts of Snorri’s Skáldskaparmál for which Snorri cites as sources the poems Hádrápa and Haustlög, by Úlfr Uggason (tenth century) and Þjóðólfr of Hvinir (ninth century) respectively, it is possible to piece together a story of how Loki stole the Brísingamen from Freyja and how the god Heimdallr recovered it after he and Loki had contended for it in the form of seals (see SnE, Skáldskaparmál 19–20, 32). The anonymous fourteenth-century Sǫrla þáttr tells how Freyja obtained a necklace as a result of sleeping in turn with each of the four dwarves who made it; how Loki stole this necklace at Óðinn’s request by biting Freyja in the form of a flea while she was asleep, thus causing her to move so that he could unclasp it from her neck; and how Óðinn returned the necklace to Freyja after she had undertaken to start a fight between two kings that would constantly renew itself until a Christian warrior should intervene and kill them (this is the battle known as Hjaðningavíg, of which Snorri gives an account, also in SnE, Skáldskaparmál 72–73). The anonymous fourteenth-century Sǫrla þáttr tells how Freyja obtained a necklace as a result of sleeping in turn with each of the four dwarves who made it; how Loki stole this necklace at Óðinn’s request by biting Freyja in the form of a flea while she was asleep, thus causing her to move so that he could unclasp it from her neck; and how Óðinn returned the necklace to Freyja after she had undertaken to start a fight between two kings that would constantly renew itself until a Christian warrior should intervene and kill them (this is the battle known as Hjaðningavíg, of which Snorri gives an account, also in SnE, Skáldskaparmál 72–73). The Brísinga men of Old Norse sources may or may not be identical with the Brōsinga mene of Beowulf, line 1199, which according to that poem (lines 1197–1201) was carried off to a ‘bright stronghold’ by one Háma, who was escaping the hostility of Eormenric, and who ‘chose eternal gain’ (see Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg 1950, 45, 177–79). This story has an analogue in the mid-thirteenth-century Norwegian Piðriks saga af Bern, based on Low German sources. Piðriks saga does not mention any Brísinga men, but tells in chs 345 and 430 how Heimir (cf. Háma) was forced to flee the enmity of Erminrikr (cf. Eormenric) and entered a monastery, bringing with him, among other
things, ten pounds’ worth of movable property (Þiðriks saga af Bern, 1905–11, II 176–77, 375–77). For the view that in Þrymskviða the Brísingamen is a symbol of female sexuality, corresponding to the hammer as a symbol of male sexuality, see McKinnell 2000, 3–7, and cf. note 12 below.

5 *sem Vanir aðrir*: the natural meaning of these words is ‘like other Vanir’, but since Heimdallr was one of the Æsir, not one of the Vanir, as the preceding line confirms, this half-line might perhaps be translated ‘like those others, the Vanir’. But if the poem was written in Christian times, the lines may reflect the confusion of the author about the categories of Norse mythology.

6 *prúðugr Áss*: another ‘reduced’ half-line of only three syllables, where an older, disyllabic form of Áss (cf. Primitive Norse *ansur*) would have allowed perfect metrical regularity; cf. note 1 above.

7 *argan*: for valuable studies of what is conveyed by this adjective in Old Norse, see Ström 1974, and Meulengracht Sørensen 1983.

8 *þegi þú, Þórr*: since the two syllables of þegi are ‘resolved’, counting metrically as one (see ION §177), this amounts to another ‘reduced’ half-line of only three syllables, in which an older, disyllabic form of Þórr (cf. Primitive Norse *þunrar*) would have allowed perfect metrical regularity; cf. note 1 above.

9 Note the exact repetition here of line 47. There the use of the neuter plural form tvau, which would be expected where the two referred to are of different sexes, is plainly justified by the fact that a god (whether Þórr or Loki, cf. note 3 above), is addressing a goddess, Freyja. Here, however, the god Loki is addressing another god, Þórr. As McKinnell (2000, 5) points out, the use of tvau here has usually been interpreted in terms of gender role, i.e. as mockery of Þórr, with Loki addressing Þórr as a woman now that he is dressed like one; this is clearly the view of Perkins (1988, 282, 284). McKinnell (2000, 5–6) argues interestingly that it is to be explained rather in terms of Loki literally turning into a female, and Þórr, though disguised as a female, actually remaining male.
10 *jötna systir*, here and in line 127, may be just a kenning for ‘troll-wife’ rather than meaning literally ‘giants’ sister’.

11 *hin er brúðfjár* (cf. also line 128): since *hin er* might very well have been pronounced as one syllable (with substitution of older *es* for *er* permitting the elided form *hin’s*), this (like the identical first half of line 128) is probably to be taken as a metrically ‘reduced’ half-line, in which the older, disyllabic element -féar (as opposed to the monosyllabic -fjár) in brúðfjár would have allowed perfect metrical regularity; cf. note 1 above.

12 Richard Perkins (1994) argues that Þórr’s hammer is a phallic symbol, and that the placing of a hammer in the bride’s lap was a feature of pagan Scandinavian wedding ceremonies. His view that *Prymskviða* is about the loss and recovery of Þórr’s virility may be interestingly compared with McKinnell’s view (2000) of the poem in terms of Jungian psychology as being about the male fear of lost manhood (symbolised by the stolen hammer) and the female fear of male betrayal (symbolised by the broken necklace), cf. note 4 above. Frankis (2000, 2–5), on the other hand, suggests that the verb *vígja* ‘to bless’ as used in line 122 may carry with it something of the sense of ‘consign to perdition’, in which, he believes, the same verb is used in the Canterbury runic charm, where the object of the verb, *þik*, has the same referent as the phrase *þursa dróttinn* (cf. *Prymskviða*, lines 19, 41, 85, 98, 119 and 125), which immediately follows it, and which evidently refers to the blood-poisoning against which the charm is directed. In this view, Þórr’s recovery of his hammer and his use of it to destroy Prymr immediately afterwards would presumably symbolise recovery from, or the successful treatment of, some kind of medical condition.

Vár, according to SnE, Gylfaginning 29/36–38, ‘listens to people’s oaths and private agreements that women and men make between each other. Thus these contracts are called várar. She also punishes those who break them.’
Volundarkviða, which immediately follows Prymskviða in the Codex Regius, has long been regarded as one of the oldest eddic poems, i.e. as dating from the ninth century. A recent argument that it shows the influence of late Old English verse (see McKinnell 2001, 331–35), however, implies a date of composition in the tenth century or even later. It tells howVolundr and his two brothers meet and marry three swan-maidens, who after nine years fly away and leave them. While two of the brothers, Egill and Slagfiðr, go in search of their wives, Volundr stays behind, working at the craft of ring-making, and hoping for his wife’s return. He is then robbed by King Níðuðr of one of the rings he has made, is captured by him and hamstrung, and forced to serve him as a smith. After discovering that the stolen ring has been given to the king’s daughter, Bóðvildr, Volundr takes revenge, first by beheading the king’s two young sons and presenting their parents and Bóðvildr with some bowls, gems and brooches made from the boys’ skulls, eyes and teeth respectively; and secondly by seducing Bóðvildr, after assuring her that he will repair the ring, the breaking of which she has feared to reveal to anyone but him. Able now to fly, Volundr responds from the air to a question from Níðuðr about the fate of his two sons by first enjoining him to swear not to harm the woman by whom he, Volundr, may have a child, and then telling him how he has disposed of the two princes, and that Bóðvildr is pregnant. He flies off, leaving the distraught Níðuðr to hear from Bóðvildr herself about the nature of her relations with Volundr.

This story finds a lengthy parallel in that of Velent (= Volundr), which forms part of Píðreks saga af Bern, a thirteenth-century Old Norse prose presentation of what are mainly German narrative traditions. Velent, the son of the giant Vaði, is trained in smithcraft by two dwarves, of whose intention to kill him, however, he learns from his father before the latter’s death. Velent kills the dwarves and takes possession of their tools and precious metal. He builds a kind of submarine by hollowing out a tree-trunk and fitting it with glass windows, and arrives in this vessel in the realm of King Níðungr, whose service he enters and who at first treats him well. The king’s smith, Amilias, challenges him to make a sword that will cut through some armour that Amilias himself undertakes to make. Taking up the challenge, and dissatisfied with the first sword he makes, Velent reduces it to
dust by filing, feeds the file-dust to some poultry, and makes another sword from the birds’ droppings. Still not fully satisfied, he follows the same procedure with the second sword, thus making a third, which he calls Mímungr. With Mímungr, he cuts through Amilias’s armour and kills him, in accordance with the terms of the challenge. He replaces him as the king’s smith, and becomes famous as such. His fortunes then change, however. King Níðungr, marching to meet an invading army, realises after five days’ march that he has not brought with him his victory stone, and fears defeat as a result. He promises his daughter and half his kingdom to the man who can bring him the stone by the following morning, and Velent, the only one to undertake the task, manages by riding on his horse Skemmingr to fetch the stone on time. On his return, however, the king’s steward attempts to bribe Velent into giving him the stone so that he, rather than Velent, can claim the king’s reward, whereupon Velent kills the steward. He conveys the stone to the king, whose victory is thus assured, but the king, angered by the killing of the steward, who had been his favourite retainer, makes Velent an outlaw. Velent then tries to take revenge on the king by poisoning him, but is foiled in the attempt, and is punished for it by having tendons cut in both his legs, so that he is unable to walk. He adjusts to this situation by feigning willingness to comply with the king’s requirement that he resume work as his smith. When two of the king’s three sons ask him to make missiles for them he says that they must first visit him walking backwards soon after a fall of snow, which they do the next day after snow has fallen in the night. Velent kills them, and makes various items of household equipment for the king from their bones, including cups from their skulls. When the king’s daughter breaks her finest ring (not one of Velent’s in this account) and fears to admit it to her parents, Velent tells her maid that the princess herself must visit him before he will repair it. When she does so, he locks her in the smithy with him and has intercourse with her. Having sent for his brother Egill, a skilled archer, Velent obtains from him the feathers of some birds he has shot, and uses them to make a feather-costume, which enables him to fly. In it he flies onto a tower, from which he reveals to Níðungr what he has done with his sons’ bones, and taunts him with the likelihood that he has made his daughter pregnant. He then flies off. The king orders Egill on pain of death to shoot at Velent, but Egill aims deliberately at Velent’s left armpit, knowing
that Velent has secreted there a bladder filled with the blood of the king’s slain sons. He punctures the bladder, and Nīðungr, seeing the blood, believes Velent dead. When Nīðungr dies soon afterwards, his surviving son succeeds him, and Velent establishes friendly relations with him and marries his sister, who by now has given birth to Velent’s son, Viðga, to whom Velent passes on in due course the sword Mímungr and a shield on which a golden serpent is depicted.

While there are obviously close similarities between these two accounts, the differences between them make it safest to assume a common source for them both, rather than a direct relationship between them. Echoes of the story they tell are found in various Old English poems: in Deor, where Welund (= Völundr, Velent) and Beadohild (= Bövildr) are dwelt on as examples of patience under suffering — Welund because of his subjection to bondage by Nīðhad (= Nīðuðr), and Beadohild because her discovery that she was pregnant caused her even more distress than the death of her brothers; in Waldere, where Weland’s (sic) skills as a smith are praised, and from which it emerges that Þeodric (= Þiðrikr) intended to give Widia (= Viðga), the grandson of Nīðhad and son of Weland, the sword Mimming (= Mímungr), because he, Widia, had once saved Þeodric; and in Beowulf, where a fine battle-dress is described as ‘the work of Weland’. In a verse passage in King Alfred’s Old English translation of Boethius’s De consolatione Philosophiae reference is made to ‘the bones of the wise Weland, that goldsmith who was long ago most famous’; and in the medieval German Latin poem Waltharius there is mention of a coat of mail made by Weland, Wielandia fabrica, that shields Waltharius (= Waldere) from his attackers. Pictorial representations of the story are found in carvings on the whalebone casket of Northumbrian origin known as the Franks casket, dated to c.700, and preserved in the British Museum; on the picture stone Ardre VIII, dated c.800, on the Swedish island of Gotland; and in stone carvings from northern England dating from the ninth and tenth centuries, found variously on a hogback tomb preserved fragmentarily in Bedale Church, North Yorkshire, and on stone crosses preserved, more or less fragmentarily, in the Parish Church and the City Museum of Leeds, West Yorkshire, and in Sherburn Church, near Filey, North Yorkshire. Weland and Wade (= Vaði) have come to be associated through local legend with specific places in England, Denmark, and Germany; and Chaucer twice mentions Wade,
once in *Troilus and Criseyde* and once in *The Canterbury Tales*, referring in the latter instance, in the Merchant’s Tale, to ‘Wades boot’ (Wade’s boat) in a context of ‘muchel craft’ — an allusion, surely, to the underwater boat made, according to *Piöris saga*, by Velent, son of Vaði. This list of reflexes of the story is by no means exhaustive.

**Bibliography**


The notes below are more selective than in the case of *Prymskviða*. Exhaustive notes on *Völundarkviða* will be found in Dronke’s edition (in *The Poetic Edda* II (1997) and (in Icelandic) in that of Jón Helgason (*Tvær kviður fornar* (1966)), both listed in the Bibliography above. Entries on ‘Völund’ and ‘Völundarkviða’ (*sic*) will be found in Andy Orchard’s *Dictionary of Norse Myth and Legend* (1997), and reference may also be made to John Lindow’s *Scandinavian Mythology: an Annotated Bibliography*, Garland Folklore Bibliographies 13 (1988).
Frá Völund


Frá Völund ok Níðaði

Meyjar flugu sunnan,  myrkvíð í gögnnum,
Alvítr unga,  òrlog drýgja;
þær á sævar strönd  settusk at hvílask,
ðróðir súðrænar,  dýrt líð spunnu.

Ein nam þeira  Egil at verja,
ðøgr mær fira,  fáðmi ljósum;
ðønur var Svanhvít,  svanþjaðrar dýr;
en in þríðja,  þeira systir,
varði hvítan  hálss Völundar.

Sátu síðan  sjau vetur at þat,
en inn átta  allan þráðu,
en enn niunda  nauðr um skíldi;
meýjar fýstusk  á myrkván við,
Alvítr unga,  òrlog drýgja.

11, 13 Svanhvítar CR.  25 Ónundar CR.
Kom þar af veiði veðreygr skyti;
Slagfiðr ok Egill sali fundu auða;
gengu út ok inn ok um sásk.
Austr skreið Egill at Qlírúnu,
en suðr Slagfiðr at Svanhvítu.

36 En einn Völundr sat í Úlfðolum;
Hann sló gull rauitt við gimfastan,1
lukði hann alla lindbauga vel;
svá beið hann sinnar ljósar
kvánar, ef hánnum koma gerði.

39 Pat spyrri Níðuðr, Níara dróttinn,
at einn Völundr sat í Úlfðolum;
nóttum fóru seggir, négldar váru brynjur,
skildir bliku þeira við inn skarða mána.

42 Stigu ór söðlum at salar gafli,
gengu inn þaðan endlangan sal;
sá þeir á bast bauga dregna,
sjau hundruð allra, er sá seggr átti.

45 Ok þeir af torn, ok þeir á létu,
fyr einn útan, er þeir af létu.

51 Kom þar af veiði veðreygr skyti,
Völundr, líðandi um langan veg.
Gekk brúnni beru hold steikja;
hár brann hrísi, allþur fura,
viðr enn vinþurri, fyr Völundi.

54 Sat á berfjallí, bauga talði,
álfa ljóði, eins saknaði;
hugði hann at hefði Hlöðvés dóttir,
Alvítr unga, væri hon aptr komin.

31 vegreygr CR.  34 skreiðr CR.  43 váru CR.
Sat hann svá lengi at hann sofnaði,
ok hann vaknaði vilja lauss;
vissi sér á höndum hofgar nauðir,
en á fótum fjótur um spenntan.

‘Hverir ro þófrar, þeir er á lögðu
bestibyrsíma ok mik bundu?’

Kallaði nú Níðuðr, Níara dróttinn:
‘Hvar gaztu, Völundr, vísi álfa,
vára aura í Úlfdröllum?’

‘Gull var þar eigi á Grana leiðu,
fjarri hugða ek várt land fjöllum Rínar;
man ek at vér meiri mæti áttum,
er vér heil hjú heima várum.

‘Hlaðguðr ok Hervör borin var Hlóðvé,
kunn var Óldrún, Kíars dóttir.’

Hon inn um gekk ennlangan sal,
stóð á gólf, stillti røddu:
‘Era sá nú hýrr, er ór holti ferr.’

Níðuðr konungr gaf dóttur sinni Bóðvildi gull-ring þann er hann tók af bastinu at Völundar. En hann sjálfr bar sverði er Völundr átti. En dróttning kvað:

‘Tenn hánum teygjask, er hánum er tét sverð
ok hann Bóðvildar baug um þekkir;
ámun eru augu ormi þeim enum frána;
sníðið ér hann sina magni
ok setið hann síðan í sævar støð.’

Svá var gört, at skornar váru sinar í knésfótum, ok settr í hólmi einn er þar var fyrir landi, er hét Sævarstaðr. Þar smíðaði hann konungi

83 amon CR. 85 settið CR.
alls kyns görsimar. Engi maðr þorði at fara til hans nema konungr einn.

90  Völundr kvað:

‘Skínn Níðaði  sverð á linda,
þat er ek hvesta,  sem ek hagast kunna,
ok ek herðak  sem mér hægst þótti:
sá er mér, frán-n mækir,  æ fjarrí borinn;
sékka ek þann Völundi  til smiðju borinn.
Nú berr Bóðvildr  brúðar minnar
— þóðka ek þess bóti —  þaugur rauða.’

Sat hann, né hann svaf, ávalt,  ok hann sló hamri;
vél gørði hann heldr  hvatt Níðaði.

Drifu ungir tveir  á dýr sjá,
synir Níðaðar,  í sævar stóð.

102  Kómu þeir til kistu,  kröðu lukla,
opin var illúð,  er þeir í sá;
fjöld var þar menja,  er þeim mögum sýndisk
at væri gull rautt  ok görsimar.

‘Komið einir tveir,  komið annars dags!
Ykkr læt ek þat gull  um gefit verða.
Segiða meyjum  né salþjóðum,
manni öngum,  at it mik fyndið.’

Snemma kallaði  seggr á annan,
111  Bróðir á bróður:  ‘Gongum baug sjá!’

Kómu til kistu,  kröðu lukla,
opin var illúð,  er þeir í litu.
114  Sneið af hófuð  húna þeira,
ok undir fen fjóturs  føtr um lágði;
en þær skálar,  er und skórum váru,
sveip hann útan silfri,  soldi Níðaði.

92 hagazt CR.  115 logði CR.
En ór augum jarknasteina
sendi hann kunnigri konu Níðaðar;
en ór þönnnum tveggja þeira
sló hann brjóstkringlur, sendi Bǫðvildi.

Þá nam Bǫðvildr baugi at hrósa,
er brotit hafði:
‘Póriga ek at segja, nema þér einum.’

Völundr kvað:

‘Ek bœti svá brest á gulli,
at feðr þínnum fegri þykkir,
ok mœðr þinni miklu betri,
ok sjálfri þér at sama hófi.’

Bar hann hana bjóri, því at hann betr kunni,
svá at hon í sessi um sofnaði.
‘Nú hefi ek hefnt harma minna,
allra nema einna íviðgjarra.

‘Vel ek,’ kvað Völundr, ‘verða ek á fitjum
þeim er mik Níðaðar námu rekkar.’
Hlæjandi Völundr hófsk at lopti.
Grátandi Bǫðvildr gekk ór eyju,
tregði for friðils ok foður reiði.

Úti stendr kunnig kván Níðaðar,
ok hon inn um gekk endlangan sal;
en hann á salgarð settisk at hvílask:
‘Vákir þú, Níðuðr, Níara dróttinn?’

‘Vaki ek ávalt, vilja laus», sofna ek minnst sízt mína sonu dauða;
kell mik í hofuð, köld eru mér ráð þín,
vilnumk ek þess nú, at ek við Völund dœma.

133 íviðgjarra CR. 143 vilja ek CR.
‘Seg þú mér þat, Völundr, vísi álfa:
af heilum hvat varð húnum mínum?’

‘Eiða skaltu mér áðr alla vinna,
at skips borði ok at skjaldir rönd,
at mars bægi ok at mækis egg,
at þú kveljat kván Völundar,
né brúði minni at bana verðir,
þótt vör kván eĩ gióm, þá er þér kunnið,
eĩa jóð eigim innan hallar.

‘Gakk þú til smiðju þeirar er þú gørðir,
þar fiðr þú belgi blóði stokkna.
Sneið ek af hǫfuð húna þinna,
ok undir fen fjóðurs fœtr um lagðak.

‘En þær skálar, er und skórum váru,
sveip ek útan silfri, senda ek Níðar;
en ör augum jarknasteina
senda ek kunnigri kván Níðar.

‘En ör þonnum tveggja þeira
sló ek brjóstkringlur, senda ek Bóðvildi;
nú gengr Bóðvildr barni aukin,
eingadóttir ykkur beggja.’

‘Mæltira þú þat mál er mik meirr tregi,
né ek þik vilja, Völundr, verr um níta;
erat svá maðr hár at þik af hest taki,
né svá offlugr at þik neðan skjóti,
þar er þú skollir við ský uppi.’

Hlæjandi Völundr hófsk at lopti,
En ókátr Níður sat þá eptir.

148 sonum CR.
‘Upp rístu, Ḟak-k-ráðr, þræll minn inn bezti, 
bið þú Bōdvildi, meyna bráhvítu, 
ganga fagrvarið við fōður røða.’

‘Er þat satt, Bōdvildr, er sǫgðu mér: 
sátuð it Vǫlundr saman í hólmi?’

‘Satt er þat, Níðaðr, er ságði þér: 
sátu vit Vǫlundr saman í hólmi 
eina ċgurstund? — æva skyldi!
Ek vætr hánum 〈vinna〉 kunnak, 
ek vætr hánum vinna máttak.’
Notes

1 *vid gímfastan*: the Codex Regius here has *vid gímfaþtan*. La Farge and Tucker (1992, 85), following Hans Kuhn (1968, 75), understand *gímfastan* as the masculine accusative singular of a compound adjective *gímfaþr* ‘fireproof’, formed from *gím*, n., a poetic word for ‘fire’, and from the adjective *faþr*, meaning ‘fast’ in the sense of ‘firm’, ‘fixed’. On this basis they take *gímfastan* to refer here to the fireproof quality of an anvil, a suggestion which involves assuming the implicit presence in the sentence of the noun *stèdi*, m., ‘anvil’ in its accusative singular form, *stèja*. The phrase *vid gímfastan stèja* would thus mean ‘on a fireproof anvil’. Another possible reading is *vid gímfastan*, which would involve taking *gím* as the accusative singular of a masculine noun *gímr* ‘gem’, which is not otherwise attested in Old Norse (where, however, the compound *gímsteinn*, m. ‘precious stone’ is found). Since *gím*, m., is the usual Old English word for ‘gem’, ‘jewel’, McKinnell (2001, 331), who adopts this reading, sees *gím* here as one example of Old English influence on *Völundarkviða*. The meaning of the phrase, in this reading, would be ‘round the firmly-held gem’ (cf. also *The Poetic Edda* II, ed. U. Dronke (1997), 245, 308). A third possibility is to read *vid gímfaþtan*, with *gím* taken once again as the accusative singular of a masculine noun meaning ‘gem’ and as qualified by *faþtan*, the masculine accusative singular of the superlative form, *faþr*, of the adjective *fár* (found most often in compounds such as *dreyrfár* ‘blood-coloured’), meaning ‘multicoloured’ or ‘highly coloured’, ‘bright’. This reading, which would give the meaning ‘round the brightest (of) gem(s)’, is the one adopted in Jón Helgason’s edition, *Tvær kviður fornar* (1966), 59. Of these three possibilities, it is the first that is favoured here.

2 *bestihysíma*: previous commentators have found the element -*byr*-problematic, and have preferred to discount it by emending to *bestísíma*, taking *-síma* as the accusative singular of *sími*, m., ‘rope’, ‘cord’, ‘bond’ (or of *síma*, n., ‘thread’), and as forming together with *bestí*, n., ‘bast’, ‘bark-fibre’ (= *bast*, n., cf. line 47) a compound noun *bestísími*, m. (or *bestísíma*, n.), meaning ‘bast rope’, ‘cord made of bark-fibre’. It may be noted, however, that Hødnebø (1972, 67), gives under *byrr*, m. (‘fair wind [for sailing]’, ‘favourable wind’), the phrase *binda byr við*
as meaning ‘to delay’, ‘hold back’, though it is not clear from the example he gives whether these meanings are to be understood in a transitive or intransitive sense: ‘bundu eigi lengi síðan byr við ok riðu aprtr síðan skyndiliga.’ What seems to emerge from this example (which is from Pørgils saga ok Haflíða, cf. the edition of Ursula Brown (1952, 37, 89)) is that the phrase means ‘to restrict (or tie) one’s time of departure to (the opportunity afforded by) a fair wind’, i.e. to delay or postpone a projected journey until such time as conditions are favourable. If the phrase may be taken as indicating that the noun byrr had associations of delay or restraint (as well as of auspiciousness), it is conceivable that byrsími, m., or byrsíma, n., might be interpreted as meaning ‘a rope or cord used for the purpose of (temporarily) restraining someone’, i.e. for tying someone up (until the time is ripe for his or her release). On this basis it may be very tentatively suggested that what is present here is the accusative singular of either bestibyrsími, m., or bestibyrsíma, n., meaning ‘a restrictive rope or cord made of bast or bark-fibre’.

3 Grana: Grani was the horse ridden by Sigurðr Fáfnisbani (see the introduction to IV, above), and used by him for, among other things, transporting the gold he won as a result of slaying the dragon Fáfnir; see PE, 188. Grana leið ‘Grani’s path’ therefore presumably means Gnitaheiðr (PE 180), which together with the mention of the mountains of the Rhine in the next line suggests that there has been some contamination of the story of Vølundr with that of Sigurðr.

4 sævar støð: ‘landing place by the sea’. The landing place in question seems to have been on an island, to judge from the phrases ór eyju and í hólmi, the former occurring in line 137 and the latter in lines 179, 181. Although sær can mean ‘lake’ as well as ‘sea’, the latter meaning seems the more likely one in the present context, in view of the possible tidal connotations of the word Ógurstund, see the note on that word below. The writer of the prose narrative accompanying Vølundarkviða in the Codex Regius has clearly understood the expression sævar støð as a place-name (see note 7, below), and as the name of an island, see lines 86-87.

5 Here the expression sævar støð (see the previous note) appears to
have been understood as a place-name, with the noun stóðr, f., ‘landing place’, ‘place where boats are beached’, being replaced by the noun staðr, m. ‘place of settlement’, here suffixed to Sævar-.

6 verða ek á fitjum: ‘if I could get (or rise?) on upward-pushing feet’. One meaning of fit, f., is the ‘web’ of the kind found on the feet of certain aquatic birds, which might suggest that Völundr is here speaking of himself as partaking of the nature of such a bird, and envisaging leaving the island referred to in line 137 either by swimming or flying. Another meaning is the ‘hind flipper’ of a seal or walrus; according to Jón Helgason (Tvær kviður fornar 1966, 74), the expression verða á fitjum would express well the idea of a seal moving into an upright position by sitting up on its hind flippers. Given the German connections of the story (see the Introduction) it is likely that the noun fit also carries here something of the sense of Middle Low German vittek ‘wing’ (cf. Tvær kviður fornar 1966, 74, and La Farge and Tucker 1992, 61).

7 ògurstund: Ásgeir Blöndal Magnusson (1977) argues convincingly that this word as used here reflects two meanings: (1) ‘the (brief) period of time between the reaching by the tide of its highest level and its beginning to ebb’, for which the Modern Icelandic dialect expression að bíða eftir ögrinu ‘to wait for the turning of the tide’ provides evidence; and (2) ‘a time of great distress’, which finds support in evidence from c.1500, cited by Ásgeir Blöndal and also by Jón Helgason (Tvær kviður fornar 1966, 80), that ögr, ögur, n., could mean ‘heavy heart’. The meaning here may well be no more than ‘a brief time of great distress’, though it is perfectly possible that the tidal associations are present here as well; cf. note 4, above.
XI: ÞIÐREKS SAGA

This extract from Þiðreks saga af Bern (cf. the introduction to X, above) has been chosen for the Reader partly because of the relative simplicity of its style, which makes it easy for beginners to read, and partly because it offers an opportunity for comparison of German treatments of the story of the fall of the Burgundians (called the Niflungar in the extract) with the Old Norse ones. The German traditions of this event are chiefly represented by the Nibelungenlied, an epic poem in Middle High German dating from c.1205, and the Old Norse ones by the anonymous mid thirteenth-century Icelandic prose Völsunga saga and its eddic sources, most especially (as far as the extract is concerned) the anonymous poems Atlakviða and Atlamál. What is described in the extract is the reception by Grímhildr of her brothers at the court of her husband, the Hunnish king Attila, where she has urged him to invite them (see Þiðriks saga, ed. H. Bertelsen, II, 279–80); in Þiðreks saga his court is located at Soest in Westphalia, as the name Susa in the extract (line 11) shows. In the Nibelungenlied the reason for the invitation is the wish of Kriemhilt (as Grímhildr is there named) to be avenged on her brothers for the slaying of her former husband Siegfried, who corresponds to the Sigurð (or in Þiðreks saga Sigurðr sveinn) of Old Norse sources. In Völsunga saga and its relevant sources, the invitation comes from Atli (the Attila of the extract), whose motive is lust for the treasure that Sigurðr had won by his slaying the dragon Fáfnir, and which, after Sigurðr had married Guðrún (the Grímhildr of the extract), had been acquired by her brothers (i.e. the Burgundians) when they brought about his death. Guðrún had then reluctantly married Atli, who now covets the treasure. Of these two versions of the story, the Old Norse one is thought to be the older. Þiðreks saga, itself an Old Norse work, though containing mainly German narrative material, is in general closer to the German version than to the Old Norse one, but falls somewhere between the two. From the extract it is clear, for example, that while Grímhildr deeply mourns the death of her former husband, which is consistent with the revenge motive of the German version, she is also interested in whether her brothers have brought the treasure of the Niflungar with them, which is consistent with the emphasis in the Old Norse version on her new husband’s lust for it. The present discussion, which
is aimed at providing an immediate context for the extract below, concentrates on the events and characters of the story as it is told in *Þiðreks saga*; neither the extract itself, nor what is said here specifically about *Þiðreks saga*, should be allowed to give rise to assumptions about the content of the story as told elsewhere, whether in the German or Old Norse versions. Parts of the story not covered by the extract are referred to by volume and page numbers of Bertelsen’s edition.

In the extract (lines 15–18), it is said that fires were prepared for the Niflungar on their arrival at Attila’s court, and that they dried themselves. This is to be understood in the light of the fact, reported shortly before the extract begins, that they had encountered bad weather on their way to Soest and got wet (II, 295). It is also perhaps intended to recall the fact that, earlier on their journey, their ship had capsized while they were crossing the Rhine, after which they dried themselves by fires at the castle of Roðingeirr, Margrave of Bakalar (Pöchlarn) (who also features in the extract; see below) (II, 286–92). On that occasion the business of drying themselves had exposed the bright armour they were wearing, as it also does in the scene described in the extract (lines 18–19). The brothers of Grímhildr mentioned in the extract are Gunnarr, Gíslher and Gerno (see lines 28–30 and 54). Þoðni is their half-brother, having been conceived as a result of their mother sleeping with a supernatural being in the temporary absence of their father (I, 319–23). In referring to himself (as he seems to be doing in line 25 of the extract) as óvin, a word which can mean ‘devil’ as well as ‘enemy’, Þoðni is probably alluding partly to his semi-supernatural, illegitimate origins and partly to the fact that Grímhildr has little reason to feel friendly towards him, because it was he who had killed her husband Sigurdr sveinn, as she had suspected from the start; he had in fact speared him between the shoulder-blades (II, 264–68), where Grímhildr, in the extract (line 35), recalls that he was wounded. Fólkher is a kinsman of the Niflungar, as the extract makes clear (line 55), and Aldrian (line 44) is the son of Attila and Grímhildr (II, 308). Þiðrekr, for whom the Ostrogothic king Theoderic (d. 526) is the historical prototype, is of course the main character of *Þiðreks saga*, from which the extract is taken; and Roðingeirr and Hildibrandr (lines 56–57) are among the many heroic figures with whom Þiðrekr becomes associated in the course of his career, which, as T. M. Andersson (1986, 368–72) has shown, constitutes the backbone of
the saga’s plot. Hildibrandr had been Þiðrekr’s foster-father when he was a boy (I, 34), and Roðingeirr, who had been present with Þiðrekr at the marriage of Grímhildr to Attila and been given by Gunnarr on that occasion the sword Gramr, which had belonged to Sigurðr sveinn (II, 278–79), gave the sword to Gíslher (II, 294) when the Niflungar visited him, as described above, on their way to Attila’s court, on which journey he then joined them (II, 295). Ironically and tragically, it is with this same sword that Gíslher kills Roðingeirr in the battle that follows what is described in the extract (II, 320–21). Þiðrekr, it is emphasised near the end of the extract (line 73), was the first to warn the Niflungar — albeit obliquely — of the hostile intentions of Grímhildr and her husband. That they hardly needed any warning, however, is apparent from Hǫgni’s no less oblique words to Grímhildr on his arrival (line 25), and from the fact that, earlier in the story, he had suspected treachery and advised his half-brothers against accepting the invitation (II, 281–84).

There are three main manuscripts of Þiðreks saga: a Norwegian vellum (Stock. Perg. fol. nr 4) marred by several lacunae and dating from the late thirteenth century, and two complete Icelandic paper manuscripts (AM 177 fol. and AM 178 fol.), both dating from the seventeenth century. The Norwegian manuscript, Stock. Perg. fol. nr 4, is referred to by Bertelsen and here as Mb. The present extract, which is in normalised spelling, has been prepared with the help of Bertelsen’s and Guðni Jónsson’s editions and collated with the relevant part of the text as it appears in the facsimile edition of Mb produced by P. Petersen and published in 1869. It is from this facsimile edition that the readings from Mb given below in footnotes are taken. The editor is grateful to David Ashurst for supplying photocopies of the relevant pages, 119r–120r, from the copy of this edition held in the British Library, and for guidance as to the meaning of Hǫgni’s words to Grímhildr in reply to her question about the treasure of the Niflungar.
XI: Piðreks saga

Bibliography

XI: ÞÍÐREKS SAGA

Frá drottning Grímhildi

Drottning Grímhildr stendr í einum turn ok sér fór bræðra sinna ok þat, at þeir ríða nú í borgina Susa. Nú sér hon þar margan nýjan skjöld ok margu hvíta brynju ok margu dýrligan dreng.

Nú mælti Grímhildr, ‘Nú er þetta it grøena sumar fagrt. Nú fara mínir bræðr með margan nýjan skjöld ok margu hvíta brynju, ok nú minnumk ek hversu mik harmar in stóru sár Sigurðar sveins.’

Nú grætr hon allsárliga Sigurð svein ok gekk í móti þeim Niflungum ok bað þá vera vel komna ok kyssir þann er henni var næstr, ok hvern at ððrum. Nú er þessi borg nálíga full af þonnum ok hestum, ok þar eru ok fyrir í Susa morg hund<ñ>uð manna ok svá hesta, svá at eð fær þolu á komit.

Frá bræðrum Grímhildar

Attila konungr tekr vel við sínum mágum, ok er þeim fylgt í hallirnar, þær sem búnar eru, ok ger<ñ>ir fyrir þeim eldar. En Niflung<ar> fara ekki af sínum brynjum, ok ekki látu þeir sín vápn at sinni.

Nú kemr Grímhildr inn í hollina, þar er fyrir váru hennar bræðr við eld ok þurka sík. Hon sér hversu þeir lypta upp sínum kýrtlum ok þar undir eru hvítar brynjur. Nú sér Högni sína systur Grímhildi ok tekr þegar sinn hjálm ok setr á hófuð sér ok spennir fast ok slíkt it sama Fólkher.

Frá Grímhildi ok bræðrum

Pá mælti Grímhildr: ‘Högni, sitt<ñ> heill. Hvárt hefir þu nú ført mér Niflungaskatt þann er átti Sigurðr sveinn?’

‘Pá svarar Högni, ‘Ek føri þér,’ segir hann, ‘mikinn óvin; þar fylgir minn skjöldr ok minn hjálmr með mínu sverði, ok eigi leiðþa ek mína brynju.’

Nú mælti Gunnarr konungr við Grímhildi: ‘Frú systir, gakk hingat ok sitt hér.’

Nú gengr Grímhildr at sínum unga bræðr Gíslher ok kyssir hann ok sitr í hjá honum ok milli <ñ> Gunnars konungs, ok nú grætr hon sárliga.

11 hundað Mb. 14 fylkt Mb.
Ok nú spyrr Gíslher, ‘Hvat grætr þú, frú?’
Hon svarar, ‘Pat kann ek vel þér segja. Mik harmar þat mest nú sem jafnan þau stóru sár, er hafði Sigurðr sveinn sér miðil herða ok ekki vápn var fest á hans skildi.’
Pá svarar Högni, ‘Sigurð svein ok hans sár látum nú vera kyrð ok getum eigi. Attila konung af Hálandandi, gerum hann nú svá ljúfan sem áðr var þér Sigurðr sveinn. Hann er hálfu ríkari, en ekki fær nú at gert at græða sár Sigurðar sveins. Svá verðr þat nú vera sem áðr er orðit.’
Pá stendr upp Grímhildr ok gengi í brott.
Því næst kemr þar Þiðrekr af Bern ok kallar at Niflungar skulu fara til borðs. Ok honum fylgir son Attila konungs, Aldrian. Nú tekr Gunnarr konung sveininn Aldrian ok berr í faðmi sér út. En Þiðrekr konungr af Bern ok Högni eru svá góðir vinir, at hvárr þeira leggr hönd sínar yfir annan ok ganga svá út ór höllinni ok alla leiti þar til er þeir koma til konungs hallar. Ok á hverjum turn ok á hverjum höll ok á hverjum garði ok á hverjum borgarvegg standa nú kurtisar konur, ok allar vilja Högna sjá, svá frægr sem hann er um þill lónd af hreysti ok drengskap. Nú kómu þeir í Þoll Attila konungs.
Frá Attila konung-í ok bræðrum Grímhildar
Attila konungr sitr nú í sínu hásæti ok setr á hægra veg sér Gunnar konung, sinn mág, ok þar næstr sitr junkherra Gíslher, þá Gernoz, þá Högni, þá Fólker, þeira frendi. Á vinstri hlið Attila konungs sitr Þiðrekr konungr af Bern ok Roðingeir margreifi, þá meistari Hildibrandr. Þessir allir sitja í hásæti með Attila konungi. Ok nú er skipat þessi höll fyrst með ínum tignustum mönnum ok þá hverjum at þórum. Þeir drekka þat kveld gott vín, ok hér er nú í dýrligsta veizla ok með alls konar féngum er bezt megu vera, ok eru nú kátir. Ok nú er svá mikill fjöldi manna kominn í borgina, at hvert hús er fullt nálaga í borginni. Ok þessa nótt sofa þeir í góðum friði ok eru nú allkátir ok með góðum umbúnaði.
Pá er morgnar ok menn standa upp, kemr til Niflunga Þiðrekr konungr ok Hildibrandr ok margir aðrir riddar-ær. Nú spyrr Þiðrekr konungr hversu þeim hafi sofizk þá nótt. Pá svarar Högni ok lætr sér hafa vel sofnat:

38 sjá Mb.
‘En þó er mitt skap ekki betra en til meðallags.’

Nú mælir Piðrekr konungr, ‘Ver kátr, minn góði vin Hógni, ok glaðr 69
ok með oss vel kominn ok vara þik hér í Húnalandi, fyrir því at þín
systir Grímhildr grætr enn hvern dag Sigurð svein, ok alls muntu þess
við þurfa, áðr en þú komir heim.’

Ok nú er Piðrekr inn fyrsti maðr, er varat hefir Niflunga. Pá er þeir
eru búnir, ganga þeir út í garðinn. Gengr á aðra hlið Gunnari konungi
Piðrekr konungr, en á aðra meistari Hildibrandr, ok með Höguna geng
Fólkher. Ok nú eru allir Niflungar upp staðnir ok ganga um borgina
ok skemta sér.
XII: SAGA AF TRISTRAM OK ÍSÖND

The Saga af Tristram ok Ísönd, also known as Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar, occupies an important position in the history of medieval literature. In part this is because it provides the only complete, though condensed, account of the twelfth-century Roman de Tristan by Thomas (of Britain, or d’Angleterre), which now exists otherwise only in fragments, but which formed the basis for Gottfried von Strassburg’s unfinished masterpiece, Tristan und Isold. From the nineteenth century to the present day the saga has therefore been a major source for the study of the Tristan legend. And the legend itself continues to fascinate now, as it did in the Middle Ages, because it is the quintessential tale of a compulsive love that transcends all other loyalties.

The importance of this saga specifically for Old Norse–Icelandic studies is that it was probably the first of the large-scale works to be translated from French at the behest of Hákon Hákonarson, king of Norway 1217–63. As such it helped to create an enthusiasm in the north for stories of the romance type — which show a concern for love as well as fighting, for the fantastic, for emotions quite freely expressed, for beauty and other sensory delights, for elegant manners, for costly display, and not least for accomplishments such as the knowledge of languages and music. The romance translations made for King Hákon, which embody these characteristics, make up a significant corpus in their own right. They would still do so, assuming that they had survived, even if they had not exerted influence beyond Norway; but in fact they soon arrived in Iceland, where themes and concerns from them were drawn into the Sagas of Icelanders, and where native imitations started to be written and to develop a character of their own. Eventually the romantic sagas, generally known today as riddarasögur (Sagas of Knights), came to be one of the dominant genres of Old Icelandic literature.

As regards the saga’s origin, the main piece of evidence is the prologue found in the seventeenth-century Icelandic manuscript AM 543 4to, which contains the earliest complete version of the work now extant. This states that the translation was made at Hákon’s command in 1226 by a certain Brother Robert. Such attributions always leave room for scepticism, but in this case there is wide agreement that the statements of the prologue are highly plausible, for in most of its parts the saga bears a strong stylistic likeness to
other romance translations made for King Hákon that are preserved in Iceland, and also — most significantly — to Strengleikar, a collection of short pieces based on Breton lais, which has survived in a Norwegian manuscript from c.1270 and is probably close to its original form. It is apparent, nevertheless, that the Saga af Tristram ok Ísland as we have it is by no means identical to Brother Robert’s version and that it has been modified, as one would expect, during the centuries of its transmission in Iceland. It was probably Robert himself who pushed the material in the direction of native sagas by concentrating on the story and omitting the many long passages of reflection that may be said to adorn, or alternatively to clog, the French text; but the very few leaves of the saga surviving from medieval manuscripts, which are themselves Icelandic and no earlier than the mid-fifteenth century, render Thomas’s words at somewhat greater length than is the case with the later manuscripts, and thus show that the saga has undergone at least one further round of shortening. There are signs too of material being added from sources other than Thomas. The consequence is that the work contains many discontinuities and inconsistencies, some of which are mentioned in the notes to the extract given here; but often enough, when Thomas or Gottfried seem bent on maximum elaboration, the saga strikes to the heart of the matter in a way that is astute, honest and humane (see note 11 below, for example).

One of the most noticeable features of the Saga af Tristram ok Ísland is the style in which many of its parts are written. It is not unlikely that this so-called ‘court style’, which is common to the Hákonian romances, was established by Brother Robert, or perhaps developed for the very first time, in this particular saga. The most obvious characteristics are the following: the frequent use of constructions based on present participles, which is regarded as unidiomatic in classical Old Norse; a good deal of alliteration, whether in formal pairs or in longer *ad hoc* strings; the habitual use of synonymous doublets, with or without alliteration; and repetitions of an underlying lexical item in varied forms. There is also the occasional recourse to rhyme and other forms of wordplay. These mannerisms derive from medieval Latin prose and can also be observed, in different concentrations, in the ‘learned style’ translations of Latin texts and in the ‘florid style’ of later religious works; but in the court romances they are integrated with the relatively plain manner displayed by native
Icelandic sagas, eschewing simile and working for the most part in sentences that are not especially complex. No doubt the purpose of the verbal decorations was to dignify the prose in general, and in particular to indicate the importance of passages where such decorations are in high density.

All the stylistic features just mentioned, except rhyme, are well represented in the extract given here, which comes from the last third of the saga when Tristram and Ísönd have been forced to part, Tristram to live in Brittany and Ísönd to remain with her husband in Cornwall. The description of the Hall of Statues is not extant in the fragments of Thomas’s work (nor did Gottfried reach so far in the story), but the episode must originally have been present in the poem because one of the fragments (lines 941–1196) begins with Tristan recalling his love and kissing his beloved’s image, corresponding to a point in ch. 81 of the saga. Grotesque though the episode may seem to modern taste, it clearly caught the Icelandic imagination, as shown by the fact that it is echoed in several native romances (cf. Schach 1968), notably in Rémundar saga keisarasonar ch. 7.

The passage has been transcribed from the manuscript mentioned above, AM 543 4to. Norwegianisms of the types listed on page 59 above do not occur in the manuscript orthography of the extract except for the occasional appearance of y in place of i; this feature has been retained here only for the name Bryngvet, which is consistently spelled thus. In general the spelling of the manuscript is post-medieval but has been normalised in line with the usage of ÍF, and the following substitutions have been made: konungr for kóngur, inn for hinn etc., lifanda for the Norwegian neuter form lifandi and eigi for ei.

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Background:


Chapter 80

Nú lætr Tristram skunda smíðinni þat er hann má, ok líkar honum þar vel undir fjallinu. Smíða þar þræsmiðir ok gullsmiðir, ok var nú allt kompásat ok búit saman at fella. Tristram lofði þá smíðunum heim at fara, ok fylgði þeim til þess <er> þeir váru ór eynni komnir ok síðan h<eim> til sins fóstirlands. Nú hefir Tristram öngvan félaga þar hjá sér nema jóþuninn;¹ ok báru þeir nú allt starf smíðanna ok felldu saman hválfhúsit, svá sem efnit var áðr af smíðunum til búit, allt steint ok gyllt með inum bezta hagleik.² Ok mátti þá berliga sjá smíðina fullgorva, svá at enginn kunni betr öskja.

Undir míðju hválfinu reistu þeir upp líkneskjua eina, svá hagliga at líkams vexti ok andliti at enginn ásjaandi maðr kunni annat at ætla en kvikt væri í òllum limunum, ok svá fritt ok vel górt at í òllum heiminum mátti eigi fegri líkneskjua finna.³ Ok ór munninum stóð svá góðr ilmr at allt húsit fylldi af, svá sem òll jurtakyn væri þar inn<i>, þau sem dýrust eru. Ën þessi inn góði ilmr kom með þeiri list ór líkneskjunn, 15 at Tristram hafði górt undir geirvörtnunni jafnsútt hjartanu eina boru á brjóstinu, ok setti þar einn bauk fullan af gullmølnum grøsum, þeim setustum er í váru òllum heiminum. Ër þessum bauk stóðu tveir reyrstafir af brenndu gulli, ok annarr þessara skaut ím út undan hnakkaban þar sem meðtisk hárit ok holdit, en annarr með sama hætti horfði til munnsins. Ëassi líknesjua var, at skopun, fegrið ok mikilleik, svá lík Ísönd dröttningu svá sem hon væri þar sjálft standandi, ok svá kvíklig sem lifandi væri. Ëassi líknesjua var svá hagliga skorin ok svá tignarliga klædd sem sómpdi inni tignustu dröttningu. Hon hafði á hofði sér kórónu af brenndu gulli, gørva með alls konar hagleik — ok sett með inum dýrustum gimsteinum ok òllum litum.⁴ En í því laufinu sem framan var í enninnu stóð einn stórr smaragdus, at aldri 27 bar konungr eðr dröttning jafngóðan. Ëi hægri hendi líkneskjunnar stóð eirvöndr eðr valdsmerki, í inum efra endanum með flúrum górt, innar hagligustu smíðar: leggr viðarins var allr klæddr af gulli ok settr með fingrgullsteinum; gullaufin váru it bezta Arabíagull; en á inu efra laufi vandarins var skorinn fugl með fjóðrum ok alls konar litum fjaðranna ok fullgoert at vængjum, blakandi sem hann væri kvíkr ok ³³

¹ but corrected in the manuscript.
lifandi. Þessi líkneskja var klædd inum bezta purpura með hvítum skinnum; en þar fyrir var hon klædd purpurapelli, at purpurinn merkir harm, hrygð, vælk ok vesóð er Ísoland þoldi fyrir ástar sakir við Tristram. Í hægri hendi helt hon fingrgullí sínu, ok þar var á ritat orð þau er Ísönd dróttning mælti í skilnoð þeira: ‘Tristram,’ kvað hon, ‘tak þetta fingrgull í minning ástar okkjar, ok gleym eigi hórmum okkjar, vælki ok vesóðum, er þú hefir þolat fyrir mínar sakir ok þyir þínar.’

Undir fótum hennar var einn fókistill steyptr af kopar í líking þess vánda dvergs er þau hafði rögt fyrir konunginum ok hrópat; líkneskjan stóð á brjósti honum því líkast sem hon skipaði honum undir fétir sér, en hann lá opinn undir fótum hennar því líkt sem hann væri grátandi. Hjá líkneskjunni var gor af brendu gullí lítil skemtan, raki hennar, líkguð sitt skakandi ok bjóllu sinni hringjandi, gótt með miklum hagleik. Ën þðru-mégin dvergsins stóð ein líkneskja lítil, eptir Bryngvet, fylgismey dróttningar; hon var vel skopuð eftir feg¢ð sinni ok vel skryýdd inum bezta búnaði, ok helt sér í hendi keri með loki, bjóðandi Ísönd dróttningu með blíðu andliti. Úmbergis kerit váru þau orð er hon máelti: ‘Ísönd dróttning, tak drykk þennan, er górr var á Írlandi Markis konungi.’ Ën þðru-mégin í herberginu, sem inn var gengit, hafði hann gótt eina mikla líknesku í líking jótunsins, svá sem hann stóð þar sjálfr einfætt or ok reiddi báðum hóndum járnstaf sinn yfir ðxl sér at verja líkneskjuna; en hann var klædd stóru bukskinni ok loðnu — ok tók kyrtilinn honum skammt ofan, ok var hann nakinn niðr frá nafla — ok gnísti þönnun, grimmr í augum, sem hann vildi berja alla þá er inn gengu. Ën þðru-mégin dyranna stóð eitt mikit leið steyp af kopar ok svá hagliga gótt at enginn hugði annat en lifanda væri, þeir er þat sæi. Þat stóð á fjórum fótum ok bardí hala sínun um eina líkneskju, er górr var eftir ráðismanni þeim er hrópaði ok rægði Tristram fyrir Markis konungi.

Enginn kann at tjá né telja þann hagleik er þar var á þeim líkneskjum er Tristram lét þar gøra í hválfinu. Ok hefir hann nú allt gótt þat er hann vill at sinni, ok fær nú í vald jótunsins ok bauði honum, sem þræli sínun ok hjónustumanni, þetta svá vel at varðveita at ekki skyldi þar nærri koma; en hann sjálfr bar lyklana bæði at hválfhúsini ok líkneskjumun. En jótunninn hafði allt fé sitt frjálst annat. Ok líkaði þetta Tristram vel, er hann hefir síkú á leið komit.
Chapter 81

Sem Tristram hafði lokit starfi sínu, þá reið hann heim til kastala síns sem hann var vanr, etr ok drekkr ok sefr hjá Ísodd, konu sinni, ok var kørr með félagum sínum. En eigi er honum hugr at eiga líkamslosta við konu sína, en þó för hann leynt með, því engi maðr mátti ætlan hans né athæfi finna, því allir hugðu <at> hann byggði hjónskapliga sem hann skyldi með henni. En Ísodd er ok svá lunduð at hon leyndi fyrir hverjum manni svá tryggiliga at hon birti hvárki fyrir frændum sínum né vinum. En þá er hann var í burtu ok gørði líkneskjur þessar, þá þótti henni mjök kynligt, hvar hann var eða hvat hann gørði.

Svá reið hann heim ok heiman um einn leynistíg at enginn varð vorið hann, ok kom svá til hválflússins. Ok jafnan sem hann kom inn til líkneskju Ísændar, þá kyssti hann hana svá opt sem hann kom, ok lagði hana í fang sér ok hendr um háls sem hon væri lifandi, ok reddi til hennar mjörgum ástsamligum orðum um ástarÞokka þeira ok harma. Svá gørði hann við líkneskju Bryngvetar, ok minntisk á þill orð þau er hann var vanr at mæla vorið þær. Hann minntisk ok á alla þá huggan, skemtan, gleði ók yndi er hann fekk af Ísönd, ok kyssti hvert sinn líkneskit, er hann ñhugaði huggan þeira; en þá var hann hryggr ok reiðr, er hann minntisk á harm þeira, vás ok vesalðir, er hann þolði fyrir sakir þeira er þau hrópuðu, ok kennir þat nú líkneskju hins vánda ræðismanns.
Notes

1 The giant, Moldagog, is introduced in ch. 73 as the owner and defender of the land. Tristram defeats him in single combat by chopping off one of his legs, at which point the giant swears loyalty to Tristram and surrenders his treasures along with his territory; in return Tristram fashions a wooden leg for his new vassal (ch. 76).

2 Ch. 78 says that the main structure of the vaulted building had been made by an earlier giant who abducted the daughter of a certain Duke Orsl and brought her to the place, where he inadvertently killed her because of his size and weight (sakir mikilleik·s; hans ok þunga) while trying to have sex. The fragments of Thomas’s poem do not contain this story, but versions of it are told by Wace and Geoffrey of Monmouth.

3 Kvikt and subsequent words modifying líkneskja have the neuter form, perhaps by attraction to annat. But fullgört in line 33 (modifying fugl) and gort in line 46 (modifying skemtan or rakki) are also neuter where one would expect masculine or feminine forms, and it is probably to be explained as the use of ‘natural’ gender (or rather referring to animals and statues as neuter, as often in English) and the tendency to looseness in grammar that is common in seventeenth-century manuscripts and was reversed by nineteenth-century purists. In all three cases the adjective is separated from its noun. Cf. Gr 3.9.8.2.

4 The words kórónan var are to be understood in front of sett.

5 The full account of the parting is in ch. 67.

6 In the Norwegian original there would have been perfect alliteration on rægt and hrópat (rópat; the initial breathing in such words is early lost in Norwegian, see p. 59 above); likewise on the phrase hryggr ok reiðr in the final sentence of the extract. The dwarf, who appears for the first time in ch. 54, tries to gather evidence against the lovers by sprinkling flour between their beds so that King Markis will see Tristram’s footprints (ch. 55). He is with the king when the lovers are discovered embracing in an orchard — the event that brings about their separation (ch. 67). There is no indication in the rest of the saga that he is ever punished for his enmity towards Tristram and Ísónd, or that he regrets it at all; nevertheless his tears, as depicted in the sculpture, are to be understood primarily as signifying remorse, though with
overtones of cowardice. In much Old Norse literature it is shameful for males to weep except when mourning a person of rank, but in the romances it is common even for heroes to weep at moments of strong emotion, as Tristram himself does when he parts from Ísðónd (ch. 68).

Ísðónd’s dog, a gift from Tristram, came originally from Elfland (Álfheimar, ch. 61). In the saga he is portrayed as a large animal that hunts wild boar and deer when Tristram and Ísðónd are living together in the woods (chs 63 and 64); but Gottfried (line 16,659) specifies two separate animals and represents the one of elvish origin as a small lapdog (line 15,805). Ch. 61 of the saga lays much emphasis on the delights of sensory perception, commenting on the silkiness and wonderful colours of the dog’s coat, and saying that the sound of his bell transported Tristram ‘so that he hardly knew whether he was the same man or another one’ (svá at hann kenndi varla hvárt hann var inn sami eða annarr).

Ísðónd’s mother prepares a wine-like love potion and tells Bryngvet to serve it to Ísðónd and King Markis on their wedding-night; but before Bryngvet can do so another servant finds it and unwittingly gives some to Ísðónd and Tristram, thus causing all the pain that ensues from their love (ch. 46). Bryngvet perseveres with her instructions and serves more of the potion to Markis and his bride; on the evidence of the statue it appears that she hoped to rectify the situation by allowing Ísðónd to fall in love with Markis, but ch. 46 says only that she gave the potion to the king without his knowledge, and that Ísðónd did not drink it on that occasion.

The giant’s trouserless condition is not mentioned elsewhere. Possibly it is meant to recall what was said of the chamber’s previous owner and his size (note 2 above); but in any case its message is clearly ‘Keep out, or else’.

Maríadókk, the steward referred to, is introduced as Tristram’s friend and bed-partner, and as the man who first discovered the adulterous affair: he woke up in the night, noticed that Tristram was missing, went out in search of him and heard him talking with Ísðónd (ch. 51). In the same chapter the saga states that it was not until a long time after this event that ‘malicious persons’ (ofundarmenn) told Markis
what was going on, and Maríadøkk is not actually named as one of the tell-tales. Gottfried, however, states in his poem that the corresponding character, Marjodoc, quickly went to the king and pretended to have heard rumours (lines 13, 637–51). The end-on approach of the lion, which appears only in this passage, no doubt involves maximum disgrace for the steward.

11 After parting with Ísònd, Tristram marries Ísodd, daughter of the duke of Brittany. The saga states bluntly that he does so either in the hope that new love will drive out old or because he wants a wife ‘for benefit and pleasure’ (til gagns ok gamans, ch. 69), this and the next sentence standing in place of much logic-chopping in Thomas (lines 235–420). On his wedding night, however, Tristram decides not to consummate the marriage because thoughts of Ísònd intrude, and he pretends to be ill (ch. 70). The assertion that his sickness was nothing else than pining for the other Ísònd (ekki var qnnur sótt Tristrams en um aðra Ísònd, ch. 70) confirms that in the saga, as in the poems of Thomas and Gottfried, the two women originally had the same name.

12 Ísodd has promised Tristram not to tell anyone that they do not have sex (ch. 70). Ch. 96 suggests that at one point she thinks he wants to become a priest or monk — possibly a joke. Eventually a chance event forces her to tell her brother Kardín, who then construes Tristram’s behaviour as an insult to the family (chs 82 and 83); but Kardín abandons any thought of a feud with Tristram when he sees the statue of Bryngvet, which he initially mistakes for a real woman, and falls in love (ch. 86). This, in fact, is the only narrative function fulfilled by the episode of the statues.
XIII: MARÍU SAGA

A Miracle of the Virgin Mary

Biographies of the saints and stories of miracles demonstrating their sanctity were among the most popular and influential literary forms of the Middle Ages. The earliest written texts brought to Iceland by Christian missionaries included Latin hagiographic narratives, and scholars have argued that they exerted seminal influence on the origins of Icelandic literature (see Turville-Petre 1953; Jónas Kristjánsson 1981 and 1986; Foote 1994).

Among the saints a special and pre-eminent place was accorded to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Her cult gained increasing importance in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Europe and in the thirteenth century the Marian prayer Ave Maria (known as Maríuvers in Old Norse) became one of the few texts all Christians were required to know by heart. Twice as many churches were dedicated to Mary as to the next most popular saint in pre-Reformation Iceland (St Peter) and she was the patron saint of Hólar Cathedral. Several Marian feasts were prominent in the Icelandic calendar and four were provided with sermons in the Old Icelandic Homily Book. A sizeable corpus of Marian poetry in Old Icelandic also survives (on the cult of Mary in Iceland see Cormack 1994, 126–29; some Marian poetry is accessible in Wrightson 2001).

Maríu saga is an Icelandic prose account of the life of the Virgin Mary that, unusually for this type of text, intersperses biographical narrative with theological reflection on a wide range of more or less closely related topics. The deeply learned saga-writer drew on a number of source texts including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, the apocryphal Gospel known as Pseudo-Matthew, and especially Evangelium de nativitate Mariae, an apocryphal account of the birth and early life of Mary believed during the Middle Ages to be by St Jerome. For historical background the writer used Books 16 and 17 of Antiquities of the Jews by the first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus; and other sources include various books of the Old and New Testaments and texts by Saints Jerome, Gregory the Great, Augustine and John Chrysostom.

A detailed description of the Fourth Lateran Council in chapter 23 of Maríu saga indicates that the saga must have been written after
1215. *Guðmundar saga* records that a saga of the Virgin Mary was written by a priest called Kygri-Björn Hjaltason (died 1237/38) and as there is no evidence of any *Maríu saga* other than the one which survives circulating in Iceland before the sixteenth century it seems probable that Kygri-Björn composed the surviving text. This would mean it was written sometime between 1216 and 1236 (in which year Kygri-Björn was elected bishop of Hólar; he then went abroad, possibly to have his election confirmed, and died shortly after his return). Turville-Petre has suggested a slightly narrower dating of between 1224 and 1236 (Turville-Petre 1972, 107).

Fourteen of the nineteen surviving manuscripts of *Maríu saga* include collections of miracle stories involving the Virgin Mary (the other five manuscripts are fragments and may originally have included miracle stories too). An additional twenty-five manuscripts contain only miracle stories, without the saga, but as these are fragmentary manuscripts it remains unclear whether the saga and miracles were ever transmitted separately. The miracle collections vary in size, contents and origin; they appear in manuscripts dating from c.1225–50 onwards.

Unger’s edition of *Maríu saga* (1871) prints two slightly different texts of the saga (from Holm perg. 11 4to and AM 234 fol.) and over 200 miracle stories, many of them in more than one version. Three different versions of a miracle of the Virgin are given below in texts normalised from Unger’s edition (this miracle story, also known from Latin and Old French sources, is briefly discussed in Widding 1965, 132–35). The three versions illustrate three different prose styles. The earliest of the three is found in AM 232 fol., a fourteenth century manuscript (c.1350). The writer has rendered the narrative in a concise and straightforward style free of rhetorical elaboration and like that characteristic of the Sagas of Icelanders. The version in AM 635 4to, a paper manuscript from the early eighteenth century (c.1700–25), translates more closely from Latin, attempting greater fidelity to the style and language of the original and also providing much more circumstantial detail than AM 232 fol. The third text comes from Holm perg. 11 4to (c. 1325–75; some readings have been adopted from Holm perg. 1 4to (c. 1450–1500)). This is written in the so-called florid style, a ‘high’ style developed during the second half of the thirteenth century especially in religious writing. Characteristic features of the florid style
found in the extract below include extensive use of adjectives and adverbs, the use of doublets, and use of the present participle where Saga Style would prefer a clause with a finite verb. A delight in rhetorical amplification that is another characteristic of the Florid Style is also notable in this, the longest of the three accounts of the miracle.

**Bibliography**


XIII: MARÍU SAGA

A Miracle of the Virgin Mary

AM 232 fol.:

Munklífi eitt var í fjalli því, er Tumba, er Mikjáls kirkja hjá munklífinu. Í musterinnu var Maríu líkneskjá, ok svá ger sem Dróttinn sæti í knjám henni, ok var silkidúkr breiðdr yfir hofuð þeim. Par kómu opt reiðar stórar ok eldingar, ok laust eitt sinn svá kirkjuna, at hon brann óll, en líkneskja Maríu var heil, ok svá stallrinn, er hon stóð á. Hvergi var á silkidúkinn runnit, er á líkneskjunní var. Munkar lístu þessi jarðegn, ok lofuðu allir Guð, þeir er heyrðu. Vér eigum þess Guð at bíðja, at hann leysi oss svá frá eilífum eldi sem líkneskit frá þessum eldshita.

AM 635 4to:

Eldr brenndi eigi líkneski várrar frú Í fjalli því, er Tumba heitir í sjónum, er kirkja hins helga Michaelis engils. Í þeim stað er mikill fjölði munka, er þar þjóna Guði. Þat bar til einn tíma, at með leyfundum Guðs dómi sló elding kirkjuna ok brenndi hana alla. Par var líkneskja Guðs móður Marie ger með třé. Yfir höfðinu líkneskjunní var einn silkidúkr. Sem eldrinn kom til þess staðar, er skriptin stóð í, brenndi hann allt umkringis, en sjálfa líkneskjuna tók ekki, sem hann öttadisk at koma henni nær, svá at eigi brann þat silkitjald sem var yfir líkneskjunní, ok eigi dökknaði þat sjálft af reyk eðrar hita. Eitt flabellum gert með þáfuglafjøðrum, er studdisk við líkneskit, brann eigi ok. Gerði Guð þessa jarðegn at sýna viðrævæmilti vera, at eigi mætti eldrinn granda líknesku þeirar, sem með hjarta ok líkam helt heilagt skírlífi með þórum dyggóum, svá at engi hiti lostasem miðta tendrask miði henni. Svá hlífði Guðs móðir, sem þér heyrðuð, sinni líkneskju í eldinnum sýnandi með því, at hon má auðveldliga með Guðs miskunn frelsa frá helvíþis eldi þá sem henni þjóna.

2 musterinn.
Eldr grandaði eigi líkneski várrar frú.

Svá er sagt, at eitt munklífi með miklum mannfjölda í reglulíum lifnaði hreins skríflífis stendr á fjalli því, er Tumba heitir. Þar er Michials kirkja hjá munklífinu. Í því musteri var líkneski várrar frú sancte Marie semiﬁliga með þreí formerð á þann hátt, sem Dróttinn várr sæti í knjám henni ok væri dúkr af sílki breiddyr yfir höfuð þeim.

Í sogðum stað kómu opt stórar reiðarþrumur ok eldingar, ok einn tíma kom svá hryggilíú til efnes, at kirkjuna laust, svá at hon brann ðll ok hvert þat herbergi, sem þar stóð nærr í umbergis. En fyrr sogð líkneskja Guðs móður var heil ok öskødd, svá sem eldrinn hefði hana öttazk, týnandi allri sinni grimmðarnáttúru svá framarlígu, at engis kyns reykjarþefr eða eldsbrunalítr hafði heldr snortit sagðan dúk en sjálfa líkneskjuna, slíkt sama fótstallinn, er hon stóð á. Lýstu munkar þessi jarðegn, ok lofuðu allir Guð, er heyrðu. Þat var viðrvæmilígt ok vel trúanílt, sem birtisk í sogðu stórtækni, at þessa heims eldr þyrði eigi at snerta þeirrar líknesku, sem baði var hrein mar í hug ok líkama, flekklaus með þillum greinum af hverjum sem einum bruna veraldilígra gírnna. Nú sem Guðs móðir sancta María, verndaði sína líkneskju, sem vér sogðum, af þeim eldsbruna, gefr oss fullkomliga skilja, at sér þjónandi menn má hon auðveldíla frelsa af eilífum eldi, því³ sém <vér> ídúliga verandi í hennar þjónustu standandi, at hon sé oss veitandi sem vér erum mest þurfandi, sem <er> alla hluti fáandi, af sínnum sætasta syni þiggjandi, þeim er lifir ok ríkir með feðr ok helgum anda útan enda.

Amen.
Notes

1 A church was built on Mount Tumba, near Avranches in south Normandy, after an apparition of the Archangel St Michael there in the eighth century. In AD 1000 a Benedictine monastery was established on the mount, which now takes its name, le Mont-Saint-Michel, from the Archangel who appeared there.

2 In Latin *occulto Dei iudicio*, a phrase often used of events in which God moved in a mysterious way. Cf. Job 11: 7–9; Romans 11: 33. Cf. also XIV:11 below.

3 *flví* (‘for this reason’) seems to introduce the main clause in this immensely complicated sentence.
The first native bishop in Iceland was Ísleifr Gizurarson. He was consecrated in 1056 as bishop of the whole population. He was succeeded in 1081 by his son, Gizurr (died 1118), whose patrimony, Skál(a)holt, in the south of the country, was made the official episcopal seat by an act of the Alþingi. About 1100 Bishop Gizurr agreed that the people of the Northern Quarter should have a bishop of their own, with a cathedral at Hólar in Hjaltadalr (Skagafjörður). With the approval of clergy and people he selected a middle-aged priest from the South of Iceland, Jón Ógmundarson (born 1052), as the first bishop of Hólar. Jón duly went abroad to seek archiepiscopal and papal sanction and in 1106 was consecrated in Lund (then of course in Denmark) by Özurr (Asser), bishop there since 1089 but now newly installed as archbishop and metropolitan of the Scandinavian churches. Jón returned to Iceland by way of Norway where he collected a cargo of timber for the new church he intended to build as his cathedral. We have no contemporary record of his activities as diocesan of the Northern Quarter. He died in 1121.

In 1193 Bishop Þorlákr Þórhallsson of Skálholt died and miracles attributed to his intercession were soon reported. His cult was formally established by the Alþingi in 1199. This seems to have prompted the Northerners to seek a saint for themselves. Invocation of Jón Ógmundarson, their first bishop, was deemed successful, and Jón’s dies natalis, 23 April, was made a day of national observance in 1200. Soon after, as was essential, a work on the new saint’s vita et acta was composed in Latin by Gunnlaugr Leifsson, Benedictine monk of Þingeyrar (born c.1140, died 1219; cf. note 4 to extract below). At the same time, a similar book was composed in Icelandic; the author apparently borrowed some material from Gunnlaugr’s work. This Jóns saga Hólabyskups ins helga is known in three recensions but only one of them exists as a unified work. This is the so-called S text, found whole in AM 234 fol., written c.1340, and in fragments in other manuscripts, the oldest in AM 221 fol., written c.1300. This recension is in a plain style and is an abridgment of an early work which is also represented in the so-called H recension. This is known only in two manuscripts, paper from the early seventeenth century, Holm papp. 4:o nr 4 and AM 392 4to, independent copies of a late medieval exemplar. Its style is like that of the S recension but it is generally
fuller and probably often closer to the early text that was their common original. Unfortunately, it is defective at the beginning and has a large lacuna in the middle. The third recension, called L, is a revision, made c.1320–30, of a text more like H than S. It survives incomplete in Holm perg. fol. nr 5, written c.1365; part of the text missing there is supplied by fragments in AM 219 fol. from about 1400. The saga in this form has a good many passages rewritten in the Latinate style that became fashionable in Iceland towards 1300 and flourished especially between about 1320 and 1350 (cf. the introduction to extract XIII above). It is also unique in introducing two whole flættir, one concerning Sæmundr inn fróði Sigfússon (1056–1133), which is not found elsewhere, and one concerning Gísl Illugason, known separately in the compilation of kings’ sagas found in the codices called Hulda and Hrokkinskinna but adapted in L to suit the hagiographer’s purpose.

The text printed below follows the S recension but with preference given to H in lines 17, 115–16, 128, 133–38 and 142, and to L in lines 155, 165–91 (see notes below). In this last passage typical features of ‘florid’ style and vocabulary are sagóra 168, 172, hvern 169, prédikandi 176, undir stjórn ok yfirboði 177, ritandi 178, mektugir 182, jungfrú 185, sogðum 186, kynnandi 190.

Bibliography
The text here is based on that in Biskupa sögur I (2003), ÍF XV, 202–20. There is a translation in Origines Islandicae, ed. and tr. Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell (1905, repr. 1976), I 534–67, and several extracts, including some of the text printed here, but from the L redaction, in The Northmen Talk, tr. Jaqueline Simpson (1965), 65–76.
Á þessu sumri hóf Jón byskup yfirfør sína yfir ríki sitt ok tók at stýra Guðs kristni med mikilli stjórn. Hirti hann vánna menn af því veldi er honum var gefit af Guðs hálfu, en styrkti góða menn ok siðláta í morgum góðum hlutum. 

Inn helgi Jón byskup hafði skamma stund at stóli setit at Hólum áðr en hann lét leggja ofan kirkju þá er þar var. Sjá kirkja hafði gjör verit næst þeiri er Oxi Hjaltason hafði gjöra látit. Þat hyggja menn at sú kirkja hafi mest gjör verit undir trúþaki á öllu Íslandi er Oxi lét gjöra, ok lagði til þeirar kirkju mikil auðræði ok lét hana búta innan vel ok vandliga ok þekja blýi alla. En sú kirkja brann upp öll med öllu skráði sínu at leyndum dómí Guðs.1 Enn helgi Jón byskup lét gjöra kirkju at Hólum mikla ok virðuliga, sú er stendr þar í dag, ok hefir hún þó verit bæði þakið ok margir hlutir aðrir at gjörvir síðan.2 Enn helgi Jón byskup sparði ekki til þessar kirkjugjörðar þat er þá væri meiri Guðs dýrð en áðr ok þetta hús væri sem fagrligast gjört ok búit. Hann valði þann mann til kirkjugjörðarinnar er þá þótti einhver hagast vera. Sá hét þóroddr <Gamlason>,3 ok var það at inn helgi Jón sparði eigi at reiða honum kaupit mikit ok gött, enda leysti hann ok sína sýslu vel ok göðmanliga. Þat er sagt frá þessum manni at hann var svá næmr þá er hann var í smiðinni, þá heyrði hann til er prestlingum var kennd íþrótt sú er grammatica heitir, en svá loddi honum þat vel í eyrum af miklum næmléik ok athuga at hann gjørðisk enn mesti íþróttamaðr í þess konar námi.

Þá er Jón hafði skamma stund byskup verit, þá lét hann setja skóla heima þar at staðnum vestr frá kirkjugyðrum ok lét smíða vel ok vandliga, ok enn sér merki hússanna.4 En til þess at stýra skólanum ok kenna þeim mónum er þar settisk í, þá valði hann eint enn bezta klerk ok enn snjallasta af Gautlandi. Hann hét Gísli ok var Finnason. Hann reiddi honum mikit kaup til hvártveggja, at kenna prestlingum at veita slikt upphald heilagri kristni með sjálfum byskupi sem hann mátti sér við koma í kenningum sínum ok formælum. Ok ávalt er hann préðikandi fyrrir fólkinnu, þá lét hann liggja bók fyrrir sér ok tók þar af slikt er hann talaði fyrrir fólkinnu, ok gjörði hann þetta mest af forsjá ok líttillæti, at
þar hann var ungr at aldri þótti þeim meira um vert er til hlýđdu at þeir sæk þat at hann tók síinar kenningar af helgum bókum en eigi af einu saman brjóstviti. En svá mikil gipt fylgði þó hans kenningum at menninir þeir er til hlýđdu kómusk við mjökk ok tóku mikla skipan ok gódha um sitt ráð. En þat er hann kenndi í orðunum þá sýndi hann þat í verkunum. Kenningar hans várú linar ok léttbærar óllum gódum mjönnun, en vitrum mjönnun þóttu vera skapilgar ok skemtilgar, en vándum mjönnun varð ótti at mikill ok sönn hirting. Um allar stórhátíðir þá var þar fjólmenni mikit, því at þannug var þá mikit erendi margra manna, fyrrst at hlýða tíðum, svá fagrliga sem þær váru fram feðdar, þar með þodiðum byskups ok kenningum þeim hinum dhýrðilgam er þar var þá kostr at heyra, hvárt sem heldr váru fram fluttar af sjálffum byskupi eða þessum manni er nú var frá sagt.

Skamma stund hafði enn helgi Jón byskup verit áðr hann tók at færa síðu manna ok háttu mjökk í annat efni en áðr hafði verit, gjörðisk hirtingasamr við osiðamenn, en var blíðr ok hegr óllum gódum mjönnum, en sýndi á sjálffum sér at allt þat er hann kenndi í orðunum, þá fylldri hann þat í verkunum. Þýndisk svá vitrum mjönnun þeim er gjörst vissu hans ráð at hann yrði sjaldan aðhuga því er sjálfr Dróttinn mælti til sinna lærisveina: ‘Luceat lux vestra coram hominibus ut videant opera vestra bona et glorificent patrem vestrum qui in celis est.’5 Þessi orð mæla svá: ‘Lýsi ljós yðart fyrir mjönnun til þess at þeir sjái göð verk yður ok dýrki þeir fóður yðarn þann er í himnum er.’

Enn helgi Jón byskup lagði ríkt við þat sem síðan hefir haldizk, at menn skyldu sökja til tíða á helgum dógu eða á óðrum vandatíðum, en bað prestunum at segja optíla þá hluti er þeir þyrftu at vita. Hann bað mjönnun at hafa hversdaglíka háttu sem kristnum mjönnum sómrí, en þat er at sökja hvern dag síð ok snemma kross eða kirkju ok flytja þar fram bænir sínar með athuga. Hann bað at menn skyldu hafa, hverr í sínu herbergi, mark ins helga kross til gæzlu sjálffum sér. Ök þegar er maðrinn vaknaði, þá skyldi hann signa sik ok syngja fyrst Credo in Deum ok segja svá trú sína almáttkum Guði ok ganga svá síðan allan daginn vápaðr med marki heilags kross, því er hann merkti sík med þegar er hann vaknaði, en taka aldrigi svá mat eða svefn eða drykk at maðr signi sik eigi áðr. Hann bað hverjum manni at kunna Pater noster ok Credo in Deum ok minnask sjau sinnum tíða sinna á

55 til þess repeated over column break. 59 prestinum S.
hverjum degi, en syngja skylduliga hvert kveld áðr hann sofnaði Credo in Deum «ok» Pater noster.  

Ok at véir lúkum þessu máli í fám orðum, þá fekk hann svá samit síðu sinna undirmanna á skömmu bragði með Guðs fulltingi at heilug kristni í Nordlendingafjördungi hefði aldrigi staðit með slíkum blóma, hvárki áðr né síðan, sem þá stóð meðan fólkit var svá sælt at þeir hofsú slíks byskups stjórn yfir sér. Hann bannaði ok með òllu alla óháttu ok forneskju eða blótskapi, gjourninga eða galdr ok reis í móti því með òllu afli, ok því hafði eigi orðit af komit með òllu meðan kristnin var ung. Hann bannaði ok alla hindrvitni þá er fornir menn hofsú tekut af tungkvámum eða dægrum eða eigna daga heiniðnum mónnum eða guðum, sem er at kalla Óðins dag eða Þórs, ok alla þá hluti aðra er honum þóttu af illum rótum rísa.  

Leikr sá var mónnum tíðr er ófagrligr er, at kveðask skyldu at, karlmaðr at konu en kona at karlmanni, klækiligar visur ok hæðiligar ok óheyriligar. En þat lét hann af takask ok bannaði með òllu at gjóra. Mansongs kveði eða visur vildi hann eigi heyrta kveðin ok eigi láta kveða. Þó fekk þeir því eigi með òllu af komit. 

Þat er sagt ífrá at hann kom á hljóð at Klœngr Þorsteinsson, sá er síðan varð byskup í Skálaholti, en var þá prestlingr ok ungr at aldri, las bók þá er kölluð er Ovidius Epistolarum. Í fleiri bók bær mansnings mikill. En hann bannaði honum at lesa þess konar beðr ok kallaði þó hverjum manni mundi oerit hofsút at gæta sín við líkamlígr munud ok rangri ást, þó at hann kveykti eigi upp hug sinn til þess meðr ne einum síðum eða þess konar kvæðum. 

Hann var ok iðinn at því at sníða af mónnum ljóta «lostu», ok svá fór hann kænliga með því at sá kom náliga engi á hans fund at eigi fengi hann á nokkura lund leiðrétta fyrir sakir guðlígrar ástara ok kostgæfi þeirar er hann lagði á hverjum manni at hjálpa. Ok ef hann lagði mónnum harðar skriptir á hendr fyrir sakir mikilla gölp, en þeir gengi undir vel ok líttilláttiga, þá var skammt at bíða áðr helgasta hans brjóst, þat er heilagr andi hafði valit sér til byggðar, þá samharmaði þeirra meinlætum ok létti «hann» þá nokkut skriptunum. Ok þá sömu menn er hafði fyrir barða fyrir sakir guðlígrar ástara ok umvandanar, þeim hinum sömu líknaði hann þá miskunnsamliga er þeir váru við skíldir sína annmarka. Ok sá er alla sína undirmenn elskaði sem bræðr eða 

101 samharmaði] + hann S.
syni, þá fœddisk hann af engra manna annmorkum eða vanhøgum, en
samfagnaði því er òðrum gekk vel en harmaði þat allt er annan veg
varð. Hann var maðr svá huggóðr at varla mætti hann sjá eða vita þat
er mœnnum var til meins, en svá örr ok mildr við fátœka menn at varla
hafði hans maki fengizk. Hann var sannr fadir allra fátœkra manna.

Huggaði hann ekkjur ok fœðurlausa, ok engi kom svá harmþrungínn á
hans fund at eigi fengi á nokkur veg huggan af hans tilstilli. Svá var
hann ástsaell við allt fòlk at engi vildi nálöga honum í móti gjöra, ok var
þat meirr fyrir sakir guðligrar ástur þeirrar er allir menn unnu honum
en líkamligrar hræzlu. ’Skórugliga flutti hann fram allá þá hlutir er til
byskulpligs embættis kómu,’11 ok þar er hann braut sína fýsi í marga
staði en gýrði Guðs vilja, ef hann fann þat at þat var eigi allt eitt fyrir
sakir líkamligs eðils, þá launaði Guð honum þat svá í hönd þegar at
hann okaði undir hann allla hans undirmenn í heilagri hlöðni.

En heilagr Johannes lifði líf sitt eptir guðligr setningu ok góðra
manna dœnum, var á þaum nætr ok daga, vakði mikit ok fastaði
longum ok deyðdi sik í morgum hlutum til þess at þá mætti hann meira
ávöxt gjalda Guði en áðr af þeim hlutum òllum er honum váru á hendi
fölgrir. Ok til þess at hann mætti þá vera frjálsari en áðr tíður at veita
eða formæli eða aðra hlutir þá fram at ðefa er Guðs kristni væri mest
upphald at, þá valði hann menn til forráða fyrir staðinn með sér þá er
fyrir skyldu sjá staðarins eign, með húsfreyju þeirir göfugrir er hann
hafði áðr áttu ’er Valðís hét.’12 Einn af þeim mœnnum var prestr virðuligr
sá er Hámundr hét Bjarnarson. Hann var afi Hildar nunnu ok einsetu-
konu sem enn man getit verða síðar í þessu máli. Næst Hámundi var
at ráðum prestr sá er Hjalti hét ok var frændi byskups. Af leiðmœnnum
var sá maðr meíst í ráðum er var göfugr at ætt. Hann hét Þrn ok var
son Pørkels af Viðimýri. Þessir menn høfðu aðra menn at undir sér, þá er
sumir önnuðusk um eign staðarins eða lond, en sumir um vinnu
eða aðra íðju á staðnum, sumir at hirda verkferi eðr greiða fyrir um
verkreíða, ’sumir’ til ferða, sumir til atflutninga til staðarins, sumir at
Þjóna fátœkum mœnnum, ok var byskup áminnandi at þat væri myskynn-
samliga gjört, sumir at taka við gestum ok veita þeim beina,13 því at á
hverri hátið sóttu menn á fund byskups, hundrað manna eða stundum
tvau hundruð eða nokkur fleiri, því at hinn heilagi Jón byskup hafði

115–16 inserted from H. 128 inserted from H. 130 Hámundar S. 133–38
Þessir . . . beina thus H.
Þat í formælum sínnum at honum þótti því at einu til fulls ef hvern maðr í <hans sýslu ok allra helzt innan> heraðs, sá er fong hefði á, kömi um sinn hit sjaldnästa at vitja staðarins at Hólum á tólf manudum. Ok fyrir þá sók varð þar svá fjölmenn at skúrdegi eða páskum at þar skorti þá eigi fjögur hundruð manna allt saman, karlar ok konur. Ok þó at margir af þessum mónum hefði vistir með sér, þá váru hinir fleiri er á byskups kosti váru, ok af honum váru sadder bæði andligri fæulu ok líkamligri, ok styrktir með byskupligri blezan fóru með fagnaði til sinna heimkynna.

Margir síðlátir menn réðusk þangat heim til staðarins ok gáfu fé með sér, en sumir fóduðu sik sjálfr til þess at hlýða kenningum byskups ok tíðagjörð, ok gjörðu sér hús umhverfis kirkjugarðinn.

Heilagr Jón byskup tók marga menn til læringar ok fekk til góða meistara at kenna þeim, Gísla Finnason, er fyrir gátum véru, at kenna grammaticam, en <einn franzesi> Ríkina prest, kapulán sinn ok ástvin, at kenna sǫng eða versagjörð, því at hann var ok hinn mestli lærdómsmaður.14

Þá var þat ekki hús náliga er eigi varð nýgdot íðan í þat er til nytsemör var. Þat var hinna ellri manna háttir at kenna hinum ygrum, en hinir yngri rituðu þá er náms varð í milli. Þeir váru allir samþykkir, ok eigi deildu þeir ok engi þóundaði annan. Ok þegar er til var hringt tíða, þá kómu þeim allir ok fluttu fram tíðir sínar með miklum athuga. Var ekki at heyra í kórinu nema fagr sǫng or ok heilagt beynthia. Hinir ellri menn kunnu sér at vera vel síðaðir, en smásveinar váru svá hirtir af meistórn sínum at þeir skyldu eigi treystask með gáleyfi at fara.

Allir hinir sømístugu kennimenn í Norðlendingafjördungi váru nokkura hrið til náms at Hólum, þá sem várr aldr, segir bróðir Gunnlaugr, mátti muna, sumir af barndómi, sumir á fulltíða aldri. Margir af sagðra meistara lærisveinum þóndaðsk á várum dagum. En einn af þeim varð Ísleifr Hallsson, hvern Jón byskup ösketi at verða skyldi byskup næst eptir hann ok þénaðarmann15 sín byskupsdóms ef hann móddi eelli, en hann andaðisk fyrir en herra byskup. En at ek nefna nokkura sagðra lærisveina, þá er ek sá mínun augum, er einn af þeim Klængur er síðan var byskup í Skál<a>holti. Var hann tólf vetra gamali á hendi fölginn Jóni byskupi af móður sinni til frœðináms, ok varð hann hinu beztí klerkr ok var lengi síðan sømíligr kennimaðr í Hólakirkju, hinn mesti upphaldsmaðr kristinnnar, þrédiðandi fagrliga

142 inserted from H. heraðinu S. til S. 155 inserted from L. 165–91 from L.
Guðs orð undir stjórn ok yfirboði tvæggja Hólabiskupa, Ketils ok Bjarnar. Hafði hann marga vaska lærisveina undir sér, ritandi bøkr margar ok merkiligar, þær sem enn tjásk at Hólum ok víða annars staðar. Vilmundr var þar ok læðr, er fyrstr var ábóti á Pingeyrum, svá ok Hreinn er þar var hinn þríði ábóti. Margir váru ok þar aðrir í skóla, þeir er síðan urðu mektugir kennimenn, Ísleifr Grímsson, fræindi byskups, Jón svarti, Bjarni Bergþórsson, Björn, er síðan var hinn þríði byskup at Hólum, ok margir aðrir þeir er langt er frá at segja. Þar var ok í fræðinæmi hreinferðug jungfrú er Ingunn hét. Øngum þessum var hon lægri í sögðum bóklístum. Kenndi hon mærgum grammarticam ok fræddi hvern er nema vildi. Urðu því margir val menntir undir hennar hendi. Hon rétti mjók latínubøkr, svá at hon lét lesa fyrir sér, en hon sjálf saumaði, tefldi eða ‹vann› aðrar hannyrðir meðr heilagra manna sögum, kynnandi mönnnum Guðs dýrð eigi at eins meðr orðum munnnáms heldr ok meðr verkum handanna.16

177 Guðs orð undir stjórn ok yfirboði tvæggja Hólabiskupa, Ketils ok Bjarnar. Hafði hann marga vaska lærisveina undir sér, ritandi bøkr margar ok merkiligar, þær sem enn tjásk at Hólum ok víða annars staðar. Vilmundr var þar ok læðr, er fyrstr var ábóti á Pingeyrum, svá ok Hreinn er þar var hinn þríði ábóti. Margir váru ok þar aðrir í skóla, þeir er síðan urðu mektugir kennimenn, Ísleifr Grímsson, fræindi byskups, Jón svarti, Bjarni Bergþórsson, Björn, er síðan var hinn þríði byskup at Hólum, ok margir aðrir þeir er langt er frá at segja. Þar var ok í fræðinæmi hreinferðug jungfrú er Ingunn hét. Øngum þessum var hon lægri í sögðum bóklístum. Kenndi hon mærgum grammarticam ok fræddi hvern er nema vildi. Urðu því margir val menntir undir hennar hendi. Hon rétti mjók latínubøkr, svá at hon lét lesa fyrir sér, en hon sjálf saumaði, tefldi eða ‹vann› aðrar hannyrðir meðr heilagra manna sögum, kynnandi mönnnum Guðs dýrð eigi at eins meðr orðum munnnáms heldr ok meðr verkum handanna.16

187 margir val repeated.
Notes

1 *at leyndum dómi Guðs* = Latin *occulto Dei iudicio*. Cf. XIII:13 above and note.

2 According to H and L, Bishop Jón shipped a cargo of Norwegian timber to Iceland on his return voyage from Lund. (Icelanders had the right to free timber from Norwegian forests that were royal property; cf. *Laws* II 211.) This information is omitted in S. Óxi Hjaltason’s church was probably built about 1050. It is not known when it burned down and when it was replaced by the church Bishop Jón demolished to make way for his new cathedral. Jón’s church stood, though repaired from time to time, until about 1290.

3 Þóroddr is called Gamłason in H and L. He has been identified as the Þóroddr *rúnameistari* mentioned in connection with a grammatical treatise, possibly the man of the same name who was a householder in Dalasýsla (western Iceland) in the first half of the twelfth century.

4 *ok enn sér merki húsanna* is absent in H. L has *hvern* [sc. *skóla*] *vér sám með várum augum, segir bróðir Gunnlaugr, er latínus oguna hefir saman sett*.

5 ‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven’ (Matt. 5: 16).

6 The Apostles’ creed and the Lord’s prayer were obligatory learning; see *Laws* I 26. In the course of the thirteenth century the Hail Mary was included as part of this basic Christian knowledge. The ultimate source for the seven canonical hours observed daily by men in secular orders and members of monastic foundations was Psalm 119: 164 (Vulgate 118: 164), ‘Seven times a day do I praise thee . . .’ (so in the Authorised Version). Laymen were also encouraged to observe them as far as possible.

7 The reform which abolished old weekday names that had reference to pagan deities is attributed to St Silvester (pope 313–35). It became common form in the Latin liturgical calendar but elsewhere in Western Europe was effective, at least in large part, only in Icelandic and Portuguese.
Exchange of scurrilous or lewd verses, often impromptu, is attested in various sources though, naturally enough, few texts of this kind have survived. Such pastimes were always frowned on by churchmen. *Mansǫngr*, literally ‘maid-song’, referred to love-poetry in general; making and repeating such verse could be counted an offence punishable at law; see *Laws* II 198. The term *mansǫngr* was later used of the conventional introduction to *rímur*, often addressed to a lady or ladies, but not always with love as the theme. See e.g. W. A. Craigie, *Specimens of Icelandic Rímur* I (1952), 291–93; T. Gunnell, *The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia* (1995), 85–86, 144, 346–48.

Ovid’s verse-epistles are *Epistulae Heroidum* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, and presumably the title in S and H refers to the former (on the fateful loves of notable ladies). For the summary remark in S, *Í þeiri bók býr mansǫngr mikill*, H has: *En í þeiri bók kennir þeim er les brögð til þess er horfir til saurðlifis ok munaðsemi;* and L has: *En í þeiri bók talar meistari Ovidius um kvenna ástir ok kennir meðr hverjum hætti menn skulu þær gilja ok nálágask þeira vilja*. These descriptions and the account of Bishop Jón’s reaction are much more appropriate to Ovid’s *Ars amatoria*, as the title in L, *de arte*, makes explicit. The switch to [liber] *Epistolarum* in the joint source of S and H may stem from some editorial delicacy. All Ovid’s works, including the *Art of Love*, were common school reading in the Middle Ages.

The object of *líknaði* is *þá sómu menn . . . þeim inum sónum*. The first phrase is acc., the second dat.; *líkna* normally takes the dat., and the explanation of the discrepancy is presumably that the writer did not know what verb was to come when he began writing the sentence. Cf. I:27 note above and Gr 3.9.8.2.

The words *Skǫrugliga . . . kómu* are introduced from H.

These men and Bishop Jón’s wife, Valdís, are not mentioned in other sources.

*Þessir menn* (line 133) . . . *veita þeim heina*: thus H. S has: *Þessir menn ǫnnuðusk mest þat er til staðarins kom ok skipuðu mönnum til sýslu, sumum til afslutningar við staðinn um þá hluti er ǫvi þótti þurfa. Sumir váru settir til verknaðar, sumir at þjóna fátaekum mönnum, ok var byskup vandr at því at þat væri miskunnsamliga gjort,*
sumir at taka við gestum. L says only: Sumir menn váru skipaðir at taka meðr gestum.

14 Ríkini has a German name and was probably Frankish rather than French. The description, einn franzeis, is in L, not in S; H lacks this paragraph and the rest of the extract.

15 -mann: the case form is influenced by hvern, and would be correct in an acc. and inf. construction after æskti. It is possibly an instance of anacoluthon rather than an instance of the acc. form mann for nom. maðr, a substitution sometimes found in late fourteenth-century manuscripts.

16 Lines 165–91 are from the L recension. A comparable passage in S is an abridgment of a similar text. Ketill Porsteinsson was bishop of Hólar 1122–45, Björn Gilsson 1147–62. Vilmundr Pórólfsson was the first abbot of Pingeyrar, 1133–48; Hreinn Styrmisson was the third abbot there, 1166–71. The identity of Ísleifr Grímsson and Jón svarti is uncertain. Bjarni Bergflórs is thought to be a priest of that name who is mentioned in other sources as an expert in computus (mathematics and astronomy) and nicknamed inn tölvisi; he died in 1173. Ingunn was probably the Inguðr Arnórsdóttir who is recorded as an informant in a list in OddrÓT, a list which is thought to be derived from Gunnlaugr Leifsson’s work on the same king.
Laxdœla saga is generally thought to have been written about the middle of the thirteenth century, because of its fully developed style and structure, the reference made in it to earlier sagas and other written sources, and the apparent influence on it of European romance. At its centre is the ‘love triangle’ story involving Kjartan, Guðrún and Bolli, which echoes, and probably draws upon, the plot common to poets’ sagas such as Kormaks saga and Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa (see Finlay 1997), but its range is much wider. It is the saga that perhaps most fully deserves the label ‘Family Saga’: not only is the descent of all the important characters traced from the one Norwegian chieftain, Ketill flatnefr, but many of the disputes that arise in its course involve family relationships, often the problematic ones between half- and foster-brothers, and marriage and divorce are among its prevailing themes. This in itself has the consequence that the role and concerns of women are unusually prominent in the saga, and the author’s evident interest in and sympathy for a woman’s point of view has led to speculation that the author may have been a woman (e.g. Kress 1986). It is not out of the question, of course, that a male author could enter into this point of view (an alternative candidate for authorship is Óláfr Þórdarson hvítaskáld, nephew of Snorri Sturluson and author of a treatise on prosody), particularly if, for whatever reason, he was writing for a predominantly female audience.

The feminine perspective is clear from the beginning of the saga in the unusually prominent role given to Unnr in dýpúðga, daughter of Ketill flatnefr, who takes on the conventionally masculine task of founding a settlement and a dynasty in Iceland; she is the ancestress of the Laxdœlir (‘people of Laxárdalr’), the family from whom the saga derives its name, and to which Kjartan and Bolli belong. The saga relates the evolution of this family over several generations before Guðrún Ösvífrsdóttir (whose family is descended from one of Unnr’s brothers) is introduced. The unusual elaboration of this early part of the saga, which goes far beyond the brevity of the conventional saga prelude, has prompted much discussion of the saga’s structure; it is generally felt to introduce and define themes that play a part in the central conflict of the saga. Some have gone so far as to argue that, rather than building up a background against which Kjartan and Bolli can be seen as idealised and heroic figures (as Madelung 1972, for
example, suggests), the opening chapters present Unnr as an exemplary figure, representing family loyalty and generosity, against which the behaviour of the three central figures is measured and found wanting (Conroy and Langen 1988). Ursula Dronke argues for a further moral decline in what she calls the ‘Age of Pewter’ (1979, 137) after the death of Kjartan.

The position of Guðrún as the focus of the saga is established not only by her dominant personality — believed to be partly modelled on two heroic women in the poems of the Poetic Edda, her namesake Guðrún Gjúkadóttir and the valkyrie Brynhildr, who is also cheated of the man she should have married — but also by the saga’s marking out of her four marriages as a narrative sequence. This is achieved by Guðrún’s four dreams in Chapter 33, which foreshadow the four marriages that the saga subsequently relates. The tidily predicted sequence is interrupted by her love for and loss of Kjartan, a pattern repeated in her dialogue at the very end of the saga with her son Bolli, who asks her ambiguously which man (maðr ‘man’, but possibly also ‘husband’) she has loved most. At first she responds with a comparison of the four men she has married; but her final reply, Peim var ek verst er ek unna mest (‘I treated worst the one I loved best’), must surely refer to Kjartan — though the question is debated to this day.

The earliest surviving (but fragmentary) manuscripts of Laxdæla saga are from the end of the thirteenth century. The only complete medieval version of the saga is in the mid-fourteenth-century Möðruvallabók, in which other Sagas of Icelanders (including Kormaks saga and Njáls saga) are also preserved (see p. 239 below). Editions of the saga are based on this text. The extract edited here follows the text of Möðruvallabók as it is represented in the editions of Kålund and Einar Ól. Sveinsson. The textual notes show where readings other than those of Möðruvallabók have been adopted; these readings are from late paper manuscripts, and may in many cases be scribal corrections. The Möðruvallabók text shows signs of later alteration which sometimes obscures the original reading; examples of this have not been noted here if the likely original reading is indicated by the evidence of other manuscripts.
**Bibliography**


XV: LAXDœLA SAGA

Chapter 34: Af Þorvaldi

Þorvaldr hét maðr, sonr Halldórós Garpsdalsgoða. Hann bjó í Garpsdal í Gilsfirði, auðigr maðr ok engi hetja.1 Hann bað Guðrúnar Ósvífrsdóttur á Alþingi þá er hon var fimmtán vetra gømul. Því máli var eigi fjarrí tekit, en þó sagði Ósvífr at þat myndi á kostum finna, at þau Guðrún váru eigi jafnmenni. Þorvaldr talaði óharðfærliga, kvazk konu bídja, en ekkí fjár. Síðan var Guðrún þostnuð Þorvaldi, ok réð Ósvífr einn máldaga, ok svá var skilt, at Guðrún skyldi ein ráða fyrir fé þeira þegar er þau koma í eina rekkju, ok eiga alls helming, hvárt er samfarar þeira væri lengri eða skemmir. Hann skyldi ok kaupa gripi til handa henni svá at engi jafnfjáð kona ætti betri gripi, en þó mætti hann halda búi sínu fyrir þær sakar. Ríða menn nú heim af þingi. Ekkí var Guðrún at þessu spurð, ok heldr gerði hon sér at þessu ógetit, ok var þó kyrrt.2 Brúðkaup var í Garpsdal at tvímanuði. Lítt unni Guðrún Þorvaldi ok var erfið í gripakaupum; váru engar gersimar svá miklar á Vestfjörðum at Guðrúnu þætti eigi skapligt at hon ætti, en galt fjáðskap Þorvaldi ef hann keypti eigi, hversu dýræ sem metnar váru. Þóðr Íngunnarson3 gerði sér dát við þau Þorvald ok Guðrúnu ok var þar longum, ok fell þar morg umrœða á um kærlíka þeira Þóðrar ok Guðrúnar. Pat var eitt sinn at Guðrún beiddi Þorvald gripakaups. Þorvaldr kvað hana ekkí hóf at kunna ok sló hana kinnhest.4 Þá mælti Guðrún:

‘Nú gaftu mér flat er oss konum þykkr miklu skipta at vér eigim vel at gört, en þat er litarapt gott, ok af hefir þú rádít brekvisi við þík.’ Pat sama kveld kom þóðr þar. Guðrún sagði honum þessa svívirðing ok spurði hann hverju hon skyldi þetta launa. Þóðr brosti at ok mælti: 5

‘Hér kann ek gött ráð til. Gerðu honum skyrtu ok brautgangs hófuðsmátt ok seg skilit við hann fyrir þessar sakar.’

Eigi mælti Guðrún í móti þessu, ok skilja þau talit. Pat sama vár segir Guðrún skilit við Þorvald ok för heim til Lauga. Síðan var gort féskipti þeira Þorvalds ok Guðrúnar, ok haði hon helming fjár alls, ok var nú meira en áðr. Tvá vetr hófuðu þau ásamt verit. Pat sama vár seldi Íngunn land sitt í Króksfirði þat sem síðan heitir á Íngunnarstoðum, ok för vestr á Skálmarnes; hana haði átt Glúmr Geirason,

3–4 svarat M. 13 ógott (?) M. 19 mjökk M. 24 þúl written twice in M.
sem fyrir var ritat. Í þenna tíma bjó Hallstein goði á Hallsteinsnesi fyrir vestan Þorskajörð; hann var ríkr maðr ok «meðallagi» vinsæll.

Chapter 35: Af Kotkeli ok Grímu

Kotkell hét maðr er þá hafði út komit fyrir litlu. Gríma hét kona hans; þeira synir várú þeir Hallbjörn slíkisteinsauga ok Stígandi. Þessir menn várú suðreyskir. Óll várú þau mjók fjölkunnig ok inir mestu seiðmenn. Hallstein goði tók við þeim ok setti þau niðr at Urðum í Skálmar «firði», ok var þeira byggð ekki vinsæl.

Þetta sumar för Gestr «til þings ok fór» á skipi til Saurbœjar sem hann var vanir. Hann gisti á Hóli í Saurbœ. Þeir mánar léðu honum hesta, sem fyrir var vant. Þóðr Ingunnarson var þá í fór með Gesti ok kom til Lauga í Sælingsdal. Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir reið til þings ok fylgði henni Þóðr Ingunnarson. Þat var einn dag er þau ríðu yfir Bláskógaheiði — var á veðr gott — þá mælti Guðrún:

‘Hvárt er þat satt, Þóðr, at Auðr, kona þín, er jafnan í brókum ok setgeirí í, en vafit spjórrum mjók í skúra niðr?’

Hann kvazk ekki hafa til þess fundit.

‘Lítit bragð mun þá at,’ segir Guðrún, ‘ef þú finnr eigi, ok fyrir hvat skal hon þá heita Bróka-Auðr?’

Þóðr mælti, ‘Vér ætlum hana litla hríð svá hafa verit kallaða.’

Guðrún svarar, ‘Hitt skiptir hana í meira, at hon eigi þetta nafn lengi síðan.’

Eptir þat kómu menn til þings; er þar allt tíðindalaust. Þóðr var lengum í búð Gests ok talaði jafnan við Guðrún. Einn dag spurdí Þóðr Ingunnarson Guðrúnú hvat konu varðaði ef hon væri í brókum jafnan svá sem karlar. «Guðrún svarar:»

‘Slíkt viti á konum at skapa fyrir þat á sitt hóf sem karlmanni, ef hann hefir hófuðsmátt «svá» mikla at sjáí geirvortur hans berar, brautgangssók hvártveggja.’

Þá mælti Þóðr, ‘Hvárt værð þú mér at ek segja skilit við Auði hér á þingi eða í heraði, ok gera ek þat við fleiri manna «ráð», því at menn eru skapstórir, þeir er sér mun þík-jær misbodit í þessu?’

Guðrún svarar stundu síðar, ‘Aptans bíðr öframis sók.’

Þá spratt Þóðr þegar upp ok gekk til Lögbergs ok nefndi sér vatta at hann segir skilit við Auði, ok fann þat til saka at hon skarsk í setgeirabrækr sem karlkonur. Broðrum Auðar líkar illa ok er þó kyrrt.
Þóðr síðar af þingi med þeim Ósvífvrssonum. En er Auðr spyrð þessi tíðindi, þá mælti hon:

Vel er ek veit þat,
var ek ein um látin.

Síðan reið Þóðr til féskiptis vestri til Saurbœjar með tölfta mann ok gekk þat greitt, því a þóðr var óspart um hversu fénu var skipt. Þóðr rak vestan til Lauga mart búfé. Síðan bað hann Guðrúnar; var honum þat mál auðsótt við Ósvífr, en Guðrún mælti ekki í móti. Brullaup skyldi vera at Laugum at tíu viku músumars; var nú veiða allskorulig. Samfyr þeira Þóðar ok Guðrúnar var góð. Þat eitt helt til at Þorkell hvelpr ok Knút fróru eigi málum á hendr Þóðr Ingunnarsyni, at þeir fengu eigi styrk til. Annat sumar eptir hofðu Hölsmenn selgr í Hvammsdal; var Auðr at seli. Laugamenn hofðu selgr í Lambadal; sá gengr vestr í fjöllin af Sælingsdal. Auðr spyrð þann mann er smalans gætti hversu opt hann fyndi smalaman frá Laugum. Hann kvað þat jafnan vera, sem líklegt var, því at hálss eini var á milli seljanna. Pá mælti Auðr:

‘Pú skalt hitta í dag smalaman frá Laugum, ok máttu segja mér hvat manna er at vetrhúsum eda í seli, ok ræð allt vingjarliga til Þóðar, sem þá átt at gera.’

Sveinninn heitr at gera svá sem hon mælti. En um kveldit, er smala-maðr kom heim, spyrð Auðr tíðinda. Smalamaðrinn svarar:

‘Spurt hefi ek þau tíðindi er þér munu þykkja góð, at nú er breitt hvílugólf milli rúma fleira þóðr ok Guðrúnar, því at hon er í seli en hann heljask á skálasmíð, ok eru fleir Ósvífr tveir at vetrhúsum.’

‘Vel hefir þú njósnat,’ segir hon, ‘ok haf sóðlat hesta tvá er menn fara at sofa.’

Smalasveinn gerði sem hon bað, ok nokkuru fyrir sólarfall sté Auðr á bak, ok var hon þá at vísu í brókum. Smalasveinn reið óðrum hesti ok gat varla fylgt henni, svá knúði hon fast reiðina. Hon reið suðr yfir Sælingsdalsheitiði ok nam eigi staðar fyr í undir tungarði at Laugum. Pá sté hon af baki, en bað smalasveinninn gæta hestanna meðan hon gengi til húss.

Auðr gekk at durum ok var opin hurð; hon gekk til eldhúss ok at lokrekkju þeiri er Þóðr lá í ok svaf. Var hurðin fallin aprtr en eigi lokan fyrir. Hon gekk í lokrekkjuna, en Þóðr svaf ok horfði í lopt

82 Lamba- M.  84 at baki dalnum M.  85 Þóðar M.  86 dalrinn M.  ánna M.  103 inn M.  105 at lockrekiunní M.
upp. Dá vákôi Auðr Þórd, en hann snérisk á hliðina er hann sá at maðr var kominn. Hon brá þá saxi ok lagði at Þórdi ok veitti honum áverka mikla ok kom á hónðina høgrí; varð hann sárá á báðum geirvortum. Svá lagði hon til fast at saxit nam í beðinum staðar. Síðan gekk Auðr brott ok til hests ok hljóp á bak ok reið heim eptir þat.

Þórdr vildi upp spretta er hann fekk áverkann, ok varð þat ekki, því at hann móddi blóðrás. Við þetta vaknaði Ósvífr ok spyrð hvat títt væri, en Þórdr kvazk orðinn fyrir áverkum nökkurum. Ósvífr spyrð ef hann vissi hverr á honum høði unnit, ok stoð upp ok batt um sár hans. Þórdr kvazk ætla at þat hefði Auðr górt. Ósvífr baði at ríða eptir henni; kvað hana fámmenn til mundu hafa farit, ok væri henni skapat víti. Þórdr kvað þat fjærri skyldu fara; sagði hana síkt hafa at górt sem hon átti.

Auðr kom heim í sólarupprás, ok spurðu þeir brœðr hennar hvert hon hefði farit. Auðr kvazk farit hafa til Lauga ok sagði þeim hvat til tíðinda hafði górrk í fórum hennar. Þeir létu vel yfir ok kváðu of lítt mundu at orðit. Þórdr lá lengi í sárum, ok grér vel bringuðarín, en sú hónðin varð honum hvergi betri til taks en àðr.

Kyrð var nú um vetrinn. En eptir um várit kom Ingunn, móðir Þóðar, vestan af Skálmaresi. Hann tók vel við henni. Hon kvazk vilja ráðask undir áraburð Þóðar; kvað hon Kotkel òk konu hans ok sonu gera sér óvært í fjárránum ok fjölkyndi, en hafa mikot traust af Hallsteini goda. Þórdr veiksk skjótt við þetta mál ok kvazk hafa skyldu rétt af þjófum þeim þott Hallstein ar væri at móti; snarask þegar til ferðar við tíunda mann. Ingunn for ok vestr með honum. Hann hafði ferju ór Tjaldanesi. Síðan heldu þau vestr til Skálmaresess. Þórdr lét fyltjala til skipps allt lausaðe þat er móðir hans átti þar, en smala skyldi reka fyrir innan fjörðu. Tölfr váru þau alls á skipi; þar var Ingunn ok önnur kona. Þórdr kom til bœjar Kotkels með tíunda mann; synir þeira Kotkels váru eigi heima. Síðan stefndi hann þeim Kotkeli ok Grímu ok sonum þeira um þjófsnað ok fjölkyndi ok lét varða skóggand; hann stefndi skóum þeim til Alþingis ok för til skip eptir þat.

Pá kómu þeir Hallbjørn ok Stígandi heim er Þórdr var kominn frá landi, ok þó skammt; sagði Kotkell þá sonum sínum hvat þar hafði í górrk meðan þeir váru eigi heima. Þeir brœðr urðu öðir við þetta ok kváðu menn ekki hafa fyrir gengit í berhøgg við þau um svá mikinn 141

140 þat M.
fjándskap. Síðan lét Kotkell gera seindhjall mikinn; þau færðusk þar á upp óll; þau kváðu þar þa
Notes

1 Þorvaldr and his father Halldórr, together with their location in Garpsdalr and Þorvaldr’s marriage to Guðrún, are mentioned in Landnámabók (ÍF I 160).

2 The medieval collection of laws Grágás, written mostly in the thirteenth century but incorporating earlier material, confirms that betrothal was a contract between the prospective husband and the bride’s male relatives (Laws II 53). Some saga narratives, however, represent women protesting at not being consulted (e.g. Laxdæla saga ch. 23), or suggest that a marriage arranged without the bride’s consent could end in disaster (Njáls saga chs 9–11). Jenny Jochens (1995, 44–48) argues that this emphasis on consent arose as a response to the Church’s insistence on marriage as a contract between equal partners.

3 Þórðr was the son of the poet Glúmr Geirason (referred to in line 34), some of whose verses in honour of sons of King Haraldr hárfagri of Norway are cited in the Kings’ Sagas, but his second name derives from the name of his mother Ingunn. He is said in Laxdæla saga (ÍF V 87) to be sakamaðr mikill ‘much given to lawsuits’; his taste for litigation is evident in this extract and leads to his downfall.

4 In other sagas too, the disgrace of a slap in the face triggers a wife’s rebellion against her husband (Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa ch. 12, Eyrbyggja saga ch. 14, Njáls saga chs 11, 16, 48).

5 Grágás (Laws II 63–66) refers to the possibility of divorce instigated by either party (though in this later, Christian, context the permission of the bishop is to be sought in many cases). On the basis of observations made by Arab and other visitors to Viking cultures (Jesch 91–92), as well as numerous references to divorce in the Sagas of Icelanders, this situation is generally thought to represent the remaining traces of a more liberal pre-Christian system of divorce virtually on demand, on grounds such as dishonour, or sexual or other incompatibility (Jochens 55–60). The wearing of women’s clothes, such as the low-cut shirt referred to here, by a man was an offence in law (see note 8 below), but nowhere else is this referred to as grounds for divorce.
The Gestr referred to is Gestr Oddleifsson, well-known in *Laxdæla saga* and elsewhere for his ability to foretell the future (in Chapter 33 he interprets the dreams of Guðrún as foreshadowing her four marriages). It is said on his introduction to the saga that he is in the habit of staying at Hóll with Þórðr and his two brothers-in-law (the mágar referred to here) on his way to the Alþingi.

*Brækr ‘breeches’ here denotes an exclusively male garment. Falk (1919, 121) considers that the word could also apply to a garment worn by women (and that this is what makes Skárphéðinn’s gift to Flosi of *brækr blár* in chapter 123 of *Njáls saga* insulting), but that the feminine version would be open around the legs; in this case it is the additional specification of a piece let in to form the seat (*setgeiríð*) that identifies it as masculine wear. The word *spjarra* has sometimes been taken to refer to the integral socks attached to one kind of (men’s) trousers (*leistabraekr*), but probably means bands of cloth wrapped around the lower legs; this is mentioned elsewhere as male dress.*

Wearing clothes proper to the opposite sex is prohibited in *Grágás* (*Laws II* 69–70), but is not said there to be grounds for divorce: ‘If women become so deviant that they wear men’s clothing, or whatever male fashion they adopt in order to be different, and likewise if men adopt women’s fashion, whatever form it takes, then the penalty for that, whichever of them does it, is lesser outlawry.’

*karlkonur*, plural of *karlkona* ‘masculine woman’, is found only in *Móðruvallabók* (other manuscripts have *karlmaðr* ‘man’ or *karlar* ‘men’). The word does not occur in any other text.

The most detailed account of the practice of the magic rite called *seiðr*, in chapter 4 of *Eiríks saga rauða*, also refers to a pedestal or platform on which the witch sits, in that case surrounded by women, one of whom chants a traditional poem, corresponding to the *galdrar* referred to here. The songs of the magician-family are said later in *Laxdæla saga* to sound pleasant (*fôgr var sí kvedandi at heyra*); on this later occasion they cause the victim’s immediate death, but more usually *seiðr* operates by influencing the weather, as in the case of Þórðr.
The word *þáttr* (pl. *þættir*) in Old Icelandic meant literally ‘a strand in a rope’, but early developed various metaphorical meanings with the basic sense of ‘a subsidiary part of something’. As a literary term it meant a short prose narrative constituting a chapter or integral episode in a saga. Though a few narratives that are classed as *þættir* are found as independent stories in manuscripts, the majority are found as parts of sagas, particularly Sagas of Kings. One group is associated with the missionary kings Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr Haraldsson, the saint, and the sagas of these kings contain various *þættir* relating to the victory of Christianity over heathendom in the late tenth and eleventh centuries. But the largest group of *þættir* is found in sagas of Haraldr harðráði (king of Norway 1046–66); some of these relate to the conflict between Haraldr harðráði and his kinsman Magnús góði Óláfsson during the period of their joint rule over Norway c.1046 (see MS, s.v. *þáttr*).

Many of the *þættir* may be older than the sagas in which they are preserved, and may originally have been independent stories. Linguistic archaisms in some of them (e.g., in *Auðunar þáttr, of, fyr, þars* and the suffixed pronoun -k) suggest that they may come from the earliest period of saga-writing in Iceland, the late twelfth century; there is little to support the idea that they were orally composed, but they are all anonymous. The majority that have survived have Icelanders as their main characters (there are 49 so-called *Íslendinga þættir*, ‘Tales of Icelanders’, in CSI), though these are often unhistorical and their adventures fictional. The story is often about how an insignificant Icelander travels abroad to a foreign (usually Norwegian) court and surmounts various difficulties to get the better of the foreigners, including the ruler himself, and returns to Iceland having made his fortune. Though the settings are historical, the events are mostly of minor historical significance. But the way in which these stories must have supported the developing feeling of Icelandic identity and national pride is obvious.

*Auðunar þáttr* follows this last pattern. Though nothing that happens in the story is impossible (gifts of polar bears from the Arctic to European rulers were not all that uncommon in the Middle Ages), it clearly has affinities to folk-tales (see ÍF VI, c–civ). Great emphasis is laid on the hero’s *gæfa* or *gipta* ‘luck’, ‘good fortune’ (a sort of innate power emanating from a person predisposing his undertakings to
success), though Auðunn is also presented as having a deal of skill in managing the eminent persons with whom he comes into contact. Auðunn is not known from other sources, though the þátr says he came from the Western Fjords of Iceland (line 2) and the historical Porsteinn Gyðuson (d. 1190; mentioned in Sturlunga saga, Guðmundar saga biskups and Icelandic annals; he lived on Flatey in Breiðafjörðr) is said to be descended from him (line 191 below). The story is supposed to take place about 1050–60 (the hostilities between Norway and Denmark referred to in line 33 continued, off and on, from soon after Magnús Óláfsson’s death in 1047 until 1064; the events of these years are described in detail in Morkinskinna, Fagrskinna and Heimskringla; see Gwyn Jones, A History of the Vikings (1984), 406–08).

Auðunar þátr survives in three versions. One is in Morkinskinna (GkS 1009 fol., written c.1275), a history of the kings of Norway from 1035–1177 probably first compiled c.1220 (see p. 57 above). A second is in Flateyarbók (GKS 1005 fol.), a huge compilation of Kings’ Sagas and other texts, written c.1387–1395, with additions made c.1450–1500; Auðunar þátr is among these additions, in the saga of the kings Magnús Óláfsson and Haraldr hardráði in a redaction deriving mainly from the original Morkinskinna compilation. The third version appears in two later compilations of Kings’ Sagas, Hulda (AM 66 fol., c.1350–1375) and Hrokkinskinna (GKS 1010 fol., c.1400–1450), which are also derived from the original Morkinskinna compilation, but have a text more similar to that in Flateyarbók than to that in GkS 1009 fol. (see MS, s.v. Hulda–Hrokkinskinna). The version in GkS 1009 fol. seems likely to be closest to the original of the three, though it has probably been shortened, while each of the three versions contains some details that are not in either of the others.
Bibliography

The Morkinskinna text is printed with original spelling in Morkinskinna, ed. Finnur Jónsson (1932), 180–87, and in normalised spelling in ION 129–35 and ÍF VI, 359–68; the Flateyjarbók text is in Flateyjarbók, ed. Sigurður Nordal (1944–45), IV 195–200.


There is a translation of the whole of the Morkinskinna compilation in Morkinskinna: The Earliest Icelandic Chronicle of the Norwegian Kings (1030–1157) by Theodore M. Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade (2000).
Frá því er Auðunn enn vestfirzki færði Sveini konungi bjarndýri

Maðr hét Auðunn, vestfirzkr at kyni ok féltill. Hann fór útan vestr þar í fjórðum með umbráði Þorsteins, búanda góðs, ok Þóris stýrimanns, er þar hafði þegit vist of vetrinn með Þorsteini. Auðunn var ok þar ok starfaði firir honum Þóri ok þá þessi laun af honum, útanferðina ok hans umsjá. Hann Auðunn lagði mestan hluta fjár þess er var fyr móður sína áðr hann stigi á skip, ok var kveðit á þriggja vetra bjórg. Ok nú fara þeir út heðan, ok fers-þ þeim vel, ok var Auðunn of vetrinn eptir með Þóri stýrimannini — hann átti bú á Mœri. Ok um sumarit eptir fara þeir út til Grenlands ok eru þar of vetrinn. Pess er við getit, at Auðunn kaupir þar bjarndýri eitt, gjörðimi mikla, ok gaf þar firir alla eigu sína.

Ok nú of sumarit eptir þá fara þeir apr til Nóregs ok verða vel reiðfarar; hefir Auðunn dýr sitt með sér ok ætlar nú at fara suðr til Danmerkr á fund Sveins konungs ok gefa honum dýrit. Ok er hann kom suðr í landit þar sem konungr var firir, þá gengr hann upp af skipi ok leiðir eptir sér dýrit ok leigir sér herbergi. Haraldr konungi var sagt brátt at þar var komit bjarndýri, góðsini mikil, ok á íslenzkr maðr. Konungr sendir þegar menn eptir honum, ok er Auðunn kom firir konung, kveðr hann konung vel. Konungr tók vel kveðju hans ok spurði síðan:

‘Áttu gjörðimi mikla í bjarndýri?’

Hann svarar ok kvezk eiga dýrit eittverft.

Konungr mælti, ‘Villtu selja oss dýrit við slíku verði sem þú keyptir?’
Hann svaraði, ‘Eigi vil ek þat, herra.’

‘Villtu þá,’ sagði konungr, ‘at ek gefa þér tvau verð slík, ok mun þat réttara, ef þú hefir þar við gefið alla þína eigu?’
‘Eigi vil ek þat, herra,’ sagði hann.

Konungr mælti, ‘Villtu gefa mér þá?’
Hann svaraði, ‘Eigi, herra.’

Konungr mælti, ‘Hvat villtu þá af gjóra?’
Hann svaraði, ‘Fara,’ segir ‹hann›, ‘til Danmerkr ok gefa Sveini konungi.’

Haraldr konungr sagði: ‘Hvárt er at þú eft maðr svá óvitr at þú hefir eigi heyrt ófrið þann er í milli er landa þessa, eða ætlar þú giptu þína

4 of M.  11 sínu M.  13 með written twice over line break M.  25 þína written twice over line break M.
svá mikla at þú munir þar komask með gjörðumar er aðrir fá eigi komizk klakklaust þó at nauðsyn eigi til?’

Auðunn svaraði, ‘Herra, þat er á yðru valdi, en öngu játum vér gðru en þessu er vér hofum áðr ætlat.’

Þá mælti konungur, ‘Hví mun eigi þat til at þú farir leið þína sem þú vill, ok kom þá til mín er þú ferr aprt, ok seg mér hversu Sveinn konungr launar þér dýrit, ok kann þat vera at þú sér gæfumaðr.’

‘Pví heit ek þér,’ sagði Auðunn.

Hann ferr nú síðan suðr með landi ok í Vik austr ok þá til Danmerkr; ok er þá uppi hvert penningar fjárrins, ok verð hann þá bídja matar bæði fyr sik ok fyr dýrit. Hann kömr á fund ármanns Sveins konungs þess er Áki hét, ok bæði hann vísta nokkverra bæði fyr sik ok fyr dýrit. ‘Ek ætla,’ sagði hann, ‘at gefa Sveini konungi dýrit.’

Áki léð selja mindu honum vistir ef hann vildi. Auðunn kvezk ekki til hafa firir at gefa.

‘En ek vilda þó,’ sagði hann, ‘at þetta kvæmisk til leiðar at ek møtta dýrit föra konungi.’

‘Ek mun fá þér vistir sem it þurfð til konungs fundar, en þar í móti vil ek eiga hálft dýrit, ok máttu á þat líta at dýrit mun deyja fyrir þér, þars it þurfð vistir miklar, en fé sé farit, ok er búit við at þú hafir þá ekki dýrsins.’

Ok er hann lítr á þetta, sýnisk honum nokkvot eptir sem ármannin mælti firir honum, ok sættask þeir á þetta, at hann selr Áka hálft dýrit, ok skal konungr síðan meta allt saman. Skulu þeir fara bánir nú á fund konungs, ok svá gjóra þeir, fara nú báðir á fund konungs ok stóðu fyr borðinu. Konungr ðhugaði hverr þessi maðr mindi vera er hann kenndi eigi, ok mælti síðan til Auðunar:

‘Hverr ertu?’ sagði hann.

Hann svaraði, ‘Ek em íslenzkr maðr, herra,’ sagði hann, ‘ok kominn nú útan af Grœnlandi ok nú af Nóregi, ok ætlaðak at föra yðr bjarnýr þetta; keyptak þat með allri eigu minni, ok nú er þó á orðit mikit fyrir mér: ek á nú hálft eitt dýrit’ — ok sagði konungi síðan hversu farit hafið með þeim Áka ármanni hans. Konungr mætli:

‘Er þat satt, Áki, er hann segir?’

‘Satt er þat,’ sagði hann.

Konungr mælti, ‘Ok þótt þér þat til liggja, þar sem ek settak þík mikinn mann, at hepta þat eða tálma er maðr gjórðisk til at föra mér

36 gðru M.  59 ðhugaði written twice over line break M.  70 melma M.
görsimi ok gaf fyr alla eign, ok sá þat Haraldr konungr at ráði at láta
hann fara í friði, ok er hann várr óvinr? Hygg þú at þá, hvé sannligt þat
var þínnar handar, ok þat veri mákligt at þú væri dreppinn. En ek mon
nú eigi þat gjóra, en braut skaltu fara þegar ór landinu ok koma aldrigi
aptr síðan mér í augsýn. En þér, Auðunn, kann ek slíka þókk sem þú
gæf mér allt dýrit, ok ver hér með mér.‘

Þat þekkisk hann ok er með Sveini konungi um hríð.

Ok er liðu nokkverjar stundir, þá mælti Auðunn við konung:
‘Braut fýsir mik nú, herra.’

Kонungr svarar heldr seint, ‘Hvat villtú þá,’ segir hann, ‘ef þú vil
eigi með oss vera?’

Hann sagði, ‘Suðr vil ek ganga.’
‘Ef þú vildir eigi svá gott ráð taka,’ sagði konungr, þá mindi mér
fyr þíkkja í, er þú fýsisk í brott.’

Ok nú gaf konungr honum silfr mjók mikit, ok fór hann suðr síðan
með Rúmferlum, ok skipaði konungfr til um ferð hans, bað hann koma
tsíðan er hann hvímenni konung. Ok er hann hefð þar dvalizk sem hann tíðir, þá ferr
hann aprtr; tekr þá sótt mikla, gjórar hann þá ákafliga magran. Gengr
þá upp allt féit þat er konungr háði gefit honum til ferðarinnar, tekr
síðan upp staðkarþs stíg ok biðr sér matar. Hann er þá kollótt ok heldr
ósaðligr. Hann kemr aprtr í Danmork at þáskum þangat sem konungr
er þá staddr, en eiþgi þorði hann at láta sjá sík ok var í kirkjuskoti ok
þætaði þá til fundar við konung er hann gengi til kirkju um kveldit. Ok
nú er hann sá konunginn ok híðina faðrða búa, þá þorði hann eigi
at láta sjá sík. Ok er konungr gekk til drykkju í hóllina, þá mataðisk
Auðunn úti, sem síðr <er> til Rúmferla meðan þeir hafa eigi kastat staf
ok skreppu. Ok nú of aptaninn, er konungr gekk til kveldsonga, átlaði
Auðunn at hitta hann, ok svá mikit sem honum þótti fyrð fyr, jök nú
míklu á, er þeir váru drukknir híðmenninir. Ok er þeir gengu inn aprtr,
þá þekði konungr mann ok þóttisk finna, at eigi háði frama til at ganga
fram at hitta hann. Ok nú er híðin gekk inn, þá veik konungr út ok mælti:
‘Gangi sá nú fram er mik vill finna; mik grunar, at sá muni vera
máðrinn.’

Pá gekk Auðunn fram ok fell til fóta konungi, ok varla kenndi konungr
hann. Ok þegar er konungr veit hvérr hann er, tók konungr í hönd
honum Auðuni ok bað hann <vel> kominn.

75 slíku M. 98 optaninn M.
‘Ok hefir þú mikit skipazk,’ sagði hann, ‘síðan vit sámsk,’ — leiðir hann eptir sér inn. Ok er hirðin sá hann, hlóga þeir at honum, en konungr segir:

‘Eigi þurfu þér at honum at hlæja, því at betr hefir hann sét fyr sinni sál heldr en ét.’

Þá lét konungr gjöra honum laug ok gaf honum síðan klæði, ok er hann nú með honum.

Þat er nú sagt einhverju sinni of várit, at konungr bíðr Auðuni at vera með sér álengðar ok kvezk mindu gjöra hann skutilsvéin sinn ok leggja til hans göða vírðing. Auðunn sagði:

‘Guð þakki yðr, herra, sóma þann allan, er þér vilið til mín leggja, en hitt er mér í skapi, at fara út til Íslands.’

Konungr sagði, ‘Petta sýnisk mér undarliga kosit.’

Auðunn mælti, ‘Eigi má ek þat vita, herra,’ sagði hann, ‘at ek hafa hér mikinn sóma með yðr, en móðir mín troði stafkarls stíg út á Íslandi, því at nú er lokit þÆrg- þeiri er ek lagða til aðr ek fœra af Íslandi.’

Konungr svaraði, ‘Vel er mælt,’ sagði hann, ‘ok mannlíga, ok muntu verða giptumaðr; sjá einsk var svá hlutirinn, at mér mindi eigi mislíka at þú færir í braut heðan, ok ver nú með mér þar til er skip búask.’

Hann gørir svá.

Einn dag, er á leið várit, gekk Sveinn konungr ofan á bryggjur, ok váru menn þá at at búa skip til þmissa landa, í Austveg eða Saxland, til Svíþjóðar eða Nóregs. Þá koma þeir Auðunn at einu skipi fógru, ok váru menn at at búa skipit. Þá spurði konungr:

‘Hversu lízk þér, Auðunn, á þetta skip?’

Hann svaraði, ‘Vel, herra.’

Konungr mælti, ‘Petta skip vil ek þér gefa ok launa bjarndýrit.’

Hann þakkaði gjöfina eptir sinni kunnustu. Ok er leið stund ok skipit var albúit, þá mælti Sveinn konungr við Auðun:

‘Þó villdu nú á braut, þá mun ek nú ekki letja þik, en þat hefi ek spurt at íllt er til hafna firir landi yðru, ok eru víða øræfi ok hætt skipum. Þú brýtr þú ok týnir skipinu ok fénu, lítt sér þat þá á, at þú hafir fundit Svein konung ok gefit honum gjörsumi.’

Síðan seldi konungr honum leðr-hosu fulla af silfri.

‘Ok ertu þá enn eigi félauss með òllu, þótt þú brjótit skipit, ef þú fær haldit þessu. Verða má svá enn,’ segir konungr, ‘at þú týnir þessu

108 sámdsk M. 109 hlóga M. 115–16 at vera með written twice M. 121 at ek vita hafa M. 138 written òðru M; corrected in manuscript. 139 fénun M.
fé; lítt nýtr þú þá þess er þú- fannnt Svein konung ok gaf honum görsimi.

Síðan dró konungr <hring> af hendi sér ok gaf Auðun ok mælti:

‘Þó at svá illa verði at þú br-jóttir skipit ok týnir fénú, eigi ertu félauß ef þú kemsk á land, því at margir menn hafa gull á sér í skipsbrottum; ok sér þá at þú hefri fundít Svein konung, ef þú heldr hringinum. En þat vil ek ráða þér,’ segir hann, ‘at þú gefir eigi hringinn, nema þú þikkisk eiga svá mikit gött at launa nökkrverjum göfgum manni; þá gef þeim hringinn, því at tignum mónnum sömir at þiggja.

Ok far nú heill.’

Síðan lætr hann í haf ok kømr í Nóreg ok lætr flytja upp varnað sinn, ok þurfti nú meira við þat en fyrr er hann var í Nóregi. Hann fær nú síðan á fund Haralds konungs ok vill efna þat er hann hét honum áðr hann fór til Danmerkr, ok kveðr konung vel. Haraldkonungr tok vel kveðju hans.

‘Ok sezk niðr,’ sagði hann, ‘ok drekk hér með oss.’

Ok svá gjorir hann. Pá spurði Harald konungr:

‘Hverju launaði Sveinn konungr þér dýrit?’

Auðunn svaraði, ‘Því, herra, at hann þá at mér.’

Konungr sagði, ‘Launat minda ek þér því hafa. Hverju launaði hann enn?’

Auðunn svaraði, ‘Gaf hann mér silfr til suðrgöngu.’

Pá sagði Harald konungr, ‘Mórgum manni gefr Sveinn konungr silfr til suðrgöngu eða annarra hluta, þótt ekki færi honum görsimar.

Hvat er enn fleira?’

‘Hann bauð mér,’ sagði Auðunn, ‘at gørask skutilusveinn hans ok mikinn sóma til mín at leggja.’

‘Vel var þat mælt,’ sagði konungr, ‘ok launa mindi hann enn fleira.’

Auðunn sagði, ‘Gaf hann mér knörr með farmi þeim er hingat er bezt varit í Nóreg.’

‘Þat var stórmannlítþt,’ sagði konungr, ‘en launat minda ek þér því hafa. Launaði hann því fleira?’

Auðunn sagði, ‘Gaf hann mér leðrhosu fulla af silfri ok kvað mik þá eigi félauðan ef ek helda því, þó at skip mitt bryti við Ísland.’

Konungr sagði, ‘Þat var ágætliga gört, ok þat minda ek ekki gört hafa; lauss minda ek þíkkjask, ef ek gæfa þér skipit. Hvárt launaði hann fleira?’

144 lítr M.  167 görsimur M.  171 var þat var M.
'Svá var víst, herra,' sagði Auðunn, ‘at hann launaði; hann gaf mér hring þenna er ek hefi á hendi, ok kvað svá mega at berask at ek týnda fénu òllu, ok sagði mik þá eigi félausan, ef ek ætta hringinn, ok bað mik eigi lóga, nema ek ætta nökkerjum tignum ‘manni’ svá gott at launa at ek vilda gefa. En nú hefi ek þann fundit, því at þú áttir kost at taka hvártveggja frá mér, dýrit ok svá líf mitt, en þú lézt mik fara þangat í friði sem aðrir náðu eigi.’

Konungr tók við gjöfinni með blíði ok gaf Auðuni í móti góðar gjafar áðr en þeir skilðisk. Auðunn varði fénu til Íslandsferðar ok fór út þegar um sumarit til Íslands ok þótti vera inn mesti gæfumaðr.

Frá þessum manni, Auðuni, var kominn Þorsteinn Gyðuson.
XVII: RUNIC INSCRIPTIONS

The terms ‘rune’ and ‘runic’ have been used to mean many different things, as the relevant entries in the *Oxford English Dictionary* will confirm. It is important to stress that here (as in all serious linguistic work) ‘runes’ and ‘runic’ refer to a set of symbols used for writing language — and nothing else. Like Roman, Greek or Cyrillic letters, runes denote speech sounds: they are an alphabetic type of script, and can in principle be used to write any language (indeed a fair number of medieval runic inscriptions are in Latin). Runes do not constitute a language in themselves. Neither are they to be associated with mystical poems or with fortune-telling, supernatural powers or similar mumbo-jumbo. It should further be noted that runes are an epigraphic script: they are found carved or scratched into stone, wood, bone, metal, etc., but were not normally written with ink on parchment. This means that the messages they carry are laconic; runic inscriptions do not preserve lengthy pieces of literature.

The origin of the runic alphabet has been the subject of much speculation, but as yet there is no consensus about when, where and for what reasons it was brought into being. The oldest extant rune-inscribed artefacts are dated to AD 200 or a little earlier. From the third century we have a reasonable number. Most have been found in southern Scandinavia, with a concentration in the area which now comprises Denmark, but a few have an eastern European provenance. These early inscriptions tend to consist of one or two words only and are hard to classify typologically. Names appear to be common, but it is often difficult to decide whether a particular name refers to the object on which it is carved, the owner, or the maker. Some of the inscriptions seem to belong to the world of trade. None obviously reflects a religious milieu. On the basis of the available evidence it has been suggested that the runic alphabet originated in southern Scandinavia in the first century of the Christian era. It is argued that Germanic peoples from this region trading with the Roman Empire perceived the need for a system of writing. That they did not simply adopt the Roman alphabet is put down to their distance from Roman culture. By no means all subscribe to this thesis, however. Some have sought to derive the runes from the Greek alphabet, others from various North Italic scripts. It has also been argued that several features of early runic writing, for example the fact that it can run right to left as
well as left to right, point to a much earlier date of origin than the physical evidence implies. One theory has it that runic script derives from archaic Greek epigraphy and may be as old as the fifth or fourth century BC. All we can say for certain is that the runes must be somewhat older than the earliest datable inscriptions because of the latter’s relatively wide geographical distribution. It also seems likely that there is some connection between the runes and classical Roman capitals: the correspondences of form and sound are too striking to be ignored (e.g. ᵏ /r/, ᵐ /h/, ᵧ /i/, ᵤ /l/, ᵥ /b/, and, less immediately transparent, ᵧ /f/, < /k/, ᵦ /u/, ᵩ /s/).

The runic alphabet of the period AD c.200–700 is known as the older fuflark (fuflark after its first six characters), and is preserved complete or in fragmentary form in nine inscriptions. These early recordings of the runic alphabet show considerable homogeneity in the form of the individual runes and, not least, the order in which they appear. The fact that variation exists, however, means it is more helpful for the student to present a reconstructed older fuflark, based on typical forms and the most commonly attested order.

![Fig. 1 The older fuflark](image)

The ♂ symbol indicates that this rune denoted the velar nasal sound of southern English sing (possibly sometimes a following /g/ as well, as in northern English).

Virtually all meaningful inscriptions written with the older runes in Scandinavia are in a form of language that pre-dates Old Norse. No examples will therefore be given here. Students who wish to familiarise themselves with this early linguistic stage should consult Antonsen (1975) or Krause (1966).

The runic alphabet did not remain unchanged. In Frisia and Anglo-Saxon England it was expanded to take account of sound changes in the forms of Germanic spoken in these areas (the best account of English runes and their uses is Page, 1999). For reasons that are by no means clear, the Scandinavians went the opposite way from their Anglo-Saxon
cousins. At a time when the number of distinctive speech sounds in their language was rising, they ejected eight runes from the *fupark* and simplified the forms of many of the characters they retained. This reform, which took place no later than c.700, seems to have been universally accepted. The new alphabet, known to modern scholars as the younger *fupark*, appears in two fairly distinct variants, one more drastically simplified than the other. The simpler runes are known as ‘short-twig’, and are found chiefly in Sweden, Norway and their colonies in the period c.700–1000 (less appropriate names sometimes used of these characters are ‘Swedish-Norwegian runes’ and ‘Rök runes’ — the latter after the famous Rök stone from Östergötland, Sweden). The more complex runes are called ‘long-branch’ and are associated with Denmark throughout the Viking Age and early medieval period and with Sweden after c.1000 (less appropriate names here are ‘Danish runes’ or ‘normal runes’). In Norway post-1000 rune-writers replaced certain short-twig with long-branch characters. The resulting alphabet is often known as the ‘Norwegian mixed *fupark*’. In illustrating these different manifestations of the younger *fupark*, reconstructed alphabets are once again presented, based on common usage; the order of the runes is always the same.

![Fig. 2 The short-twig younger *fupark*](image)

![Fig. 3 The long-branch younger *fupark*](image)

![Fig. 4 The Norwegian mixed *fupark*](image)
The ā symbol indicates that this rune denoted a nasal a-sound (for most of the Viking Age, at least), as in French manger.

Towards the end of the Viking Age Christianity became the official religion in Scandinavia, bringing with it the Roman alphabet and medieval European culture. Conceivably, knowledge of an alphabet in which it was possible to denote speech sounds more precisely than the runic — with its limited inventory of sixteen characters — encouraged rune-writers to seek ways of expanding their medium. Whatever the cause, between about 1000 and 1200 various expedients were adopted to increase the range of runic characters available. In some cases diacritic dots were placed on runes (ℓ, for example, tended to denote a voiced velar — and perhaps palatal — as distinct from ℓ, which stood for the unvoiced counterpart(s); ū was used for front unrounded vowels lower than /i/). Another method was to differentiate existing variants, so that what had been two forms of the same rune became two separate characters, each denoting a different sound (ū was thus restricted to /a/ and ū to /o/, while ℓ came to denote /æ/ and Ô/ø/ or /ø/). The upshot of these reforms was what is generally known as the medieval fuflark. That the example given in Fig. 5 below is a modern construct must be strongly emphasised. While complete older and younger fuflarks of various kinds are attested, medieval alphabet inscriptions tend to be based firmly on the sixteen runes of the younger fuflark. Odd supplementary characters may be included, but seldom more than one or two. Quite possibly rune-writers did not consider the medieval additions to the fuflark to be new runes, simply variations on the existing sixteen.

Fig. 5 The medieval fuflark

Double dots are used here in transliterating dotted runes, to indicate that not all these supplementary characters had a fixed sound value. Ô, for example, might denote /ø/ or /y/, and even /o/ in some areas, while ℓ regularly stood for both /æ/ and /e/ until the differentiation of ℓ and ℓ. Occasionally a dotted rune may even have the same value as its undotted counterpart.
During the Viking and Middle Ages many different types of runic inscription were made. Best known are perhaps the commemorative rune stones which span the period c.750–1100. After 1100 the raised stone with its emphasis on the commissioner(s) — the living — goes out of fashion and is replaced by the grave-slab which concentrates attention on the dead. Inscriptions are also found on a variety of loose objects: wood, bone, metal — even leather and pottery. Some of these are charms, some marks of ownership, some brief letters; yet others take the form of statements, express wishes, or record crude jokes; not a few seem to be pure gobbledygook. There is also a substantial corpus of runic graffiti. Those carved into the walls or furniture of churches are often of a pious nature, some of the other examples are more racy. Church furniture may also carry more formal inscriptions, recording, for example, who made an object or its purpose.

After some four hundred years of coexistence with the Roman alphabet, runes dropped out of fashion in Scandinavia. It is impossible to give anything like a precise date for their demise since in one or two places they continued to be used for particular purposes long after they had been forgotten elsewhere — in Gotland until c.1600, in Iceland until well into the seventeenth century, and in the Swedish province of Dalarna — there increasingly mixed with letters of the Roman alphabet — as late as the nineteenth century.

Runic inscriptions are important. Although often extremely laconic, many of them were composed in the pre-manuscript period and — unlike most manuscript texts — are originals. They can throw light on Scandinavian history, culture and language, not least the last. Runic writing tends to be more orthophonic (i.e. true to the pronunciation) than its Roman-alphabet counterpart, presumably because runes were not learnt in a school or scriptorium and carvers adopted a less disciplined approach to orthography. Through runic writing we can thus learn at first hand something of the forms of Scandinavian in use during the Viking and Middle Ages.

Each of the runic texts below is presented in four different ways: (1) by a normalised representation of the runes; (2) as a transliteration (in bold); (3) as an edited text (in italics); (4) in English translation. The normalisation of runes is a process akin to printing handwritten texts in the Roman alphabet: in principle each rune appears in one form only. However, variants that are diagnostic of a particular type of alphabet are retained.
The aim of the transliteration is to make the text more accessible to the reader without knowledge of runes, while preserving as much of possible of the original orthography. What is transliterated is therefore in each case the distinctive rune (so that, for example, Ʌ is always rendered as k, Ʉ and Ʌ as s, and so on). While it is sensible to give one’s transliteration a helpful phonological profile (rendering Ʌ Ʉ Ʌ as fup, for example, rather than, say, as xyz) it cannot be over-emphasised that we are not dealing here with phonetic transcription: Ʌ is rendered as k whether it denotes /k/, [g] or [ɣ] (a voiced velar spirant, as the g in ON or modern Icelandic eiga, cf. NION I 11, 17), Ʉ is given as u whichever rounded vowel it stands for (/u/, /o/, /y/, /ø/ or the semi-vowel [w]), etc. Nor is modern punctuation or spacing introduced in the transliteration; the text is given line by line as it appears in the original. Separation marks are however reproduced as : for convenience whatever their actual form. Round brackets indicate that a rune, group of runes or separator is uncertain, square brackets that the material within them is conjectured or supplied from an earlier drawing or photograph. A slur over two or more transliterated runes marks a bind-rune (a runic ligature).

The distance of some of the edited texts from the Old Norse of grammars and dictionaries makes normalisation problematic. In the selection offered here Norwegian and Norwegian-inspired inscriptions have been treated like the Icelandic texts in NION II. For Danish and Swedish inscriptions the normalisation practice of Peterson (1994) has been used as a guideline, but the editor has felt free to depart from it to indicate notable phonological features. Long vowels are marked with an acute accent, as in Old Icelandic; r stands for the reflex of Germanic /z/, most recently identified as a voiced palatal fricative with sibilant quality. Note that æ can denote a short as well as a long vowel.
Bibliography


*DR* = Lis Jacobsen and Erik Moltke, eds, *Danmarks runeindskrifter* 1–2 (1941–42).


*SR* = *Sveriges runinskrifter* 1–15 (1900, in progress). (This series is subdivided by province — e.g. vol. 2 is *Östergötlands runinskrifter*, vols 6–9 *Upplands runinskrifter* — and edited by a variety of scholars.)
XVII: RUNCIC INSCRIPTIONS

A: KÄLVESTEN

(Photo: Michael Barnes)
This inscription is designated Ög 8 in SR. It is from Östergötland in central southern Sweden and dated to the ninth century.

In runic writing it is not uncommon for a single character to denote the final sound of one word and the initial sound of the next, as in aukrimulfR. It is necessary only that the two sounds denoted can be expressed by one and the same rune. The spellings kubl and uikikR reflect the omission of homorganic nasals that is a feature of runic spelling. When /m/ occurs immediately before /p/ or /b/, and /n/ before /k/, /g/, /t/ or /d/, rune-writers often do not designate the nasal; the b in kubl thus indicates /mb/, the second k in uikikR /ng/. On the possible use of i for /y/, see Bryggen (2) below.

The word kumbR is almost always plural and is thought to denote a monument made up of more than one element. In the earliest Viking-Age inscriptions, as in those from before the Viking Age, there seems to be no way of distinguishing between ‘that’ and ‘this’: þau defines kumbl, but not obviously as something close at hand or more distant. Aft is a short form of the preposition eptir, parallel to fyr for fyrir and und for undir. The short forms are on the whole earlier than their longer counterparts. Sunu is an old acc. sg. form with the original -u preserved (as it may also possibly be in the -u- in Styggur, though the etymology of this name is uncertain). The demonstratives sá, sú are regularly used in Viking-Age runic inscriptions to denote ‘he’, ‘she’. Fial is an East
Scandinavian variant of West Scandinavian *fell*. The preposition *mir*, apparently reflecting a spoken form lacking [ð], is attested only in a handful of runic inscriptions from Sweden. Outside the Swedish province of Hälsingland, use of the verb *fá* to denote the making of a runic inscription is an indicator of considerable age; it is a term found in older *fuðark* inscriptions (in the form *fa(i)hido* ‘[I] made’) and in the earliest of those in the younger *fuðark*. *Auk* is an older form of *ok* with the diphthong preserved (the conjunction is related to the verb *auka* ‘increase’). For personal names in the above text and for personal and place-names in Glavendrup, Jelling, Andreas II and Gripsholm below, see *Dictionary of Proper Names in Scandinavian Viking Age Runic Inscriptions* (available at http://www.sofi.se/SOFIU/runlex/).

The Kälvesten inscription is notable for being the earliest to document a Scandinavian expedition to the east. Rune forms and language combine to suggest a date in the first half of the ninth century.

B: GLAVENDRUP

(Photo and © National Museum of Denmark)
(Side A)

Rûn*îrûr*nû

(r nßNªiltr ˝ sn

ti ˝ st niN3àNsi ˝ nu1t

nl n˝ snulunßu3n

uínl

(i)

3sªni3uinr3nN3inßN

nl n ˝ suNi˚ ˝ ßnr3u

ßubl ˝ 3nusi ˝ n1t ˝ 1 n3ur

siN ˝ nuß ˝ ªàNs ˝ ßuNn ˝ nu1t

unr ˝ siN ˝ iN ˝ suti ˝ r nist ˝ ruN

n˚ ˝ 3nsi ˝ n1t ˝ trutiN ˝ siN

3ur ˝ uißi ˝ 3nsi ˝ ruNn ˚

(Photo and © National Museum of Denmark)

(Side B)

Rûn*îrûr*nû

Rûn*îrûr*nû

Nhîr ˝ Dûtr*îrûr*nû

Nhîr ˝ Dûtr*îrûr*nû

Nhîr ˝ Dûtr*îrûr*nû

Nhîr ˝ Dûtr*îrûr*nû

Nhîr ˝ Dûtr*îrûr*nû

Nhîr ˝ Dûtr*îrûr*nû
(Side C)

\[\text{nt ˝ rit n ˝ sn ˝ unr3i ˝ is ˝ st niN3nNs i} \]

(Side A)

\[\text{raknhiltr:sa} \]
\[\text{ti:stainpånsi:auft} \]
\[\text{ala:sauluakuþa} \]
\[\text{uial(i)þshaþuiarþanþiakn} \]

(Side B)

\[\text{ala:sunir:karþu} \]
\[\text{kUBL:þausi:aft:faþur} \]
\[\text{sin:auk:þåns:kuna:auft} \]
\[\text{uar:sin:in:suti:raist:run} \]
ar:þasi:aft:trutin:si
þur:uiki:þasi:runar

(Side C)

at:rita:sa:uarþi:is:stainþansi
aílti:iþa aíft:ánan:traki

*Ragnhildr satti stein þennsi aíft Alla, Sölva goda, vía liðs, hæið-verðan þegn. Alla synik gæðu kumbl þausi aíft faður sinn auk hans kona aíft ver sinn. En Sóti ræist rúnar þassi aíft dróttin sinn. Þórr vígi þassi rúnar. At retta(?) sá verði es stein þennsi aílti(?) eða aíft annan dragi.

‘Ragnhildr placed this stone after Alli, leader of the Sölvar, priest of the host, a noble thane. Alli’s sons made these memorials after their father and his wife after her husband. But Sóti carved these runes after his lord. Þórr hallow these runes. May he be reckoned a pervvert(?) who removes(?) this stone or drags it [for use as a memorial] after another.’

This inscription has the number 209 in *DR*. It is from Fyn and dated to the tenth century.

For notes on kumbl and auk, see the Kälvesten inscription above.

There is disagreement about what the sequences au, ai and ia denote in Danish inscriptions of the mid- and late Viking Age. Some argue that after the East Scandinavian monophthongisation /au/ > /ø:/, /ei/ > /e:/, /øy/ > /ø:/, digraphic spellings were used to denote vowel sounds for which the younger *fuflark* had no specific symbols, au denoting /ø/ or /œ/ and ia or ai /æ/. Others believe that in the case of ia, at least, some kind of diphthongisation is reflected (cf. Swedish dialectal jär as a reflex of hér ‘here’). The question cannot easily be resolved. We may note that au became a common way of indicating /œ/ throughout the Scandinavian runic world — including the West where there was no monophthongisation — and that the Glavendrup inscription consistently spells historical /au/ and /ei/ digraphically, indicating perhaps that the carver still used the historical diphthongs in his speech. In the East Scandinavian of the Viking Age the demonstrative pronoun meaning ‘this/these’ usually consisted of the basic pronoun sá, sú, þat plus the
deictic (pointing) particle -sa or -si. Hence ōnnsi (acc. m. sg.), ōassi (< ḫar + si, acc. f. pl.), ōausi (acc. n. pl.). Acc. faḍur lacks labial mutation (cf. NION I 39–41), as commonly in East Scandinavian.

The sequence ala:sauluakupausial(i)þsaifþuraþfanþakiakn has been taken in different ways. DR sees sölva as an epithet, ‘the pale’, agreeing with Alla; goða is reckoned to be modified by véa (gen. pl.), giving ‘priest of (the) temples’; that leaves liðs heiðverðan þegn, which is said to mean ‘noble thane of the retinue’, with ‘thane’ a rank in a king’s or nobleman’s body of retainers. Further permutations are possible. In favour of the interpretation offered on p. 223 above are the references to nuka kúpi ‘leader of the Ness-dwellers(?)’ in the Helnæs and Flemløse I inscriptions (DR 190; 192; cf. also Icelandic Ljósvetningagoði), and the suspicion that liðs would probably follow heiðverðan þegn if it modified the phrase, as véa supposedly follows goða. With the order liðs heiðverðan þegn, which implies definition of þegn, we would perhaps also expect the adjective to have weak inflexion. It is unfortunate that this part of the inscription is so hard to interpret, for it clearly contains information on the structure of tenth-century Danish society. As construed on p. 223 above, the man commemorated was goði (secular leader?) of a group of people, véi (priest? — cf. Gothic weiha with that meaning) of a body of men, and a þegn — perhaps the holder of some military rank. That the offices enumerated are three may be significant. The making of the monument is attributed to three agencies (Alli’s sons, Ragnhildr and Sóti), and the Trygge-vælde inscription (DR 230), apparently commissioned by the same Ragnhildr and also carved by Sóti, describes a (different) monument made up of three elements.

Whatever Alli’s functions, it is clear they were not performed in a Christian society. That is amply confirmed by the invocation Pórr vígi þassi rúna; almost certainly by the final part of the inscription too, though important elements of this are obscure. We may surmise with Niels Âge Nielsen (Runestudier, 1968, 14–15) that ríta is a way of writing retta, from earlier *hretta and related to Old Icelandic skratti ‘unmanly sorcerer’, but the meaning of aílti is hard to determine. Conceivably we are dealing here with the verb elta ‘chase’. Whatever the exact interpretation, the warning against tampering with the runestone has several parallels (Runestudier, 16–52), and all seem to stem from entirely heathen milieux. To this may be added the heathen ship-setting that forms part of the Glavendrup monument.
C: JELLING II

(Side A)

*TRIITR:YNTHRA:B:IYTNRNY
YNBNTYTNY:T:YNRNYTBNY
TNYTRTNRNYTINRNY:INTRNY
*TRIITR[::]ITNRYTIGNRNY

(Side B)

*TRIITR:YNRNYTYP

(Phot: Michael Barnes)
(Side C)

-\text{nu}\text{t (à)} Ni \text{ßnr3i (ß)}

(Side A)

\text{haraltr: kunukr: bañ: kaurua}
\text{kubl: ðausi: aft: kumbl: fursin}
\text{aukaft: ðaurui: muður: sina: sa}
\text{haraltr[:] jias: sår: uan: tanmaurk}

(Side B)

\text{ala: auk: nuruiak}

(Side C)

:auk: ð(a)ni[:](karði)[:] kristnà

*Haraldr konungr bað gørva kumbl ðausi aft Gorm faður sinn auk aft Þórví móður sîna. Sá Haraldr es sér vann Danmørk alla auk Norweg auk dani gørøi kristna.*

‘King Haraldr ordered these memorials to be made after Gormr, his father, and after Þórví, his mother. That Haraldr who won for himself all Denmark and Norway and made the Danes Christian.’

This inscription has the number 42 in *DR*. It is from northern Jutland and dated to the period c.960–80.

For notes on the spellings *kunukr*, *kubl* and *auk*, and on the word *kumbl* itself, see Kälvesten above; for digraphic spellings of expected monophthongs and the forms *ðausi* and *faður*, see Glavendrup.

Conceivably ð was inserted into *ðaurui* as a means of indicating the nasal quality of the root vowel (*ðor* - < *ðunra*-); it is otherwise hard to understand why the name should have been written in this way. *nuruiak* represents the earliest recorded form of the name ‘Norway’; it is noteworthy that it lacks the dental spirant denotation of OE *Norðweg*.

The *Haraldr konungr* of the inscription is the Danish King Haraldr Blue-tooth, who ruled from somewhen around the middle of the tenth century until c.985; *Gormr* is his predecessor, King Gormr the Old, and *Þórví* the famed Þyri *Danmarkar bót* (‘Denmark’s betterment’,
an epithet that perhaps has its origins in the Jelling I inscription — DR 41 — made by Gormr in her memory). All three figures appear in various of the Icelandic Kings’ Sagas. Here Haraldr speaks to us directly. The stone, he states, is raised in memory of his father and mother, but he goes on to claim mighty achievements for himself, to the extent that the inscription is more a celebration of his own life than that of his parents. Scholars have wondered why Haraldr would have waited so long before erecting the memorial, and it has been suggested the part of the inscription that records Haraldr’s deeds was added later (for which there is some physical evidence). It is also possible that an earlier inscription in memory of Gormr and Pórví was replaced by Jelling II. The claim that Haraldr won for himself the whole of Denmark is probably to be understood to mean that he consolidated the strong position that Gormr had established, perhaps extending his power eastwards (it is far from clear what Danmørk encompassed in the tenth century). That he won Norway receives some support from Einarr Skálaglamm’s poem Vellekla (980s?), where it is said that Norway north of the Oslofjord area lay under Earl Hákon (stanza 17) and that konungr mykmarkar Hlǫðvinjar ‘the King of Jutland’ commanded the earl to defend the Dannevirke (protective wall in southern Jutland) against the enemy (stanza 27). There are different accounts of when and in what circumstances Haraldr became Christian (940s? c.960?). The statement dani gærði kristna must refer to the introduction of Christianity as the official religion of ‘Denmark’, an event that presumably took place not long after Haraldr’s conversion. Individual families will have been Christian before this and others will have remained heathen for a time afterwards. (The most important sources for Danish history in the tenth century are presented and translated into Danish in Jørgen Bjernum, Kilder til vikingetidens historie, 1965. See further the collection of articles entitled ‘Jelling problems’ in Mediaeval Scandinavia 7, 1974, 156–234; Moltke 1985, 202–20; Else Roesdahl, The Vikings, 1992, 161–65.)
Sandulfr hinn svarti reisti kross þenna eptir Arinbjörg, kvinnu sína.

‘Sandulfr the black raised this cross after Arinbjörg, his wife.’
This inscription is MM (Manx Museum) no. 131, from the far north of the Isle of Man. Together with the bulk of the Manx runic corpus it has been dated, chiefly on art-historical grounds, to the tenth century.

For notes on the digraphic spelling of /ɔ/, see Glavendrup.

*Sandulfr*, the subject of the sentence, lacks the nom. m. sg. -r ending. Several of the Manx inscriptions show aberrant grammatical forms, and this has been attributed to prolonged contact with speakers of other languages (notably Gaelic). The long prepositional form *aftir* (see Kälvesten above) appears to conflict with the tenth-century dating of the inscription. Other runological and linguistic features of the Manx inscriptions too suggest they may be later than conventionally supposed, but art historians continue to insist on the tenth century (see Katherine Holman, ‘The dating of Scandinavian runic inscriptions from the Isle of Man’, *Innskrifter og datering/Dating Inscriptions*, 1998, 43–54). *Kvinna* ‘woman’ ‘wife’ is a variant form of *kona* (whose gen. pl. is *kvenna*).

While ‘stones’ were raised in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, the Norse settlers in the Isle of Man (and some of the other colonies in the British Isles) opted for crosses. The Irish tradition of raising crosses without legend and the Norse habit of raising rune-stones seem to have merged. Whether this apparent blending of Gaelic and Norse culture is enough to explain the extraordinarily high level of runic activity in Man (over 30 inscriptions or fragments thereof survive) is uncertain. It may simply be that fashions spread more easily in a relatively small island community.
Tolla lét ræisa stæin þennsa at sun sinn Harald, bróður Ingvars.
FlæiR fóru drængila
fiarri at gulli
auk austarla
ærni gáfu.
Dóu sunnarla
á Serklandi.

‘Tolla had this stone raised after her son, Haraldr, Ingvarr’s brother. They went manfully, far in search of gold, and in the east gave [food] to the eagle. Died in the south in Serkland.’

This inscription runs in one continuous line along the body of the carved snake. It is designated Sö 179 in SR and is from Södermanland in eastern Sweden, dated to the eleventh century.

The pronoun flæiR was initially forgotten and added below the line. Although the rune-writer makes regular use of separation points, the division is not always between words. In two cases a single character denotes the final sound of one word and the initial sound of the next (pinsat = penssa at, a:ustarlar:ni = austarla ærni, see Kälvesten above), and while the separation in sunar:la:asirk:lan:ti might be thought to have morphemic (relating to word-structure) or phonological rationale, that in a:ustarlar is harder to fathom.

The small number of runes available to those who carved in the younger fuflark makes a sequence like tula difficult to interpret. Initial t may stand for /t/ or /d/, u for any rounded vowel, and l for a long or short consonant. The guess that the stone’s commissioner was called Tolla is prompted by the thought that tula may conceal a hypocoristic name. These are often derived from full names and tend to exhibit weak inflexion and a long medial consonant. Tolla is a plausible hypocoristic form of Porlaug, Porleif|Porløf or Porljót. The preposition at ‘after’ ‘in memory of’ is most probably an assimilated form of aft; it triggers the accusative and is not to be confused with the at that triggers the dative (see NION I 186; cf. NION III, at). The adverb suffix -la (drængila, austarla, sunnarla) is also found in Old West Norse (e.g. harðla ‘very’, síðla ‘late’), but is less common there.

Over twenty-five Swedish rune-stones commemorate men who accompanied Ingvarr on an expedition to the east. There is also an Icelandic saga telling of his exploits, Yngvars saga víðförla. Though
this seems to be largely fiction, some of what it says agrees with other sources. Thus saga and rune-stones agree that the expedition headed east, and the 1041 date the saga gives for Ingvarr’s death is confirmed by three Icelandic annals. We are probably safe in assuming that all the Ingvarr stones are from the 1040s. This great expedition met its end in ‘Serkland’. The name occurs in Swedish runic inscriptions other than those raised in memory of Ingvarr’s followers, in skaldic verse, and in Icelandic prose literature. Scholars differ about the location of Serkland. An influential view connects serk- with the name Saracen and holds that Ingvarr and his followers made their way to what is now Syria and Iraq by way of the Russian rivers (see, however, Kirsten Wolf’s article ‘Yngvars saga víþforla’ and accompanying bibliography in Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf, eds, Medieval Scandinavia, An Encyclopedia, 1993, 740).

Apart from the raiser formula (the initial statement detailing who commissioned the stone, after whom, and their relationship), the inscription is composed in fornyrdíslag, the metre of most of the Eddic poems. Alliteration in the first two lines is on f- (fóru, fiarri), in lines three and four on vowels (austarla, ærni), and in the last two on s- (sunnarla, Serklandi). Verse is common enough in eleventh-century Swedish inscriptions (see Frank Hübler, Schwedische Runendichtung der Wikingerzeit, 1996).

F: MAESHOWE no. 23


Sjá haugr var fyr hladínn heldr Loðbrókar. Synir hennar, þeir vóru hvatir, slíkt vóru menn, sem þeir vóru fyrir sér.

‘This mound was built before Loðbrók’s. Her sons, they were bold. Such were men, as they were of themselves [i.e. they were the sort of people you would really call men].’
This inscription is edited in Michael P. Barnes, *The Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe, Orkney* (1994), 178–86. It is carved into two adjacent stones (the splits in the two lines of runes are indicated by spaces in the transcription and transliteration above) of one of the walls of the prehistoric chambered cairn known as Maeshowe on the Orkney Mainland. The likelihood is that most of the thirty-three runic inscriptions in the cairn were the work of Norwegian passers-by rather than native Orcadians and that they were all made towards the middle of the twelfth century.

In medieval runic inscriptions **h** is commonly used to denote [ɣ] (see p. 216 above). The spelling *lapin* indicates Norwegian or at least non-Icelandic authorship (contrast Icel. *hlaðinn*). The use of *heldr* in
the sense ‘than’ is well documented (cf. Johan Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske Sprog*, 1883–1972, I 782–83). The thrice-repeated *uþro* ‘were’ indicates a labially mutated root vowel. In normalised Old Icelandic this word is usually written *váru*, reflecting early thirteenth-century coalescence of /ːa:/ (a long low back rounded vowel, cf. *NION* I 8–9) with its non-mutated counterpart /a:/.

Not all have agreed that the sequence *slituþro* is to be interpreted *slíkt vóru*. It has been read as part of a compound *slétvörumenn* ‘smooth-hide men’, judged to be used in playful antithesis to the name *Loðbrók* ‘shaggy breeches’. If *slit* does denote *slíkt* we must assume a pronunciation [sliːxt], with the unvoiced velar spirant [x] (as in Scots *loch*, cf. *NION* I 11–12, 17–18) perhaps confused with preaspiration — if indeed that feature existed in twelfth-century Scandinavian.

The inscription apparently makes reference to the legendary character Ragnarr *Loðbrók* and his famous sons, but uses the feminine pronoun *hennar* in the process. Three possible explanations for this suggest themselves. (1) The grammatical gender of *brók* (f.) has overridden natural gender. (2) To the carver, *Loðbrók* was not Ragnarr’s nickname but the name of a woman. (3) A (puerile) joke is being made at Ragnarr’s expense based on the feminine gender of *brók*. Given the jocular nature of many of the Maeshowe graffiti, the last explanation is perhaps the most plausible.

G: BRYGGEN (BERGEN)

(1) B 279; *NIyR* 651

(3) "florkællmyntæríntírivírbíðar

*Porkell myntari sendir þér pipar.*

‘Porkell moneyer sends you pepper.’
(2) B 17

(Side A)

ost:min:kis:mik
ki

(Side B)

f:upork:hnias:tbmly

Ást mín, kyss mik.

‘My love, kiss me’ (accompanied by an enigmatic ki — perhaps the beginning of a second kis — and followed or preceded by the complete younger runic alphabet).

(3) B 380

(Side A)

ð₁₁:₁₁₁₁:₁₁₁₁:₁₁₁₁:₁₁₁₁

(Side B)

₅:₃₃₃₃:₃₃₃₃:₁ём₃₃:₁ём₃₃:₁ём₃₃
Most of the Bryggen inscriptions have received only preliminary publication. They have an archaeological number prefixed by B. Those included in the corpus edition *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer* have an *NIyR* number as well. A selection of the Bryggen runic finds was discussed by Aslak Liestøl in his article ‘Runer frå Bryggen’, *Viking* 27 (1963), 5–53. Vol. 6 of *NIyR* deals with the inscriptions in Latin and with those classified as business letters and owners’ tags. The whole corpus is available on the internet at http://www.nb.no/baser/runer/ribwww/english/runeindex.html

In terms of age the Bryggen inscriptions, which can be reasonably precisely dated by fire layers, stretch from the late twelfth to the early fifteenth century. They are written on a variety of materials, most commonly wood but also bone, leather, metal, stone and pottery. Their content is also varied. Three fairly typical examples are presented here: (1) is from the world of commerce, (2) expresses a lover’s heartfelt desire, (3) is of uncertain import but carries echoes of Norse poetry.

(1) is carved on a small piece of wood and was found above the 1198 fire layer. It was presumably a note or label accompanying a parcel of pepper despatched by Porkell. Notable in this inscription is the doubling of *l* to mark a long consonant — a Roman-alphabet practice sometimes adopted by medieval rune-writers. The spelling *myntæri* suggests weakening of both vowels in the -*ari* suffix.

(2) is carved on both sides of a piece of wood. It was found above the 1248 fire layer. The spelling *ost* indicates a pronunciation in the region of /ɔːst/ (for /ɔː/ see p. 234 above), implying rounding of /aː/,
a characteristic feature of most mainland Scandinavian dialects by the late Middle Ages. It is strange to find kyss written kis in the thirteenth century. As long as there was no separate rune for /y(:)/, either u or i were in theory possible symbols for this high front rounded vowel since /y/ shared the features [high] and [front] with /i/ and [high] and [rounded] with /u/ (cf. Kälvesten above). In fact u was the rune normally used to denote /y(:)/ in the Viking Age; it seems to have become the preferred symbol for all rounded vowels. Whether kis reflects unrounding of /y/, known from a few modern Norwegian dialects, is uncertain. Another Bryggen inscription, B 118, writes the same word kys.

Partial or complete fuflarks are very common in the Bryggen material. Some have attributed their use to a belief in the magic powers of the runic alphabet — the conviction that it could help ward off evil or, as here, achieve a particular aim. This is highly uncertain. Fuflarks may have been carved for practice, to demonstrate literacy, or for other mundane reasons (cf. Karin Seim, De vestnordiske futhark-innskriftene fra vikingtid og middelalder — form og funksjon, 1998, 198–335). Notable in this fuflark is the use of separation points. Why there should be a separator after the initial f is uncertain. The division of the younger fuflark into three groups of six, five and five runes respectively is, however, a well-established practice — and the basis of a widespread type of runic cryptography (cf. Page 1999, 80–88).

(3) is carved on both sides of a piece of wood. It was found under the 1198 fire layer. On the use of h to denote [ɣ], see Maeshowe no. 23 above. The sequence sïfu is presumably to be construed as 2nd sg. pres. subj. of vera ‘[to] be’ + pronoun. The verb-form lacks the usual -r ending, however, and is possibly to be seen as a cross between subjunctive and imperative.

The text appears to be in verse. The metre has been identified as galdralag, a variant of ljóðaháttr notorious for its irregularity (see SnE, Háttatal 100–01). Certainly side A of the inscription not only has alliteration, but carries distinct echoes of Hymiskviða 11 (PE 90):

Ver þú heill, Hymir,
í hugum gðum.

How far side B’s text is to be seen as a continuation of A’s is unclear, as is its purpose. It is hard to suppose that belief in the Norse gods
persisted in Bergen into the late twelfth century. Perhaps the writer intended a curse, along the lines of the well-documented *troll hafi/ taki* . . . ‘the trolls have/take . . .’. At the time the inscription was made Óðinn and Þórr might well have been regarded as trolls. Alternatively there may be a further literary allusion here (cf., e.g., *Hárbarðsljóð* 60, PE 87). If the allusion is specific, however, it must be to literature that has not survived.
The manuscript known as Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol., Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi) got its name in the late nineteenth century from Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður, where Magnús Björnsson (d. 1662), the first known owner of the book, lived. (For information about the book’s contents and history, see Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1933.) Möðruvallabók is datable only by the forms of its language, spelling and letters, which suggest that it was written in the middle of the fourteenth century. Mistakes in the names of places in eastern Iceland indicate that the manuscript was not written in that part of the country, and a reference to Mýrifjörður as being in the west shows that it was probably put together in northern Iceland, for a scribe from southern or western Iceland would think of Mýrifjörður as lying to the north. Möðruvallabók contains eleven Sagas of Icelanders and must have been expensive to produce, for it is both large (consisting of 200 leaves measuring 34 × 24 cm) and elaborately decorated with coloured initials ornamented with romanesque foliage or simple pen flourishes. The book was produced by a team of scribes; one wrote the text (leaving blank spaces for the chapter headings and the initials, as well as for the verses in Egils saga), another copied in the missing verses and a third wrote the chapter headings and drew and coloured the initials. A fourth scribe wrote part of the text of Egils saga on folio 83 recto.

Chapter Five of Kormaks saga begins towards the bottom of the second column on fol. 121 verso. The initial ‘P’ is three lines high, indicating that it begins an ‘ordinary’ chapter. ‘Important’ chapters, such as the first chapter of a saga, were usually given larger initials four, five or six lines high, a graphic indication of their ‘larger’ significance.

The text is written in what is called Gothic formal textual script or Gothic book hand (to distinguish it from the half-cursive script used in documents). Compared with Carolingian scripts, the letters are compressed vertically, the vertical elements have been made uniform, the serifs and curved elements have been broken into angles, and the bows of different letters that face each other are ‘fused’ or overlapped. Characteristic letter shapes are the ‘two-storey a’, whose neck bends to touch its bow, and the tall letters such as ‘l’ and ‘k’, whose ascenders start
with a serif on the left instead of looping round to the right, as in half-cursive. Unlike their European counterparts, Icelandic scribes of Gothic script did not always use round ‘s’ in final position, and they preferred an angular form of the Carolingian ‘f’ ( initialValue), except in Latin words, where they used the proper Gothic ‘f’ that stands on the guide line. In the first half of the fourteenth century, the upper arm becomes looped, and in the second half of the fourteenth century, the bottom arm becomes looped as well ( initialValue). As with the Carolingian scripts, ‘i’ and ‘j’ are not dotted, and ‘u’ and ‘v’ are used interchangeably for both the consonant and the vowel (even to the extent of sometimes putting an accent over ‘v’ to indicate a long vowel). Capital initials are not regularly used at the beginning of sentences and in proper nouns; instead, they occur at the beginning of chapters, paragraphs, verses and speeches. Occasionally they are used to signal important nouns, some of which may be names.

In the following transcription, letters in italics are expansions of abbreviations. Facsimiles of the two manuscript pages can be seen at http://vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/NION-2-facs.pdf. Compare the normalised text in extract IV.

fol. 121v, col. 2, line 28:
Porveig het kona. hon var fall þorueigarsona | ði

Observe the ‘round r’ after the ‘o’ in Porveig ( initialValue); the shape results from writing an ‘r’ using the right-hand curve of the ‘o’ for the upright. Round ‘r’ is generally used after a letter with a bow, such as ‘o’ or ‘d’ (which has the form initialValue). The letter above the first ‘h’ is a ‘t’, though it looks like an ‘r’. Icelandic abbreviations generally have one of the omitted consonants above the word, with no indication of what the omitted vowel is or whether it goes before or after the superscript consonant. The abbreviation for hon (‘h’ with superscript ‘o’) breaks the rule just given for superscript letters, but it is because ‘h’ with a horizontal stroke through the ascender (the stroke is a general sign of abbreviation) is the abbreviation for the extremely common word hann. A different abbreviation must therefore be used for hon. The line breaks off to leave space for the chapter heading, which is in red ink. The virgule before the ‘ði’ at the very end shows that these letters belong with ‘haf’ in the line above (i.e. hafði, the last word of Chapter 4).

line 29:
miog fiolkunnig hon bio asteinstodum í

Note that ‘q’ is written without the hook, long vowels are usually written without accent marks, and there is no point at the end of the sentence. All
these absences are common. The second ‘n’ in fjölkunnig is not written but is indicated by a horizontal stroke above, which here signifies a nasal consonant. (In such abbreviations, the stroke is often to the left of the ‘n’ that is written, making it difficult to see whether the transcription should be ‘mn’ or ‘nn’.) No space separates the preposition á from its object Steinsstòðum; this is a frequent practice. Also frequent is the practice of using a single consonant to represent two, resulting in ‘steinstodum’ for Steinsstòðum.

line 30:
miðfírði. hon atti íj. sonu. hét hinn ellri

Note the regular ‘r’ after the ‘i’. Roman numerals were usually set off by a point before and after, and the last ‘i’ took the form of ‘j’. The usual abbreviations for hon and hét appear, as well as the nasal stroke for the second ‘n’ in hinn.

line 31:
oddr en hinn yngri guðmundr þeir varo hauaðamenn

Note the round ‘r’ after the letters with bows: ‘d’ (ð) in Oddr and Guðmundr and ‘þ’ in þeir. There were several variants of ‘y’, but all have a dot to distinguish them from ‘ij’. Note the superscript ‘i’ above the ‘g’ in ‘yng’; generally a superscript vowel stands for ‘r’ or ‘v’ plus that vowel, and here it stands for ‘ri’. Two more very common abbreviations appear here: ‘þr’ with a stroke through the ascender of the ‘þ’ stands for þeir, and ‘v’ with a superscript ‘o’ stands for varo (i.e. váru). The stroke over ‘mn’ simply signals an abbreviation; it is not a nasal stroke, although it looks like one.

line 32:
miklir. Oddr venr kuamur sinar itungu til

As mentioned in the introduction, Icelandic scribes did sometimes use initial capitals for names, but it can be difficult to tell whether a letter is meant to be large or not. The ‘O’ here is definitely large, and some would read the ‘o’ at the beginning of line 31 as large as well, though it is not as large as this one. Note the abbreviation sign over the ‘m’ in kvámur; shaped something like ∞, it actually evolved from a round ‘r’, which as a superscript letter was the Latin abbreviation for ‘ur’ and was so used in Icelandic.

line 33:
þorkels. & sitr a tali við Steingerði. þorkell gerir ser dádt við þa brædr

The abbreviation for all case forms of Porkell is ‘þ’ with a stroke through the ascender followed by ‘k’ with a stroke through the ascender. These strokes are general signals of abbreviation and do not indicate nasal consonants.
There is no indication of case; here it is expanded to *Porkels* because the preceding *til* always takes the genitive. Note the shape of the ampersand. It is actually a ligature of ‘e’ and ‘t’, i.e. *et*, the Latin word for ‘and’. Although it is borrowed from Latin, Icelandic scribes most likely thought of it as *ok* rather than *et*, and it may be transcribed *ok*, which is how the scribe spells the word on fol. 122r, col. 1, line 34. The scribe’s usual abbreviation for *Steingerðr* (irrespective of case) appears here: a capital ‘S’, a small ‘t’, and an abbreviation sign something like a flattened ‘S’ (cf. the more rounded form of this sign in line 36 below). The ‘v’ with superscript ‘i’ is a common abbreviation for við. The zigzag over the ‘g’ in *gerir* (called a ‘tittle’, and much like the abbreviation sign in *Steingerðr*) stands for a front vowel or diphthong plus ‘r’. The abbreviation for *bræðr* is ‘bb’; the idea is that if one ‘b’ stands for *bróðir*, then two b’s stand for the plural. Note that in the text of extract IV, the vowel æ of *bræðr* is archaised/normalised to *brœðr*.

**line 34:**

& eggjar þa at sitia firir kormaki. Oddr quað ser þat ecki

The abbreviation for *fyrir* is ‘f’ with a superscript ‘i’. This word was often spelled *firir* (the unrounded first vowel resulting from low-stress conditions, cf. *fíkkja* for *fýkkja* and *mindi* for *myndi*), so without an unabbreviated example to guide us, we cannot be certain which spelling the scribe would use. If the scribe does use *firir* when spelling it out in full, the abbreviated form should be expanded to *firir* as well (a principle that applies to any abbreviated word). *Kormakr* is abbreviated by a stroke through the ascender of its first letter. The expansion here in the dative is controlled by the preceding preposition. The spelling of *kvæð* is unusual; the standard form would be ‘kô’ with either a sign something like a ‘w’, which means ‘v’ or ‘r’ plus ‘a’, or a superscript ‘a’, also indicating ‘v’ or ‘r’ plus the vowel, but the scribe here employs both. Although ‘qv’ is a common alternative for ‘kv’, the spelling *kvæð* on fol. 122r, col. 1, line 4 suggests that the use of ‘q’ here is because it affords space for an abbreviation sign (and also avoids confusion with the ‘k’ abbreviation for *Kormakr*). It therefore might be more representative of the scribe’s orthography to expand the abbreviation with ‘q’ as *kvað*, but ‘q’ is retained here to show what is actually on the page. Finally, what looks like a ‘fl’ with a superscript ‘a’ is more likely to be ‘fl’ with a stroke through the ascender, which is a very common abbreviation for *þat*. This abbreviation appears more clearly in the next line.

**line 35:**

ofrefli. þat var einnhuern dag er kormakr kom i tun

Apart from the abbreviation for *þat*, the most interesting thing to see in this line is how the nasal stroke signifies an ‘n’ in *einnhuern* and an ‘m’ in *kom*. 
line 36:
gu. var Steingerðr i stofu & sat a palli. þorueigar synir sátv

Note the superscript ‘r’ in var and Porveigar, indicating ‘ar’. Note also the doubled ‘s’; as with the doubled ‘b’ in line 34, a single ‘s’ is an abbreviation for son, and two s’s stand for the plural synir. This abbreviation is set off by a point before and after.

line 37:
i stofun n i & varo bunir at veita kormaki til ræði er hann gengi

The front-vowel-plus-r sign appears over ‘bun’; here the front vowel is an ‘i’. The accent over the ‘v’ must be treated as a graphical flourish, but in fol. 122r, col. 1, line 3 it represents a long vowel, cf. fol. 122r, col. 1, line 34. The scribe often abbreviates names by putting a point after the first letter, but here he has put a point before and after the ‘k’ as well, as he did with the abbreviation for synir in the previous line. Note that the elements of the compound word tilræði are separated by a space (cf. the running together of a preposition and its object in line 29). The very common abbreviation for hann (‘h’ with a stroke through the ascender) appears at last.

line 38:
inn. en þorkell hafdi sett odrum megin dyra sverð

Do not mistake the two t’s of sett for ‘ct’, despite the almost non-existent cross-bar of the first ‘t’. The round ‘r’ with a stroke through the tail in ‘odr’ is the Latin sign for ‘rum’, here yielding odrum. The scribe spells dura as dyra (an extension of the i-mutation forms occurring in other parts of the paradigm); note the dot over the ‘y’ (see note to line 31 above). The front-vowel-plus-r sign appears over ‘svð’; here the front vowel is an ‘e’.

line 39:
brugðit. en oðrum megin setti Narfí lia i langorfí.

What looks like a majuscule ‘H’ is actually a majuscule ‘N’. This letter shape is inherited from early Carolingian script and developed from the fashion of making the angle of the cross-bar of the ‘N’ shallower and shallower, until at last it was horizontal rather than diagonal. Note also how the letters of langorfí are spread rather far apart; presumably the scribe was stretching the word so that it would reach to the end of the line.

line 40:
en þa er kormkr kom at skaladyrum. skaraði ofan
The ‘r’ over the ‘e’ is not an abbreviation; it is simply the second letter of the word written superscript, perhaps to save space. This turned out not to be necessary, for when the scribe came to write skaraði ofan, he had to space the letters widely to fill the line. Scribes frequently faced the problem of whether to right-justify the line by stretching one word or compressing two.

line 41:
liainn. & mætti hann suerdínú & brotnáði i mikít

The accent over the ‘i’ in sverðínú does not represent a long vowel; it may be intended to help the reader distinguish between the minim of the ‘i’ and the minims of the ‘n’. The final ‘it’ of mikít is indicated by a stroke through the ascender of the ‘k’; this is another common use of that sign.

fol. 122r, col. 1, line 1:
skarð. þa kom þorkell at & quað kormak mart illt gera & var

The expansion Kormak in the accusative case is determined by its being the object of the preceding verb.

line 2:
máloði. snyr inn skyndiliga & kueðr Steingerði af sto

Similarly, the expansion Steingerði in the dative case is determined by the preceding verb. The letters ‘sto’ at the end of the line are the first part of the word stofunni. Note that the scribe does not use a hyphen to indicate a word divided at the line break.

line 3:
funni. ganga þau þt vm aðrar dyrr. & lykr hann hana

Here we see an accent placed over ‘v’ to indicate a long vowel. The small capital ‘r’ with a dot over it is a combination of two abbreviations for the same thing: small capital consonants (most frequently ‘G’, ‘N’ and ‘R’) were used to represent geminates, but doubled consonants could also be indicated by a dot over a single capital consonant.

line 4:
ieinu vtiburi. kuað þau kormak alldri siaz skulu. kormakr

The letters ‘slu’ with a stroke through the ‘l’ is the usual abbreviation for skulu. Perhaps to fill out the line, the scribe uncharacteristically spells out the first syllable of Kormakr and indicates the rest of the word with a general abbreviation sign.
Line 5:
gengr inn & bar hann skiotara at en þa varði. & varð

Line 6:
þeim bilt. kormakr litaz vm. & ser eigi steingerði. en ser þa bræðr
An ‘e’ with a superscript ‘i’ was a common abbreviation for eigi.

Line 7:
er þeir stuku vapn sín. snyr í brott skyndiliga.
The scribe clearly writes stuku (which would normally represent stukku, the past plural of stókkva), but this may be an error for struku (the past plural of strjúka), which gives better sense.

Line 8:
& quað visu. Hneit víð hrungrís fotá. halluitindum
The abbreviation ‘.q.v.’ for the phrase kvad vísu is common. Note the large initial marking the start of the verse, as well as the ‘v’ (for vísa) in the space between the columns (cf. lines 12, 19, 28). The scribe clearly writes halluitindum, but this is an error for halluitiondum (i.e. hallvitjónundum).

Line 9:
stalli. inn var ek ilmi at finna. engi sar of fenginn
The words sár and fenginn are subject to emendation because it is difficult to interpret the line as it stands, but the letters are all quite clear.

Line 10:
vita skal hitt ef hann hættir. handuíðris mer grandi ne
The letters ‘sl’ with a stroke through the ‘l’ is the usual abbreviation for skal.

Line 11:
yggs fír líð leggium. litis meira vitiss. kormakr finnr. Steingerði
Note the small capital ‘G’ (without a dot) for the geminate in yggs. The spelling ‘litis’ is an error for lítís. The sense of the passage shows that the scribe (or his exemplar) has left out eigi or ecki from the phrase Kormakr finnr Steingerði.

Line 12:
& quað visu. Braut huarf or sal sæta. sunnz erum
Note the use of ‘z’ to represent ‘ds’. Most often it represents ‘ts’ (which is how the two sounds in sunds would have been pronounced).

line 13:
hugr a gunni. huat merkir nu herkiss haull þuer

line 14:
ligar alla renda ek allt it iðra. eirar geirs at
The scribe (or his exemplar) has left out the ‘h’ in hárgeirs.

line 15:
þeiri. hlins erumc haurn at finna. hus brageislum fu
What looks like ‘ϕ’ by the ‘h’ is actually the Latin abbreviation for ‘us’ and was so used in Icelandic.

line 16:
sir. Eptir þad geck kormkr at husi er Steingerðr var i & braut vpp husit
The scribe or his exemplar has omitted the suffixed article -nu from húsi.

line 17:
& talaði við Steingerði. hon mølti. þu breytir ouarliga. sækir til tals
The letters ‘mli’ with a stroke through the ‘l’ is a common abbreviation for mølti. Note that the last letter of tals is superscript to keep it within the column.

line 18:
við mik þviat þorveigar synir ero ætlæðer til hofuðs þer. þa

line 19:
quad kormkr. Sitia suerd & huëtia. sin andskotar minir

line 20:
eins karls synir inni erað þeir banar minir. enn a

line 21:
viðum velli. vega tueir at mer einum. þa er sem ærat

line 22:
vlfi oræknum fior sæki. þar sat kormkr vm daginn. Nu sér
line 23:
Þorkell. at þetta ráð er farit er hann hafði stofnat. Nu
The letters ‘þta’ with a stroke through the ascender of the ‘þ’ is the usual abbreviation for þetta.

line 24:
biðr hann þorgeigar sonu at sitia fírir kormaki i dal einum fírir vtan garð

line 25:
sinn. þa mælti þorkell. Narui skal fara með ykr. en ek mun
The sign that looks like a ‘3’ after the ‘m’ of með developed from the semi-colon (;). It is a Latin abbreviation used to represent several combinations of letters, including ‘et’. In Iceland it was adopted as an abbreviation for ‘eð’.

line 26:
vera heima & veita yðr lið ef þer þurft. vm kue

line 27:
Illdit ferr kormakr i brott & þegar er hann kemr at dalnum sa hann menn
Note the superscript ‘o’ above ‘btt’. A superscript vowel usually stands for ‘r’ or ‘v’ plus that vowel, and here it stands for ‘ro’.

line 28:
.íí˝. & quað visu. Sitia menn & meina. mer eína gnásteina

line 29:
þeir hafa vilat vinna er mer varða gna borða. þvi meira

line 30:
skal ek þeiri. er þeir ala meíra aufund vm varar gongur.

line 31:
ylnna saulua gunni. þa hliopu þorgeigar synir vpp & sottu at
Note the ligature of the two p’s; this is a space-saving device like the use of ‘i’ after ‘o’.

line 32:
kormaki lengi. Narui skriaði vm it ytra. þorkell ser heiman
line 33: 
at þeim sækiz seint & tekr ýapn sín i þvi bili kom steingerðr

The stroke over the ‘v’ is a flourish and not an indication of a long vowel.

line 34: 
vt & ser ætlan foður síns. tekr hon hann honund. ok

In contrast to the ‘v’ in the previous line, the stroke over the ‘v’ here is an indication of a long vowel.

line 35: 
kemz hann ecki til liðs med þeim bræðrum lauk sua þvi ma

line 36: 
li at oddr fell en Guðmundr varð ouigr & do þo siðan

line 37: 
eptir þetta for kormakr heim. en þorkell ser firir þeim bræðrum litlu si

line 38: 
ðarr farr kormakr at finna þorveigu. & kuez ecki. vilia by

line 39: 
gð hennar þar i firðinum. skáltu flytia þik i brott

Note the abbreviation for skáltu: the usual abbreviation for skal (cf. line 10 above), followed by ‘tu’.

line 40: 
at aqueðinni stundu. en ek vil allra bota varna

The spelling of ákveðinni with a ‘q’ shows that the scribe freely uses both ‘q’ and ‘k’ before ‘v’ (‘u’) even when he does not need to use ‘q’ in order to have space above the letter for an abbreviation.

line 41: 
vm sonu þina. þorveig mælti. þat er likaz at þvi komir þu a leið

The abbreviation ‘m.’ could stand for either mælir or mælti, but because the scribe writes mælti in lines 17 and 25, we assume that mælti is meant here as well. The last letters of the line are difficult to read because the
word was compressed to fit the tiny space left at the end of the column.

col. 2, line 1:
at ek verða hérað flotta en synir minir obættir. en þvi skal

line 2:
ek þer launa at þu skalt steingerðar alldri níota. kormakr segir. þuíf

Note the superscript ‘i’ after the ‘d’ in ‘alld’. A superscript vowel usually
stands for ‘r’ or ‘v’ plus that vowel, and here it stands for ‘ri’. The stroke
above the ‘i’ in njóta is probably meant to distinguish the ‘i’ from the ‘n’; it
does not indicate a long vowel. The abbreviation ‘s.’ could stand for either
segir or sagði, and as ‘segir’ is found in line 9 below, ‘s.’ is expanded as
segir here as well.

line 3:
mantu ecki raða en vanda kerling. Siðan ferr

Note that Siðan does not start a new chapter in this version of the text.

line 4:
kormakr at finna Steingerði iamt sem aðr. ok eitt sinn er þau tala

The nasal consonant supplied in the expansion of ‘iat’ is ‘m’ because the
scribe’s spelling of jafnt without ‘f’ suggests that that his pronunciation of
this word was /yamt/ rather than /yant/.

line 5:
vm þessa atburði. lætr hon ecki illa ifir. kormakr quað visu. Sitia

A ligature of ‘þ’ and long ‘s’, with a stroke through the ascender, is the
abbreviation for pess. Here the following ‘a’ gives the case ending.

line 6:
menn & meina. mer asianu þína. þeir hafa laugdis

line 7:
loddu. linna fætr at vinnna. þviat vpp skulu allar að
line 8:
stafns aðr ek þer hafna. lysigrund i landi. linnz
The letters ‘ld’ with a general abbreviation stroke stand for land.

line 9:
þioðár renna. Mælþu eigi sua mikit vm segir Steingerðr
Note the uncial (i.e. Continental early medieval Latin) form of the capital ‘M’.

line 10:
mart ma þvi bregða. þa quadj kormakr visu. Hvern munder

line 11:
þu grundar hlin skapfraumuð linu. liknsy

line 12:
nir mer luka. lios þer at ver kiosa. Steingerðr segir. Braðr

line 13:
munda ek blindum. bauglestir mik festa. yrði
The exaggerated serif of the ‘d’ in blindum makes the minim before it look like an ‘í’, but it is not.

line 14:
goð sem gerðiz. goð mer & skaup froða. kormakr segir. Nu kaustu
The ‘z’ at the end of gerðiz stands for ‘st’, which is a late alternative for the -sk suffix (see NION I, § 3.6.5.3).

line 15:
sem vera ætti opt hefi ek higat minar kuamur

line 16:
lagðar. Nu biðr steingerðr kormak stunda til foður hennar

line 17:
& fa hennar & firir saker steingerðar gaf kormakr þorkatli giofum. ep
The abbreviation for hennar (‘hnar’ with a stroke through the ascender of
the ‘h’) is unusual. Perhaps influenced by the dative case of *Porkatli*, the scribe has put *gjafar* in the dative.

**line 18:** *tir þetta eigu margir menn hlut i & þar kom vm siðir*

**line 19:**
*at kormakr bað Steingerðar. & var hon honum fostnut & aqueðin*

**line 20:**
*brullaupsstefna & stendr nu kyrt vm hrið nu*

**line 21:**
*fara orð a milli þeirra. & verða i nockurar greinir*

The letters ‘pra’ with a stroke through the ascender of ‘p’ are the common abbreviation for *þeirr*.  

**line 22:**
*vm fiarfar. & sua veík við breytiliga at siðan*

There is a rather thick accent mark over the ‘i’ of veik which lends it the appearance of a long ‘s’, but the sense calls for veik and not vesk, which is meaningless.

**line 23:**
*þessum raðum var raðit. fanz kormaki fatt vm. en þat var firir*

**line 24:**
*þa sauð at þorveig seiddi til at þau skylldi eigi nio*

**line 25:**
*taz mega. þorkell i tunguatti son roskinn er*

**line 26:**
*þorkell het. & var kallaðr tangniostr.hann hafði ver*

**line 27:**
*it vtan vm stund. þetta sumar kom hann vt. & var medð*

**line 28:**
*foður sínum. kormakr sækir eigi brullaupit. eptir þvi sem a*
line 29:
kueðit var & leið fram stundin. þetta þikir fræn

line 30:
dum Steingerðar ouirðing er hann bregðr þessum raða hag & lei

line 31:
Bersi het kuanfang bersa | ta ser rað.

As with the first line of Chapter Five, the first line of the next chapter includes a large decorated initial to signal the start of the new chapter, the heading for which is in red in the centre of the line, and the end of the last line of the previous chapter fills the space at the end of the line and is marked off by a virgule.

As has emerged from the preceding commentary, Icelandic scripts changed over time. (For illustrations of these scripts down to 1300, see Hreinn Benediktsson 1965.) The earliest script was the Carolingian minuscule that was current when Latin letters were first taught to Icelanders. This script was used through the first quarter of the thirteenth century, and was gradually superseded by a Carolingian Insular script that was used through the rest of the century. By the fourteenth century, various kinds of Gothic script had become predominant. A formal textual Gothic was used for de luxe books, but for letters, charters and other documents a half-cursive Gothic was used, and this informal script gave rise to a formal half-cursive that was used in books. Not surprisingly, most manuscripts show signs of the transition from one script to another, signs that help establish the date of the manuscripts. The formal textual Gothic script of Möðruvallabók suggests a date of the fourteenth or fifteenth century, and the presence of all three kinds of ‘f’ (ϝ) on fol. 121v, col. 2, lines 29 and 30; with the upper arm looped on fol. 121v, col. 2, lines 35 and 37; and with the lower arm looped as well (ϯ) on fol. 121v, col. 2, line 36) somewhat narrows the date to closer to the middle of the fourteenth century.

Scripts changed slowly, making it difficult to pinpoint the date of an undated manuscript on that basis alone, but the Icelandic language itself and its spelling evolved somewhat more rapidly, providing additional evidence for a manuscript’s age. Keep in mind that scribes often worked from written texts, and sometimes they would retain
the earlier forms that they saw in their exemplars, although in general their copies reflect contemporary forms. This text of Kormaks saga is definitely from the fourteenth century; es has been replaced by er, ‘þ’ is absent from non-initial positions, and ‘d’ has begun to replace ‘ð’.

Yet there are none of the changes that arose in the second half of the century: á is not written ‘aa’ (cf. fol. 121v, col. 2, line 29), ‘e’ does not become ‘ei’ before ‘ng’ and ‘nk’ (cf. fol. 121v, col. 2, line 37), and enn or inn has not been replaced by hinn as the definite article (en is used on fol. 122r, col. 2, line 3, though hinn appears, before an adjective, on fol. 121v, col. 2, lines 30 and 31).

It is the combination of these various factors that has led to the dating of Möðruvellabók to the middle of the fourteenth century. On the basis of its orthography, it could be from the first half of the century, but the double-looped ‘Þ’ makes it more likely to be just a little later. The chronological range of these palaeographic and linguistic forms is reflected in the way the date is given in the recent analysis by Degnbol et al. 1989, which uses the formulation ‘c.1330–1370’ instead of the near-equivalent ‘c.1350’.

Bibliography


Hreinn Benediktsson. 1965. Early Icelandic Script as Illustrated in Vernacular Texts from the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries. Íslenzk handrit / Icelandic Manuscripts II.
Landnámabók (The Book of the Settlements) is thought to have been first compiled in the first half of the twelfth century, probably by several collaborators including Ari Þorgilsson, who also wrote Íslendingabók (The Book of the Icelanders, see Text VIII above), and Kolskeggr Ásbjarnarson (see ÍF I 395; both these men were nick-named inn fróði ‘the learned’, or, in the case of the latter, inn vitri ‘the wise’). It must have been based on information provided by contemporary landowners in various parts of Iceland. It contains accounts of the first settlers in each area of Iceland in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, beginning with Ingólfr Arnarson (cf. Text VIII above, note 12) in the southwest of the country, and going round the coast clockwise until it came back to the southwest (though the original work seems to have begun in the south, at the eastern limit of the Southern Quarter). It covers about 430 settlers (men and women), contains 3,500 personal names and about 1500 farm-names. The genealogies of settlers are traced both down to the time of the compilers and back to their origins in Norway or other parts of northern Europe. Since there was no state taxation of landholdings in the Icelandic Commonwealth, the original purpose of the work, insofar as it was not simply historical, may be presumed to have had something to do with assertion of inheritance rights, or more generally to do with the establishment of a national identity.

The work does not survive in its original form, but a version of it, known as Styrmisbók, was made by the priest and historian Styrmir Káraason (died 1245; lawspeaker at the Alþingi 1210–14 and 1232–35; prior of the monastery on Viðey near Reykjavík 1235–45). From this were derived the five surviving redactions. Only a fragment of the Melabók version survives, on parts of two poorly preserved leaves written at the end of the fourteenth or beginning of the fifteenth century. This version was probably compiled by Snorri Markússon of Melar in Melasveit (d. 1313) and seems to have been based fairly closely on Styrmisbók, with some additions from Sagas of Icelanders. Sturlubók was compiled by the historian Sturla Þórarson (died 1284), nephew of Snorri Sturluson, but is only preserved in AM 107 fol., written by Jón Erlendsson (died 1672). It is this version that first introduced the changed geographical arrangement of the work, beginning now with the settlement of Ingólfr. Sturla also added a great deal of new material from Sagas of Icelanders and other histories
or pseudo-historical writings (while some early Sagas of Icelanders may have themselves included material from Styrmisbók). Hauksbók was compiled by lögmaðr (one of the two highest government officials in Iceland) Haukr Erlendsson (died 1334) in 1306–08. Part of this redaction survives in Haukr’s own hand in AM 371 4to, part in AM 105 fol., written again by Jón Erlendsson. Haukr used both Styrmisbók and Sturlubók, and also introduced material from other sources, including Sagas of Icelanders. Skarðsárbók was compiled by Björn Jónsson of Skarðsá (died 1655) in the 1630s, and survives in various copies, the most important of which is AM 104 fol., written by Ásgeir Jónsson (died 1707). It was based principally on Sturlubók and Hauksbók. Finally, there is Þórdarbók, compiled by Þórdur Jónsson (died 1670) probably between 1644 and 1651, and preserved in what is largely Þórdur’s autograph in AM 106 and 112 fol. It is based on Skarðsárbók and Melabók and some other sources, and can be used for reconstructing the lost Melabók text.

The extract below comprises chapters 6–9 of the Sturlubók version (AM 107 fol., ff. 2v21–5v5; S), with some corrections from Hauksbók (H). They tell mainly of the settlement of Ingólfr, held to be the first Icelandic settler, in south-west Iceland, where he lived at what is now the capital of Iceland, Reykjavík (there is a parallel to most of this in Flóamanna saga chs 2–3, IF XIII 233–37). Like many other settlers, he initially appropriated a huge area, comprising the whole of the south-western peninsular of Iceland, but this was subsequently divided up among a number of later arrivals.

Bibliography

Landnámabók is edited by Jakob Benediktsson in IF I. This is based on Sturlubók, with all the divergent passages in Hauksbók printed on facing pages, and with the whole of what survives of Melabók printed on the lower part of the relevant pages. Variants and additional material from Skarðsárbók and Þórdarbók are indicated in textual notes, while the whole of Skarðsárbók with full variants and most of the additional passages from Þórdarbók are printed in the same editor’s Skarðsárbók. Landnámabók Björns Jónssonar á Skarðsá (1958 and 1966). The Sturlubók, Hauksbók and Melabók versions are all included in full in Landnámabók (1900), ed. Finnur Jónsson. All the primary manuscripts are reproduced in facsimile in Landnámabók. Ljósprentun handrita, ed. Jakob Benediktsson (1974), which has an introduction in English as well as in Icelandic. Sturlubók is translated into English in BS.

XIX: LANDNÁMABÓK

«Chapter 6»: Frá Bjørnólf 

Bjørnólf hét maðr, en annarr Hróaldr; þeir váru synir Hrómundar Gripssonar. Þeir fóru af Pelamorð fyrir víga sakir ok staðfestusk í Dalsfirði á Fjðllum. Sonr Bjørnólfar var Órn, fáðir þeira Ingólfs ok Helgu, en Hróaldr's son var Hróðmarr, fáðir Leifs.

Þeir Ingólfar ok Leifr fóstbrœðr fóru í hernað með sonum Atla jarls ens mjóva af Gaulum, þeim Hásteini ok Hersteinu ok Hólmsteinu. Með þeim fóru òll skipti vel, ok er þeir kvámu heim, mæltu þeir til samfara með sér annat sumar. En um vettrinn góðu þeir fóstbrœðr veizlu sonum jarlsins. At þeir veizlu strengði Hólmsteinu heit at hann skylldi eiga Helgu Arnardóttur eðr öngva konu ella. Um þessa heitstrenging fannsk mönnum fátt, en Leifr roðnaði á at sjá, ok varð fátt um með þeim Hólmsteinu er þeir skilðu þar at bodinu.

Um várit eptir bjoggusk þeir fóstbrœðr at fara í hernað ok ætluðu til móts við sonu Atla jarls. Þeir fundusk við Hisargaf, ok lögðu þeir Hólmsteinu brœðr þegar til orrostu við þá Leif. En er þeir hofðu barízk um hrið, kom at þeim Ólmóðr en gamli, son Hrða-Kára, frændi Leifs, ok veitti þeim Ingólfu. Í þeir orrostu fell Hólmsteinu, en Hersteinu flyði.

Þá fóru þeir Leifr í hernað. En um vettrinn eptir fór Hersteinu at þeim Leifi ok vildi drepa þá, en þeir fengu njósn af for hans ok góðu mótt honum. Varð þá enn orrostu mikil, ok fell þar Hersteinu.

Eptir þat dreif at þeim fóstbrœðrum vinir þeira or Fjðafylki. Váru þá menn sendir á fund Atla jarls ok Hásteins at bjóða sættir, ok sættusk þeir at því at þeir Leifr guldu eignir sínar þeim feðgum.

En þeir fóstbrœðr bjóggu skip mikit er þeir áttu, ok fóru at leita lands þess er Hrafna-Flóki hafði fundit ok þá var Ísland kallat. Þeir fundu landit ok váru í Austfjörðum í Álptafirði enum syðra. Þeim virðisk landit betra suðr en norðr. Þeir váru einn vetr á landinu ok fóru þá aprt til Nóregs.

Eptir þat varð Ingólfur fél þeira til Íslandsferðar, en Leifr fór í hernað í vestrvíking. Hann herjaði á Írland ok fann þar jardhús mikit.1 Par gekk hann í, ok var myrkt þar til er lýsti af sverði því er maðr helt á. Leifr drap þann mann ok tók sverðit ok mikit fé af honum; síðan var

2 Space is left for a large ornamented capital at the beginning of each chapter, and also at line 104.  4 Fjøllum H, Fjøllum S.  22 honum H, þeim S.
hann kallaðr Hjörleifr. Hjörleifr herjaði víða um Írland ok fekk þar mikit fé; þar tók hann þræla tíu er svá hétu: Dufþakr ok Geirrøðr, Skjalðbjorn, Halldórr ok Drafðdittir; eigi eru nefndir fleiri. En eptir þat fór Hjörleifr til Nóregs ok fann þar Ingólfs fóstbróður sinn. Hann hafði áðr fengið Helgu Arnardóttur, systur Ingólfs.

<Chapter 7>

Þenna vetr fekk Ingólfr at blóti miklu ok leitaði sér heilla um forlög sín, en Hjörleifr vildi aldri blóta. Fréttin vísaði Ingólfi til Íslands. Eptir þat bjó sitt skip hvárr fleira mága til Íslandsferd; hafði Hjörleifr herfang sitt á skipi en Ingólfr félagsfé þeira, ok logðu til hafs er þeir váru búnir.

<Chapter 8>

Súmar flat er fleir Ingólfr fóru til at byggja Ísland, hafði Haraldr hárfagri verit tólf ár konungr at Nóregi; þá var líðit frá upphafi þessa heims sex þúsundir vetra ok sjau tigir ok þrýr vetr, en frá holdgan Dróttins áta hundruð ok sjau tigir ok fjögur ár. Þeir höfðu samflot þar til er þeir sá Ísland; þá skildi með þeim.

Þá er Ingólfr sá Ísland, skaut hann fyrir borð þondugissúlum sínum til heilla;² hann mælti svá fyrir at hann skyldi þar byggja er súlurnar kömi á land. Ingólfr tók þar land er nú heitir Ingólfshöfði, en Hjörleif rak vestr fyrir land ok fekk hann vatnfátt. Þá tóku þrálar írsku þat ráð at knoða saman mjöll ok smjör, ok kölluðu þat óporstlát; þeir nefndu þat mínþak. En er þat var til búit, kom regn mikit, ok tóku þeir þá vatn á tjóldum. En er mínþakit tók at mygla, køstuðu þeir því fyrir borð, ok rak þat á land þar sem nú heitir Mínþakseyrr. Hjörleifr tók land við Hjörleifshöfða, ok var þar þá fjörðr, ok horfði botinninn inn at höfðanum.

Hjörleifr lét þar gjöra skála tvá, ok er önnur toptin átján faðma, en önnur nútján. Hjörleifr sat þar um vetrinn. En um várí tók hann sá; hann átti einn uxa ok lét hann þrælana draga arðrinn. En er þeir Hjörleifr várú at skála, þá gerði Dufþakr þat ráð at þeir skyldu drepa uxann ok segja at skógarbjorn³ hefði drepit, en síðan skyldu þeir ráða á þá Hjörleif ef þeir leitaði bjarnarin. Eptir þat söggðu þeir Hjörleifi þetta. Ok er þeir fóru at leita bjarnarins ok dreifðusk í skógin, þá

⁴⁹ vi. H, íí˝. S.
settu þrálar at sérhverjum þeira ok myrðu þá alla, jafnmarga sér. Þeir hljópu á brutt með konur þeira ok lausafé ok bátinn. Þrálar fóru í eyjar þar er þeir sá í haf til útsúðr, ok bjöggusk þar fyrir um hrið.

Vífill ok Karli hétu þrálar Ingólfs; þá sendi hann vestr með sjó at leita þondvegissúlina sinna. En er þeir kvámu til Hjørleifshofða, fundu þeir Hjørleif dauðan. Þá fóru þeir aptr ok sogðu Ingólfi þau tíðindi; hann lét illa yfir drápi þeira Hjørleifs. Eptir þat fór Ingólfr vestr til Hjørleifshofða, ok er hann sá Hjørleif dauðan, mælti hann:

‘Litít lagðisk hér fyrir góðan dreng, er þrálar skyldu at bana verða, ok sé ek svá hverjum verða ef eigi vill blóta.’

Ingólfr lét búa groft þeira Hjørleifs ok sjá fyrir skipi þeira ok fjárhlut. Ingólfr gekk þá upp á hofðann ok sá eyjar liggja í útsúð til hafs; kom honum þat í hug at þeir4 mundu þangat hlaupit hafa, því at bátrinn var horfinn; fóru þeir at leita þrálanna ok fundu þá þar sem Eið heitir í eyjunum. Váru þeir þá at mat er þeir Ingólfr kvámu at þeim. Þeir vurðu felmsfullir ok hljóp sinn veg hverr. Ingólfr drap þá alla. Par heitir Duþpaksskor er hann5 lézk. Fleiri hljópu þeir fyrir berg þar sem við þá er kennt síðan. Vestmannaeýjar heita þar síðan er þrálarinn víru drepnir, því at þeir váru Vestmenn. Þeir Ingólfr hofðu með sér konur þeira er myrðir hofðu verit; fóru þeir þá aptr til Hjørleifshofða; var Ingólfr þar vetr annan.

En um sumarit eptir fór hann vestr með sjó. Hann var enn þriðja vetr undir Ingólfsfelli fyrir vestan Ólfusá. Þau missari fundu þeir Vífill ok Karli þondvegissúlur hans við Arnarhvál fyrir neðan heití.

CHAPTER 9

Ingólfr fór um várit ofan um heití; hann tók sér bústað þar sem þondvegissúlur hans hofðu á land komit; hann bjó í Reykjavarvík; þar eru enn þondugissúlur þer í eldhúsi. En Ingólfr nam land milli Ólfusár ok Hvalfjarðar fyrir útan Brynjudosal, milli ok Óxarár ok Óll nes út.

Þá mælti Karli: ‘Til ills fóru vær um góð heruð er vær skulum byggja útnes þetta.’

Hann hvarf á brutt ok ambátt með honum. Vífill gaf Ingólfr frelsi, ok byggði hann at Vífilsstóptum; við hann er kennt Vífilsfell; þar bjó þann lengi, varð skilrir maðr. Ingólfr lét göra skála á Skálafell; þáðan sá hann reyki við Ólfusvatn ok fann þar Karla.

101 kennt Vífilsfell first written kendr Vífilsð(alr) in S. 102 Skála- H, Skalla- S (skála also witten with -ll- in S in line 62).
Ingólfr var frægastr allra landnamsmanna, því at hann kom hér at óbyggðu landi ok byggði fyrstr landit; gørðu þat aðrir landnámsmenn eptir hans dœmum.

Ingólfr átti Hallveigu Fróðadóttur systur6 Lopts ens gamla; þeira son var Porsteinn, er þing lét setja á Kjalarnesi áðr Alþingi var sett.7 Son Þorsteins var Þorkell máni lögðogumaðr, er einn heiðinna manna hefir bezt verit síðaðr at því er menn vita dœmi til. Hann lét sik bera í sólargeisla í banasótt sinni ok fal sík á hendi þeim Guði er sólina hafði skapat; hafði hann ok lifat svá hreinliga sem fleir kristni menn er bezt eru síðaðir. Son hans var Þormóðr, er þá var allsherjargoði er kristni kom á Ísland. Hans son var Hamall, faðir Más ok Þormóðar ok Torf∂a>.

Notes

1 There is a record of such an event in Iceland in 874; see ÍF I cxxxvi.

2 Such high seat pillars may have had carvings of heathen gods on them; presumably the gods were believed to guide the pillars ashore at a propitious place, and they would have been re-used in the settler’s new home in Iceland. See particularly Eyrbyggja saga ch. 4 (ÍF IV 7–10).

3 There have never been any brown bears in Iceland, though polar bears have sometimes reached there on drift ice.

4 I.e. þrælarnir (so Þóðarbók).

5 I.e. Duflakr.

6 Þóðarbók has, more correctly, fóðursystur.

7 See Text VIII above, lines 44–47 and note 23.
Old Norse, as defined in *NION* I, 1.2, refers to Viking-Age and medieval Icelandic (c.870–1550) and Norwegian (c.750–1350). The term has, however, sometimes been used more widely, to include pre-Reformation Swedish and Danish, and also the Scandinavian colonial languages (besides Icelandic) that resulted from Viking-Age expansion and settlement. *ION*, for example, has separate sections devoted to ‘West Norse’ (Icelandic and Norwegian) and ‘East Norse’ (Danish and Swedish). This terminological uncertainty has various causes. Literary and historical scholars have tended to focus almost exclusively on the medieval writings of Iceland and Norway, so that for them Old Norse easily became synonymous with the shared literary idiom of those two countries. Added to that, the English word ‘Norse’ is not far removed from Scandinavian *norsk(r)* ‘Norwegian’ (from which language Icelandic is of course descended). Those concerned with linguistic history, on the other hand, seeking English equivalents for the Danish/Norwegian terms *vestnordisk* and *østnordisk* (Swedish *västnordiska*, *östnordiska*), tended to alight on ‘West Norse’ and ‘East Norse’, though some have preferred ‘Old West Scandinavian’ and ‘Old East Scandinavian’.

Traditionally the East/West division is seen as the first major dialect split in Scandinavian. Prior to that, a relatively homogeneous North or North-West Germanic is supposed to have existed, a daughter language of Common or Proto-Germanic, itself descended from Indo-European. Differences between East and West emerge during the Viking Age (c.750–1050) and early Middle Ages (c.1050–1200), and are clearly manifested in the oldest preserved vernacular manuscripts from Scandinavia (Iceland and Norway c.1150, Denmark and Sweden c.1250–75).

How far the traditional view of pre-Reformation Scandinavian linguistic history reflects reality has increasingly been questioned. In the light of what is currently known about language change and diversity, it is hard to believe that a uniform speech community stretching from Helgeland in Norway to southern Jutland, from the Baltic to the North Sea, can have existed at any period. Nor is it easy to see how the radical changes of the Scandinavian syncope period (c.550–700), whereby a language not far removed from Common Germanic developed into an idiom close to Old Norse, could have
been accomplished without considerable dialectal variation — at least while the changes were under way. The alternative is to assume that throughout the Scandinavian-speaking world a rising generation began simultaneously to alter their speech patterns in identical ways — a scenario that runs counter to the little evidence that exists and seems to be without parallel. It is possible that political and social factors in the early Viking Age worked in favour of linguistic uniformity, giving us the ‘Common Scandinavian’ of linguistic handbooks, but it is hard to identify precisely what factors these might have been. More likely, there was always dialectal variation of one kind or another, but the sparseness of the sources hides it from our view.

At the start of the manuscript age differences must have existed not only between West and East Norse, but between speech communities all over the Scandinavian world. That, at least, is what the earliest preserved vernacular texts indicate. Beneath the overlay of regional and scriptorium-based norms of writing, a dialect continuum can be glimpsed, running from southern Jutland through the Danish islands to Skåne and thence further north, east and west into Sweden and Norway.

Medieval writings from Denmark and Sweden may thus be expected to show features of East Norse, of regional and of local (scriptorium-based or dialectal) type. In addition there will be variation depending on the age of text or manuscript. The Scandinavian Middle Ages (c.1050–1550) were, like the syncope period, a time of great linguistic change. It was then that the grammars of Danish, Norwegian and Swedish lost most of their inherited inflexions, and speech was Germanised through the adoption of vast numbers of words, idioms and derivational affixes from Low German, the language of the Hanseatic traders (many of whom populated the growing Scandinavian towns such as Bergen, Lund, Stockholm).

The West Norse/East Norse dichotomy as it appears in manuscript sources comes down to a limited range of phonological and morphological criteria. The principal shibboleths are enumerated here (grammatical abbreviations are explained at the beginning of the glossary in NION III).

(1) In eastern Scandinavia the falling diphthongs /ei/ /au/ /øy/ were monophthongised to /e:/ /ø:/ /ø:/ respectively, e.g. O. Icel. steinn ‘stone’, lauf ‘foliage’, dreyma ‘[to] dream’, O. Swed. sten, løf, drøma.
(2) Labial mutation (NION I, 3.1.7.1), although not infrequently attested in East Scandinavian runic inscriptions, is largely absent from Danish and Swedish vernacular manuscripts, e.g. O. Icel. hófn ‘harbour’ kolluðu ‘called [3rd pl.]’, O. Dan. hafn, kallathulo.

(3) Front mutation (NION I, 3.1.7.2) is also lacking in the East in specific cases: (a) the present tense sg. of strong verbs, e.g. O. Icel. kómr ‘comes’, O. Swed. kom(b)er; (b) the past subjunctive of strong verbs and weak verbs of the krefja ‘demand’ and hafa ‘have’ types, e.g. O. Icel. væri ‘would be’, hefði ‘would have’, O. Dan. vare, hafði; (c) where the conditioning factors are /gi/ /ki/, e.g. O. Icel. tekit ‘taken [supine]’, O. Swed. takit; (d) where the conditioning factor is /z/ (which ultimately developed to /r/), e.g. O. Icel. glér ‘glass’, O. Dan. glar.

(4) In eastern Scandinavia there are more occurrences and more types of breaking (NION I, 3.1.7.3) than in the West, e.g. O. Icel. ek ‘I’, syngva ‘[to] sing’, O. Swed. iak, siunga.

(5) /u/ often developed to /o/ in western Scandinavia while remaining unchanged in the East, e.g. O. Icel. bod ‘message’ ‘command’, O. Dan. buth.

(6) The Germanic diphthong /eu/ developed regularly to [ju:] in most eastern forms of Scandinavian, but in the West it became [jo:] immediately before /h/, /m/ and dental consonants (and occasionally in other contexts), e.g. O. Icel. brjóta ‘break’, O. Swed. briuta.

(7) Initial [w-] is lost in the West immediately before /r/, e.g. O. Icel. rangr ‘crooked’ ‘wrong’, O. Swed./Dan. wrangær.


(9) In eastern Scandinavia the -sk form of the verb (NION I, 3.6.4, 3.6.5.3) is simplified to -s, e.g. O. Icel. skiljask ‘[to] part [from]’, nefnask ‘[to] call oneself’ ‘[to] be called’, O. Dan. skiljas, nefnæs.

(10) In western Scandinavia the 2nd pl. verb ending is -ð, in Sweden and eastern Denmark (Skåne) -n; in the rest of Denmark the consonant is lost, leaving the ending -æ/-e, e.g. O. Icel. hafði ‘have [2nd pl. pres.]’, O. Swed. hauin, (central and western) O. Dan. hauæ.

(11) In western Scandinavia the dat. pl. form of the suffixed definite article is -num, in Sweden and northern Skåne it is -inf-en, in Denmark otherwise -num/-nom, e.g. O. Icel. steinunnum ‘the stones [dat. pl.]’, O. Swed. stenomen, O. Dan. dyefflonom ‘the devils [dat. pl.]’.

The East/West division is by no means absolute (as items 10 and especially 11 indicate). Various western features are found in Danish manuscripts, especially those from Jutland (types of palatal mutation as in slær ‘hits’, O. Swed. slar, lack of breaking as in æk ‘I’, O. Swed. iak, ‘o’ rather than ‘u’ spellings as in both ‘message’ ‘command’, O. Swed. buþ). Nor can the language of Gotland easily be classified as
West or East Norse. In common with the former it retains the falling diphthongs, e.g. *bain* ‘bone’, *draumbr* ‘dream’, *droyma* ‘[to] dream’; on the other hand, it prefers */u/* even where O. Swed. and O. Dan. have */o/*, e.g. *fulc* ‘people’, *lufa* ‘[to] permit’, O. Swed. *folk*, *loua*. Other areas of the medieval Scandinavian world also have their linguistic peculiarities (as indicated above). Haugen offers an introduction to the variety in his ‘Checklist of dialectal criteria in O[ld] Sc[andinavian] manuscripts (1150–1350)’ (1976, 210–13).

Time as well as place can affect the language of medieval Scandinavian manuscripts. Around 1300 written Norwegian and Swedish still by and large retained the inflexional system inherited from North Germanic. By 1400, this system was in an advanced state of collapse. Danish succumbed earlier. Manuscripts from around 1300 show that Jutlandic apocope (loss of final vowels) and Zealandic reduction of unstressed vowels to */s/* had already taken place, sweeping away the many inflexions dependent on the */a/* */i/* */u/* trichotomy (e.g. corresponding to O. Icel. *kallaða*, *kallaði*, *kolluðu* ‘called [1st sg., 3rd sg., 3rd pl. indic.]’ we find simply *kallæth* or *kallæthe*). Only in Skåne, where little or no reduction had occurred, does the language of the earliest Danish manuscripts regularly exhibit traditional case endings and verbal inflexions.

By the fifteenth century the influence of Low German had begun to make itself felt in Danish, Swedish and Norwegian manuscripts (introducing words such as *æra* ‘honour’, *handel* ‘trade’, *stolter* ‘splendid’ ‘gallant’, *bruka* ‘use’ and derivational affixes like *an-*, *be-*, -*aktig*, -*het*, Middle Low German *êre*, *handel*, *stolt*, *brûken*, *an-*, *be-*, -*achtich*, -*heit*). In Norway this influence resulted in part from the Swedicisation and ultimately Danicisation of the written language. So strong was the Danish input that by the time of the Reformation Norwegian had all but ceased to exist as a written medium.

Four samples of eastern Scandinavian are now provided, two from Sweden and two from Denmark. They have been selected for their linguistic (and generic) variety. Different geographical areas are represented, different stages in the development of Swedish and Danish and different styles. Unlike Old Icelandic and to some extent Old Norwegian texts, those from eastern Scandinavia are not customarily normalised. The manuscript spellings are thus retained here, although abbreviations are expanded without comment.
XX: East Norse

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C. J. Schlyter, *Samling af Sweriges Gamla Lagar* 3 (1834).


Elias Wessén, *De nordiska språken* (1965 and later printings).
XX A: THE PROVINCIAL LAW OF UPPLAND

The age of this law is uncertain, but there are indications that parts of it may have existed in oral form in the late Viking Age. There are five medieval manuscripts. The text printed below — the preface to the law — follows Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek B 12 (from the first half of the fourteenth century), f. 1. The complete manuscript is published in Schlyter (1834), and a modern Swedish translation with extensive commentary is available in Holmbäck and Wessén (1933), see especially 7, 10–12. Many of the sentiments expressed in the passage about the purpose and role of the law (lines 5–10) are to be found in similar form in the prefaces to other Scandinavian provincial law texts.

Notes on the language


2. Labial mutation is absent, e.g. lagh (1) ‘law’, allum (3) ‘to all [dat. pl.]’, O. Icel. lƒg, ƒllum.

3. Front mutation is absent in the past subj. form warin (10) ‘were [3rd pl.]’ and the supine (aff) takit (18) ‘remove’, O. Icel. væri, tekit.


6. Historical [w] is shown in initial position before /rl/, e.g. wrangum (9) ‘wrongdoers [dat. pl.]’, O. Icel. røngum.

7. The -sk verb form appears as -s throughout, e.g. gømæs (7) ‘be maintained’, haldæs (7) ‘be kept’, skiptis (20) ‘is divided’, O. Icel. geymask, haldask, skiptisk.

8. The 3rd pl. past subj. form warin (10) ‘were’ shows the -n ending typical of O. Swed. and the O. Dan. of Skåne (contrast O. Icel. væri). Final -n was generally lost in Viking-Age Scandinavian, but retained in certain forms in East Norse, cf. O. Swed. øghon, O. Dan. øghæn ‘eyes’, O. Icel. augu.

9. A characteristic feature of O. Swed. is the development of /d/ between /n:/ and /r/ and /:/ and /r/, of /b/ between /m/ and /l/ and /m/ and /r/, and of /p/ between /m/ and /n/ and /m/ and /l/ (the linguistic term for this phenomenon is segmentation). Examples from the passage below are: aldræ (20) ‘of all [gen. pl.]’, Fæmpti (25) ‘[the] fifth’, O. Icel. allra, jimti.
10. Characteristic of the O. Swed. of the province of Uppland is the use of ‘-æ’ in unstressed syllables (especially endings) rather than ‘-a’. There are examples throughout the passage below, e.g. sweæ (3) ‘of the Swedes’, vææ (5) ‘[to] be’, timæ (11) ‘time [dat. sg.]’ ‘era’. In other kinds of O. Swed. we find either ‘-a’, or a mixture of ‘-a’ and ‘-æ’ dependent either on the quantity of the preceding stressed syllable or the quality of its vowel.

11. The inflexional system inherited from Germanic is still more or less intact in the B 12 manuscript of The Provincial Law of Uppland, though there are signs of incipient breakdown. The genitive is not necessarily found after mellum ‘between’ and til ‘to’, e.g. mellum ræt ok o ræt (6–7) ‘between right and wrong’, til næfst (8) ‘for the chastisement’, nor the dative after aff ‘off’ ‘from’ and i ‘in’, e.g. aff . . . warpt ræp (17–18) ‘according to . . . our deliberations’, i. kristnu ræt (14) ‘in the Christian Law’. Acc. m. sg. ðæn ‘the’ has been extended into the nom., e.g. ðæn fyrsti ær (21) ‘the first is’.
XX A: THE PROVINCIAL LAW OF UPPLAND


12, 13, 15, 17 letters written but subsequently erased. 21 word omitted by scribe, supplied by Schlyter (1834, 7) from other manuscripts.
XX B: THE TOWN LAW OF FLENSBORG

Apparently first written in Latin, this law was revised and put into Danish about 1300. The principal manuscript of the Danish text (now in Flensborg Stadsarkiv) stems from this period. The extracts printed below are found on ff. 1–2 (preface and Vm arf), 14–15 (skipthiuf, skip i hauæn). The complete text is published (without commentary) in Kroman (1951), 113–35, the sections below on pp. 113–14, 128.

Notes on the language

1. Monophthongisation of /ei/ /øy/ is marked throughout (except in the negative adverb ‘ey’ (6), cf. modern Danish and Swedish ej), e.g. them (5) ‘them’, døør (8) ‘dies’, (han) gømæ (19) ‘[let him] keep’, O. Icel. þeim, deyr, geymi.
2. Labial mutation is absent in (the) hafti (6) ‘they had’, O. Icel. þeir hofði. It is however marked in börn (13), böræ (11) ‘children’, logh (13) ‘law’. The product of labial mutation regularly develops to /ø/ in Danish when immediately followed by /l/ and /r/ (cf. modern Danish øl ‘beer’, ørn ‘eagle’). N. pl. logh has exceptionally retained the mutated vowel (albeit probably as /o/); other neuter nouns with root /a/ exhibit the same vowel in sg. and pl., e.g. land ‘country’ ‘countries’, blath ‘leaf’ ‘leaves’. Forms such as oll (8) ‘all’ do not reflect labial mutation, but rather rounding of /a/ immediately before /l:/ (common in manuscripts from southern Jutland), cf. ollæ (4), olt (20) ‘all’, O. Icel. allir, allt.
3. Front mutation is absent in the sg. pres. indic. forms takær (9) ‘takes’, hauær (11) ‘has’, kummaær (32) ‘comes’, O. Icel. tekr, hefr, kóm. It is however found in fœær (19) ‘gets’, heuær (22) ‘has’, which is in keeping with the position in many Jutlandic dialects past and present (cf. above).
4. Breaking is absent from stei (29) ‘steals’. Jutlandic follows West Norse in being less prone to breaking than the generality of eastern dialects, cf. O. Icel. stelr, O. Swed. and central and eastern O. Dan. stiel.
6. Nasal + /t/ is unassimilated in winter (3) ‘winters’, cf. O. Icel. vetr. We also find ‘nt’ written where East as well as West Norse normally has ‘(tt)’, e.g. ient (29) ‘[indef. art.]’, sint (32) ‘[refl. poss.]’, O. Icel. eitt, sitt, O. Swed. et, sit. These may be unassimilated forms too, but they could be analogical new formations in which the root morpheme (i)en-, sin- has been extended into the n. sg.

8. Characteristic of central and Jutlandic O. Dan. is the weakening of unstressed vowels: on Zealand and the other islands they tend to be reduced to [a], commonly written ‘e’ or ‘æ’; in Jutland word-final vowels are often apocopated (lost). The extracts below show both reduction to [a] and loss, e.g. liuær (8) ‘lives’, theræ (26) ‘their’, kune (17) ‘wife’, haft (6) ‘had’, æfn (15) ‘means’, mell (26) ‘between’, scul (29) ‘are to’, cf. O. Icel. lifir, þeira, konu, hofðu, efni, milli, skulu.

9. Jutlandic dialects often exhibit diphthongisation of /e:/ and /oː/. In the extracts below we find, e.g., ien (9) ‘one’, gwoz (20) ‘property’. It is this diphthongisation that gives, for example, modern Danish hjem as opposed to Icel. heim, Swed hem.

10. The forms iauæn (9) ‘equal’, gaghin (27) ‘gain’ may reflect the syllabicisation of final /-n/ (cf. O. Icel. jafn, gagn), but it has also been suggested that these spellings could represent an early attempt to mark the glottal catch (stød), characteristic of many kinds of modern Danish.

11. Little of the inherited Germanic inflexional system remains in the Flensborg law text. With a few exceptions nominal and verbal endings are either apocopated or appear as -æ, -ær, -æs or -s (cf. the examples under item 8 above, and additionally byries (1) ‘begins’, thers (27) ‘theirs’, O. Icel. byrjask, þeira). Not only have many of the traditional inflexional distinctions disappeared, there has also been much analogical restructuring. We find, for example, bymens (1) ‘townsmen’s’, fathers (24) ‘father’s’, thers (27) ‘theirs’, where the -s originally appropriate to the gen. sg. of certain nouns, pronouns and adjectives has been generalised as a possessive ending (O. Icel. ðæjar-manna, fður, þeira); further: klæþær (10) ‘clothes’ and børnæ (21) ‘children’, where the plural morphemes -r and -æ/-e (the latter not uncommon in Danish) have been extended to neuter nouns which originally had no plural ending in Old Norse (O. Icel. klæði, born).

12. Grammatical gender no longer follows the pattern inherited from Germanic (and ultimately Indo-European). Masculine and feminine have largely coalesced, while words modifying certain neuter nouns are not marked for neuter gender, e.g. thinner scra (4) ‘this legal code’, O. Icel. þessa skrá (acc. f. sg.), annæn kune (17) ‘another wife’, O. Icel. àðra konu (acc. f. sg.), ien par (11) ‘one pair’, O. Icel. einu pari (dat. n. sg.), hwær barn (18–19) ‘each child’, O. Icel. hvert barn (nom. n. sg.). During the Middle Ages written Danish gradually loses the features that distinguish masculine and feminine gender, leading to the two-gender system of the modern standard language. Most Jutlandic dialects ultimately drop the neuter sg. -s marker in adjectives, while an area of western Jutland abandons the old gender system entirely, introducing a new distinction between countable nouns, which are common (m. + f.) gender, and non-countables, which are neuter. The confusion seen
in the extract below is presumably an indication of the way grammatical gender was developing in Jutland.

13. As early as medieval Danish we find that counting between 50 and 99 may be by the score, as it is in the modern language. Here *fiyrsin tiughæ* (2) denotes ‘eighty’, i.e. ‘four times twenty’ (modern Danish *firs*).
Hær byriæs bymens skra af flænsborgh.

Fra wors hærræ aar, thusænd wintær. oc tuhundræth. fiyrsin tiughæ, oc fiyræ wintær. a fyrmer wor frugh aftæn.1 aldaærmen oc rathmen, oc ollæ bymæn i flænsborgh, lotæ scriuæ thinnæ scra, thær hærtugh woldemær af iutland gaf them. oc statfhæst mæth sin naath oc wold. for thi at the haft ey fyr stathæligh skra.

Vm arf.


Vm arf.

Thær fathær takær annæn kunæ. for brollæp. ellær brollæps dagh. fathær gif ut børn mæthærn.2 ellær næfnæ gwoth witnæ til, mykæt hwær barn fæær til siit mæthærn. Oc han gómæ thet e mæth the wilæ. En for glømer han thet. tha skal olt hans gwoz, oc thot gwoz thær han fæk mæth hans kunæ skipsæs iauæn i tu. oc halft takæ hans børnæ. oc halft han mæth theræ stiyæ mothær. Af hun hauær børn fyr with annæn sin gift man.3 the nytæ then samæ ræt, thær sagh ær. En brollups kost skal af fathærs löt ut gangæ. sum mothærs iorthæ færth. af ien barn lót.4

Vm arf.

E mæth arf ær mell fathær oc børn vskift. òkæs theræ gooæ, ellær nøkæs, gaghin oc skathæ væræ oll thers.

skipthiuf

Hwo sum stæl i skip. skipmen scul ham sættæ i ient vbygd øland mæth tundær oc eldærn. oc thrigi dagh cost.
skip i hauæn

Hwannær skip kummær i hafn. ænik skipman ma føræ sint gooz af skip, vtæn styraeman, oc skipmenz orlof.

**Notes**

1 15th August, the festival of the Assumption. The Latin text of the law has *in crastino assumptionis beatae uirginis*, i.e. 16th August.

2 ‘Where the father takes another wife, the father is to distribute to the children the inheritance which comes from the mother before the wedding or the wedding day.’

3 ‘If she already has children by another husband . . .’

4 ‘But the wedding expenses are to be taken from the father’s share, [just] as the mother’s funeral [expenses are to be taken] from one child’s share [of the inheritance].’
Erik’s Chronicle is a verse history of Swedish political affairs covering the period from the early thirteenth century until the election of Magnus Eriksson as king in 1319. Although the text was probably composed in the 1320s, the earliest extant manuscripts are from the second half of the fifteenth century. The genesis of Erik’s Chronicle is poorly understood. Some have thought to see traces of Västergötland dialect in the text, and have connected the work to that part of Sweden, but in the forms in which we have the poem it is the late medieval character of the O. Swed. that is most striking. The extract printed below, lines 862–93 of the poem, is taken from p. 20 of Royal Library, Stockholm, MS D 2, dated 1470–80. The complete manuscript is edited in Pipping (1921), and there is a detailed commentary on Erik’s Chronicle in Pipping (1926). See also Rosén (1959).

Notes on the language

1. Monophthongisation of /ei/ /øy/ is marked throughout, e.g. swena flere (5) ‘many squires’, lōðst (8) ‘untied’, O. Icel. sveisnar fleiri, leyst.
4. The scribe writes ‘iw’ rather than ‘io’ in the nickname diwr (21), O. Icel. dýr (<*deura), Faroese djór.
5. Segmentation of /d/ between /n:/ and /r/ and of /p/ between /m/ and /n/ is found (cf. passage A, Notes on the language 9), e.g. andre (5) ‘other’, kompne (3) ‘come [pp.]’, O. Icel. aðrir (<*annrir, *anþþrik), komnir.
6. The vowels of unstressed syllables are mostly written ‘a’, ‘e’, ‘o’ as in modern Swedish, though ‘i’ and ‘u’ also occur, e.g. theria (8) ‘their’, hallande (18) ‘Halland [dat. sg.]’, waro (3) ‘were’, bordhin (27) ‘the tables’, lupu (30) ‘ran [3rd pl.]’ ‘knocked’, O. Icel. þeira, Hallandi, váru, bôðin, hlupu. The rules governing the spoken and written forms of unstressed vowels in O. Swed. are complex, but by the second half of the fifteenth century ‘a’, ‘e’ and ‘o’ predominate in writing. The form sagdo in line 11 is presumably a scribal error, since the subject is singular.
7. M. nom. pl. -r is lost, e.g. kompne (3) ‘come [pp.]’, andre slike (21) ‘other such [people]’, swena (5) ‘squires’, O. Icel. konnir, aðrir slíkir, sveinar. This is a reflection of a general tendency in O. Swed. for historical [r] (so-called ‘palatal r’) to be dropped in unstressed position immediately following
a vowel. The tendency is seen most clearly in certain texts from Östergötland and Småland, and seems to weaken in dialects further north and east.

8. There is evidence for the lengthening of short stressed syllables, a development that affected all forms of Scandinavian in one way or another between c.1200 and 1550, e.g. *samma* (2) ‘same’ (lengthened consonant), *wiid* (9) ‘at’, *maat* (9) ‘food’ (lengthened vowel), O. Icel. *sömu, við, mat*.

9. The inherited Germanic inflexional system has in large part been abandoned. This is not the result of the merger or loss of unstressed vowels as in Zealandic and Jutlandic Danish, but stems chiefly from a failure (of uncertain cause) to maintain the inflexional distinctions still potentially available in the language. Acc. replaces dat. in *gawo sik* (7) ‘gave themselves’, *aff sik* (8) ‘from themselves’, O. Icel. *gáfu sér, af sér*; acc. replaces gen. in *sjælden samma tidh* (2) ‘within the same period’, *mellom gardhin ok ena broo* (15) ‘between the farm and a certain bridge’, O. Icel. *sinnan + gen.* (normally), (*á*/í) milli/millum + gen.; indeterminate case replaces gen. in *til swerike* (22) ‘to Sweden’, O. Icel. *til Svífljóðar*; dat. replaces acc. in *elskade them* (26) ‘loved them’, O. Icel. *elskadi þá*; the demands of rhyme overwhelm the strong nom. m. sg. adjectival ending in, e.g., *godh* (13) ‘fine’, *stark* (19) ‘strong’, O. Icel. *gôðr, sterkr*; acc. m. sg. *then* has replaced nom. m. sg. *sa* (10) ‘that’ (a very early change in O. Swed., cf. passage A, Notes on the language 11), and acc. f. sg. *þa* (2) ‘that’ ‘the’, O. Icel. *sá, þá*.

10. Middle Low German influence is seen in the loan words *hælade* (13) ‘warrior’, *kamp* (14) ‘battle’, *bestoodh* (14) ‘fought’, *bleff* (32) ‘remained’ (cf. Low German *helet, kamp, bestân, blîven*). Note also the prefix *be-* (cf. Low German *be-*), which becomes productive in the mainland Scandinavian languages. The phrases *The danske* (3) ‘the Danes’ and *the vplænzske* (12) ‘the Upplanders’, with their preposed definite articles, are probably also Low German inspired (cf. O. Icel. *danir, upplendingar*).

11. Danish influence, not uncommon in late O. Swed., is found in the replacement of the reflexive pronoun and reflexive possessive by the corresponding 3rd pl. pronoun and possessive, e.g. *them* (25) ‘themselves’, *thera* (8) ‘their’, for *sik, sina(r)*.
XX C: ERIK’S CHRONICLE (ERIKSKRØNIKAN)

jNnan Etake war een striidh
tha jnnan then samma tiidh

3 The danske waro tha kompne tiit
herra benkt aff alsø ok palne hwit
Ok andre riddare ok swena flere

6 wæl hwndrada ōrss ok æn mere
Ok gawo sik alle godha tröst
ok haffdo thera plator aff sik lôöst

9 Ok satho wiid bord ok fingo sik maat
tha òpte then man i trænno saat
Ok sagdo them allom tidhande

at the vplænzske komo ther ridhande
Herra wlf karsson een hælade goodh
huilkin kamp han ther bestoodh
mellom gardhin ok ena broo

12 han sagde ther aff æ til han doo
wæl twhundradhe ōrss waro thee
herra peder porsse aff hallande
een rasker hælade fromer ok stark
han war wt driffwen aff danmark

15 Ok offe diwr ok andre slike
the waro tha rymde til swerike
Ok haffdo eth hertoghanom eth hald

18 hertoghen lente them gotz ok wald
Swa at the matto them wæl næra
ok ælskade them wæl ok haffde them kæra

21 bordhin wordo tha rasklika skutin
ok margh dør sønder brutin
The hafdo summi latit sina hesta i stal

24 ther swena lupu hwar annan vm koll
Thera ōrss waro tha rasklika hænt
margh plata bleff ther ospent

27

23 eth (1) error for aff ‘from’; the scribe probably anticipated the following eth.
Notes

1 In 1277, following certain other acts of war committed by the Danes and the deposed Swedish king Valdemar Birgirsson in south-western Sweden.

2 The Danish forces.

3 The Swedish forces, fighting on behalf of the Swedish king, Magnus Birgirsson, younger brother of Valdemar.

4 If Peder Porsse and Offe Diwr are to be identified with the Peder Porse and Uffo Dyre who were said to be among those responsible for the murder of the Danish king, Erik Klipping, we have to assume a chronological error in Erik’s Chronicle, since the murder did not take place until 1286, nine years after the events portrayed here. There is evidence to suggest that at least some of those implicated in the death of King Erik fled to Sweden and obtained protection from King Magnus (Pipping (1926), 339–40; see also note 5 below).

5 Before he became king of Sweden, Magnus bore the title ‘duke’. He was elected king in 1275, but Erik’s Chronicle has got events out of order (cf. note 4 above).

6 Magnus gave the fleeing Danes succour (hald), granting them estates and power (i.e. fiefs).
XX D: THE MARIAGER BOOK OF LEGENDS

*The Mariager Book of Legends* is the (modern) title given to manuscript GKS 1586 4to (Royal Library, Copenhagen), a compilation of hagiographic literature and miracles translated into Danish from Latin, focusing in particular on the life and works of St Jerome (c.345–420). GKS 1586 4to dates itself to 1488, and states that it was written in the Birgittine monastery of Mariager, north-eastern Jutland, by brother Nicolaus Magni. Rather than Jutlandic, the language reflects the embryonic Zealandic standard that came increasingly to characterise late medieval written Danish, although various Jutlandic features can be found here and there throughout the manuscript. The extract printed below is taken from an apocryphal letter of St Cyril (c.315–86), Bishop of Jerusalem (c.349–86), to St Augustine (354–430), Bishop of Hippo (North Africa, c.396–430), and is found on ff. 97v–98r of GKS 1586 4to. The complete manuscript is published in Knudsen (1917–30).

Notes on the language


2. Front mutation is absent in the preterite subjunctive form *haffdhæ* (2) ‘had’ as is usual in East Norse, O. Icel. *hefðir* (though it is questionable how far a separate subjunctive mood is still a recognisable category in Danish at this late date).

3. Breaking is found in *iek* (8, 12) ‘I’, O. Icel *ek*. The original broken form is *iak* (thus O. Swed., cf. modern Swed. *jak*), but in Danish the [j] fronts the immediately following /a/ (modern Dan. *jeg*).

4. The form *sywffn* (14) for earlier *sjun* ‘vision’ ‘revelation’, O. Icel. *sjón, sýn*, seems to reflect a north-eastern Jutlandic dialect development whereby [ju:] > [yw].

5. The -sk form of the verb appears as -s in *lighnes* (5) ‘resembles’, O. Icel. *líkisk*.

6. The segmentation of /d/, /b/ and /p/ occurs in O. Dan. as well as O. Swed. (cf. passage A, Notes on the language 9), but in Dan. the development is in most cases reversed during the fourteenth century. However, /d/ sometimes remains between /n:/ and /l/, as in *andhre* (5) ‘other’ (<*annriR, *anflriR*).

7. The vowels of unstressed syllables are written ‘-e’ or ‘-æ’, both almost certainly reflecting some form of the central vowel [ə], e.g. *withæ* (1) ‘know’,
sændhe (4) ‘sent’, sthoræ (10) ‘great’, ware (11) ‘were’, O. Icel. vita, sendir, stóru, várú. Although the manuscript was written in Jutland, there are only occasional signs of the apocope of word-final vowels, as in the weak adjectival form hedherligh (15) ‘honourable’, O. Icel. heídărli.

8. Vowel + voiced velar spirant [ɣ] is normally diphthongised in medieval Danish. Following back vowels [y] > [w], which is reflected in the forms saffdh (2) ‘told’, saw (< sagh, with analogical [ɣ]) (15) ‘saw’, O. Icel. sagt, sá.


10. The inherited Germanic inflexional system has been almost wholly abandoned and replaced by something akin to the system of standard modern Danish. Morphological case is not much in evidence outside personal pronouns, and verbs are inflected for number and little else (this feature was finally discarded from the written language in the late nineteenth century). Lack of case inflexion can be seen in, e.g., i thynæ breffwe (3) ‘in your letters’, aff mænneske (11) ‘by people’, for manghe daghe (16) ‘many days ago’, O. Icel. i bréfum þínnum, af mónum, fyrrir morgum dógum (all dat.); there is no gender marking in, e.g., thynæ breffwe (3) ‘your letters’ (with analogical plural -æ/-e, cf. O. Icel. nom./acc. pl. bréf þín), aeren (5) ‘the glory’ (f. indistinguishable from m.); the absence of personal inflexion from verbs is documented in, e.g., thu haffdhæ (2) ‘you had’, Wij som withe (9) ‘we who know’, O. Icel. þú hefðir, vér sem vitum. Preserved inflexional distinctions are, e.g., war (4) ‘was’, ware (11) ‘were’, iek (13) ‘I’, mik (16) ‘me’, Wij (9) ‘we’, oss (8) ‘us’.

11. Middle Low German influence is seen in the loan words ære(n) (5) ‘honour’ ‘glory’, bewiisithe (6) ‘demonstrated’, megtughe (6) ‘powerful’, thwiffwell (7) ‘doubt’, forklæræ (12) ‘establish’ (cf. Low German ère, bewîsen, mechtich, twîvel, vorklaren). Note also the prefixes be- and for- and the suffix -het (Low German be-; for-; -heit), which become productive in the mainland Scandinavian languages (as already here in, e.g., helighet (4) ‘holiness’, sandhet (8) ‘truth’, where -het is used to derive abstract nouns from native adjectives).

12. The orthography reflects a tendency to employ superfluous consonants, a usage which reached its culmination in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century handwritten Danish, e.g. haffdhæ (2) ‘had’, skreffsth (3) ‘wrote’, thwiffwell (7) ‘doubt’.
Kæresthe Augustine sigher sanctus Cyrillus Thu skalth withæ At
manghe haffwe ther vndher paa ligherwiiss som thu haffdhæ saffdh
them noghet nyth oc vhørligth Ther thu skreffsth i thynæ breffwe
som thu sændhe mik. at jeronimus war liighæ i helighet johanni
baptisthæ. oc andhre apostelæ Oc at han lighnes them oc i æren
Hwicketh thu bewiisthe meth megtughe skæll oc vndherlighe sywffn
Sanneligh ther er enghen thwiffwell vppa Mæn thet er alzwærdugsth
at throo j all sannesthe sandhet oc gudelighet Oc wænther iek at oss
skall enghen vndher oc thwiffwell hændhe ther om Wij som withe
hans helgesthe leffneth. oc hans sthoræ vndherlighe jærthegnæ som
aldrigh ware førre hørdhe aff mænneske Oc forthy at thynæ skæll
ware swa sthoræ till at forklaræ thes sandhet Tha bør thet sik ey at iek
skall ther till legghe noghre læthæ skæll oc eenfaldughe Thy will iek
offwergiffwe them alle oc sighe aff een vndherligh sywffn som then
hedherligh Cyrillus bissopp i alexandria saw som han withner i sith
breff ther han sændhe mik for manghe daghe
XXI: EIRÍKS SAGA RAUÐA

There are various literary sources for our knowledge of medieval Norse visits to America (Vínland, Markland). As early as c. 1073, Adam of Bremen writes in his *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (see pp. 56 and 60 above) that Sven Estridsson, the Danish king and one of Adam’s main informants, ‘also told me of another island discovered by many in that ocean’. Adam continues: ‘It is called Wineland because vines grow there of their own accord, producing the most excellent wine. Moreover, that unsown crops abound there, we have ascertained not from fabulous conjecture but from the reliable report of the Danes.’ Half a century or so later, Ari Þorgilsson in his *Íslendingabók* alludes to the inhabitants of Vínland, the Skrælingar, in connection with traces of human beings found by Eiríkr rauði in Greenland (see p. 105 and note 30 to Text VIII above). An Icelandic geographical treatise (*landalýsing*) which may be as old as the beginning of the thirteenth century mentions Helluland (cf. lines 21–25 below), Markland (cf. lines 26–29 below) and Vínland and says that some people think that Vínland is an extension of Africa (cf. *HOIC* 104–06; Alfræði íslenzk I 1908, 12). The two ‘Vínland sagas’, *Grœnlendinga saga* and *Eiríks saga rauða* (respectively about 25 and 40 pages in the editions in the Íslenzk fornrit series) contain circumstantial, but often unreliable, accounts of various voyages said to have been made to Vínland. An Icelandic annal for the year 1347 records a visit to Markland by a party of Greenlanders that must have taken place at about that time (cf. *HOIC* 104).

It can be safely deduced from literary evidence alone that the Norse visited the American continent centuries before Columbus’s voyages to it around 1500. In 1960, however, the Norwegian Helge Ingstad made the significant archaeological discovery of a Norse site at L’Anse aux Meadows on the northern tip of Newfoundland, and this he subsequently excavated in the following decade together with his archaeologist wife, Anne Stine Ingstad. The site at L’Anse aux Meadows consists of the remains of three largish halls and five other buildings, one of which was used for producing iron from local bog-ore. Radiocarbon analyses indicate a general dating to around the year 1000. It appears to have been occupied over a relatively short period of time and may have lain deserted for a year or more between visits. An important activity there seems to have been the repair of ships.
There is little or no archaeological sign at L’Anse aux Meadows of any crop or animal husbandry.

Few, then, now doubt that the Norsemen visited the mainland of the North American continent in the Middle Ages. The historical realities were probably somewhat as follows. The first visits can reasonably be dated to the period 980–1010 and it is quite possible that, as some written sources suggest, it was Leifr, son of Eiríkr rauði, or some other member of Eiríkr’s circle, who made the first landings. Over the next three and a half centuries or so there would doubtless have been many voyages to North America, of only a few of which there is any record in the written sources. Most of these would have had their starting point in the Eastern Settlement of the Norse colony in Greenland (cf. notes 26 and 27 to Text VIII above) and many would probably only have reached the closest part of the mainland, Labrador, from where much-needed timber might be fetched. The finds at L’Anse aux Meadows confirm beyond doubt the presence of the Norsemen in Newfoundland. And it is entirely probable that they got further south, very possibly to the southern side of the Gulf of St Lawrence (and there found the wild grapes growing which gave rise to the name Vínland; cf. note 8 below). On the other hand, it is far less certain that they rounded the inhospitable coasts of Nova Scotia and penetrated further down the eastern coasts of what is now the U.S.A. In such areas as they did visit, they doubtless encountered members of the indigenous population, whether Inuit or Native American, whom they called ‘Skrælingar’ (cf. note 13 below). Some of the sources (e.g. the extract from Eiríks saga rauða edited here) suggest that permanent agrarian colonisation was intended at least by Þorfinnr karlsefni Þórðarson. But while Þorfinnr may have been a historical figure who mounted a major expedition to Vínland (and whose son Snorri may indeed have been born in North America), the evidence of archaeology for actual settlement is virtually non-existent. Quite why the Norsemen failed to establish any permanent foothold in North America is difficult to say (cf. Perkins 2004, 62–63 and references there). The sources themselves suggest that the hostility of the Skraelingar played a major part in discouraging settlement by the Norsemen (cf. lines 153–54 below). This may have been a factor. But it was probably as much the length and tenuousness of lines of communication with the nearest Norse settlement in Greenland, itself small and fragile, that were decisive. At all events it seems likely that
the last Norse voyages from Greenland to North America took place around or not long after 1350, and by the beginning of the fifteenth century the Greenland colony itself appears to have been in terminal decline.

As already indicated, it is *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grœnlendinga saga* that give the most detailed medieval accounts of visits to Vínland. *Eiríks saga rauða* must have been written before c.1302–10, the date of the oldest text (in Hauksbók, AM 544 4to). There are certain reasons to suggest that this saga was first written no earlier than 1263, but these are not entirely decisive and some scholars believe that it may have existed, in some version or other, as early as the first decades of the thirteenth century (cf. ÍF IV 1985, 367–69; Perkins 2004, 34–36, 52–53). *Grœnlendinga saga* cannot be dated more precisely than to between about 1200 (the time that saga-writing is thought to have begun) and c.1387 (the date of the sole manuscript, Flateyjarbók). Although some of the same main characters appear in the two sagas and they both have accounts of voyages to Vínland as an important part of their narrative, there are also substantial differences between the stories they tell. In addition to an initial sighting by one Bjarni Herjólfsson, *Grœnlendinga saga* tells of four separate visits to Vínland, under the leadership of Leifr (son of Eiríkr rauði), Þorvaldr (also Eiríkr’s son), Þorfinnr karlsefni and Freydís (said to be the daughter of Eiríkr) respectively. *Eiríks saga rauða* has no mention of the sighting by Bjarni Herjólfsson and tells of only two visits (an unplanned visit by Leifr in ch. 5 and Þorfinnr karlefní’s expedition in chs 8–12). It is uncertain what relationship there is between *Grœnlendinga saga* and *Eiríks saga rauða* and which of them is the older. It is perhaps more likely that *Grœnlendinga saga* was written first and that it is, on the whole, truer to historical reality. *Eiríks saga rauða* appears to be more concerned with telling the life-story of Þorfinnr karlsefni and more particularly that of his wife Guðrún Þorbjarnardóttir. But whichever of the two sagas is taken as the older, the possibility cannot be excluded that the author of the later of them knew the earlier in some way and used it as a source.

While the Vínland Sagas are the most detailed accounts of Norse visits to America, their limitations as historical sources must be emphasised. They were written at the earliest some two hundred years after the events they purport to describe took place. They contradict
each other in various ways. They present a vague and confused picture of the topography of the lands in the West. Some of the place-names they mention are doubtless fictional and those that may be genuine are difficult or impossible to locate with any degree of certainty (cf. note 1 below). The descriptions given of the Skraelingar are distorted in certain respects (cf. note 13 below). Alongside the named persons in Eiríks saga rauða and Grœnlendinga saga who probably existed in reality (e.g. Leifr Eiríksson, Porfinnr karlsefni Þórdarson), there are also a number who are entirely fictional. Thus the Pórhallr veiðimaðr of Eiríks saga rauða is an invented character (cf. line 9 and note 2 below); and doubtless the daughter of Eiríkr rauði called Freydís who appears both in Eiríks saga rauða and Grœnlendinga saga is also entirely fictional and the expedition she and her husband are said in ch. 7 of Grœnlendinga saga to have undertaken never took place; cf. Perkins (2004, 46–53). The narratives contain much exaggeration and the fantastic sometimes intrudes (cf. the story of Freydís in lines 132–42 and that of the uniped in lines 172–91 below). The aim of the authors was often more to tell a good story than to record history. As historical sources, then, the Vínland Sagas must be approached with a high degree of circumspection and their shortcomings never lost sight of. But with this said, it must also be stressed that the stories they tell and the picture they give of the lands in the West must often contain some kernel of historical truth, and an expedition to North America led by a historical Porfinnr karlsefni very possibly really did take place.

For his account of Vínland and Porfinnr karlsefni’s expedition there, the author of Eiríks saga could well have had at least some genuine and accurate information, quite possibly in oral form. He may well have read Grœnlendinga saga (see above). It has been argued that he knew at first hand Adam of Bremen’s Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum (see above) and was influenced by it. He may also have been influenced by sagas (such as Yngvars saga víðførsla) which tell of Scandinavian expeditions in Russia and eastwards from there. The three verses which he incorporates into his narrative (see note 11 and lines 183–90) were probably not his own compositions and must therefore be ranked amongst the saga’s sources for the passages in which they occur.

The excerpts edited here are from the saga now generally known as Eiríks saga rauða and its heading in 557 (f. 27r1) is Saga Eiríks rauða.
It is possible that in 544 the saga had the heading *Saga Ærfinns karlsefnis*, though if so it is no longer legible, and this could even have been its original name (cf. ÍF IV 1985, 338–41). Certainly the saga concerns itself more than with any other persons with Ærfinnr karlsefni, son of Æðr hesthöfði, and perhaps more particularly with Æðríðr, daughter of the Ærbjørn mentioned in line 16 below. Its ch. 3 tells of Æðríðr’s arrival in Greenland with her father, ch. 6 of her marriage to Ærsteinn, son of Æríkr rauði, and Ærsteinn’s subsequent death. Ch. 7 introduces Ærfinnr karlsefni and relates how he sails to Greenland together with Snorri Ærbrandsson, Bjarni Grímólsson and Æðrhallr Gamlasson (see lines 3–5 below); it also tells of Ærfinnr’s marriage to the widowed Æðríðr. It has been related in ch. 5 how Leifr, son of Æríkr rauði, went to Norway where King Óláf Tryggvason bade him preach Christianity in Greenland. We are told in the briefest terms how, on his voyage back to Greenland, he unexpectedly came across lands before unknown, where grape-vines and self-sown wheat grew (ÍF IV 1985, 415). In Greenland he successfully preached the faith; further, there was much talk there of sailing in search of the country he had discovered. At the beginning of ch. 8, the scene is set at Brattahlíð, the home of Æríkr rauði in Greenland after Ærfinnr’s marriage to Æðríðr. It should be noted that the text of 557 is here, as elsewhere, somewhat corrupt and the start of a new chapter is not marked. Some of the characters who play a part in the subsequent narrative are only cursorily introduced or not at all (like Freyðís, daughter of Æríkr rauði and wife of Æðrarðr, for instance; see lines 132 and 162). On the historicity of the various characters in the saga, see Perkins (2004, 46–53).

*Æríks saga rauða* is preserved in two vellums: (1) AM 544 4to (= 544), part of the important codex Hauksbók (cf. MS 271–72) named after Haukr Erlendsson (d. 1334) and written in the first decade of the fourteenth century. The text of *Æríks saga* was written partly by Haukr himself and partly by two other scribes. (2) AM 557 4to (Skálholtsbók; = 557), probably written around 1420 by Óláf Loptsson (d. c.1458). These two manuscripts present the saga in somewhat different forms. 557 offers us an often rather garbled text written by a careless and unpractised scribe, but one which is probably more faithful to the original of the saga than that of 544. 544’s text (as has been shown in greatest detail by the Swedish scholar Sven B. F. Jansson in his 1945
monograph) appears to have undergone substantial rationalisation and revision by its three scribes, including both lengthening and shortening. For this reason, 557 (ff. 32v6–33v6; 33v25–35r12) rather than 544 is made the basis for the edition of the following excerpts from the saga (ch. 8 and chs 10, 11 and 12), though obvious errors are corrected and missing words supplied from 544 unless otherwise stated. The text of 557 is, however, in need of substantial emendation, and while this can often be carried out on the basis of the Hauksbók redaction (in 544), it has not been possible to eliminate all its illogicalities (especially the topographical ones). This should not be forgotten, and readers must reconcile themselves to some measure of inconsistency and obscurity remaining (e.g. at lines 146–48). In defence of the scribe of 557, it may be said that the manuscript he was copying was quite possibly difficult to read, and that some of the imperfections of narrative in his text may also have been found in it. The chapter divisions and chapter numbering are based partly on the manuscripts, partly on previous editions. The scribe of 557 made use of various abbreviations (e.g. for the personal name Karlsefni), which are here silently expanded.

Bibliography

Facsimile editions: Arthur Middleton Reeves (ed.), The finding of Wineland the Good (1890 and reprints). [Contains facsimiles with parallel transcriptions of Eiríks saga rauða from both AM 557 4to and AM 554 4to (Hauksbók) as well as of Grænlendinga saga from Flateyjarbók]

Dag Strömbäck (ed.), The Arna-Magnæan manuscript 557, 4to containing inter alia the history of the first discovery of America, CCIMA XIII (1940).


Íslenzk fornrit edition: in the original issue of ÍF IV 193–237 (1935, reprinted with corrections 1957), which contained primarily Eyrbyggja saga, Eiríks saga rauða was edited mainly on the basis of AM 544 4to by Matthías Pórdarson, as well as Grænlendinga saga based on its only manuscript, Flateyjarbók. In 1985, Ólafur Halldórsson produced a supplementary volume (Viðauki) with continuing pagination comprising a text of Eiríks saga rauða, now based on AM 557 4to, and a substantial introduction; the contents of this volume were also included as an appendix to the reprint of the 1935 edition. The whole is referred to here as ÍF IV (1985).
English translations: numerous translations of the two Vinland sagas into English exist. Both the following contain translations of *Eiríks saga rauða* based mainly on the version in AM 557 4to (as well as translations of *Grœnlendinga saga* and much background material).


Background reading: there is a huge body of secondary literature concerning the Norsemen in America. A comprehensive bibliography (best up to 1992) is Robert Bergersen, *Vinland bibliography. Writings relating to the Norse in Greenland and America* (1997). It should be noted that many contributions to the subject have been amateurish or biased or over-speculative and should be treated with some circumspection.


G. M. Gathorne-Hardy, *The Norse Discoverers of America* (1921); 2nd ed. (1970) with a new preface by the author and a preface by Gwyn Jones.


*MS*, under *America, Norse in; L’Anse aux Meadows; Maine coin; Viking hoaxes; Vinland Map; Vinland Sagas*.


Other works referred to:

XXI: EIRÍKS SAGA RAUÐA

Porfinnr karlsefni Þórðarson’s expedition to Vínland

<Chapter 8>

...Ætluðu þeir Karlsefni ok Snorri at leita Vínlandsok þoluðu menn margt um þat. En því lauk svá at þeir Karlsefni ok Snorri bjuggu skip sitt ok ætluðu at leita Vínlands um sumarit. Til þeirar ferðar réðusk þeir Bjarni ok Þórhallr með skip sitt ok þat foruneyti er þeim hafði fylgt.

Maðr hét Þorvarðr. Hann var mágr Eiríks rauða. <Hann fór ok með þeim, ok Þorvaldr, son Eiríks.> Þórhallr var kallaðr veiðimaðr. Hann hafði lengi verit í veiðiforum með Eiríki um sumrum ok hafði hann margar varðveizlur. Þórhallr var mikill vexti, svartr ok þursligr. Hann var heldr við aldr, ódæll í skapi, hljóðlyndr, fámáluger hversdagliga, undirförlull ok þó hafði Eiríkr lengi tal af honum haldit. Hann var á skipi með þeim Þorvaldi, því at honum var viða kunnigt í öbyggðum. Þeir hófðu þat skip er Þorbjörn hafði út þangat ok réðusk til ferðar með þeim Karlsefni, ok váru þar flestir grønlenzkir menn á. Á skipum þeira var fjórir tígrir manna annars hundraðs.

Sigldu þeir undan síðan til Vestribyggðar ok til Bjarneyja. Sigldu þeir þaðan undan Bjarneyjum norðanveðr. Váru þeir úti tvau degr. Þá fundu þeir land ok reru fyrir á bátum ok kónnuðu landit ok fundu þar hellur margar ok svá stórar at tveir menn máttu vel spyrnask í iljar. Melrakkar váru þar margir. Þeir gáfu nafn landinu ok kólluðu Helluland.

Þá sigldu þeir norðanveðr tvau degr ok var þá land fyrir þeim ok var á skógr mikill ok dýr morg. Ey lá í landsuðr undan landinu ok fundu þeir þar bjarnadýr ok kólluðu Bjarney. En landit kólluðu þeir Markland, þar er skógrinn <var>.

Þá er líðin váru tvau degr, sjá þeir land ok þeir sigldu undir landit. Þar var nes, er þeir kvámu at. Þeir beittu með landinu ok létu landit á
stjórnborða. Þar var öræfi ok strandir langar ok sandar. Fara þeir á bátum til lands ok fundu kjöl af skipi ok kölluðu þar Kjalarnes. Þeir gáfu ok nafn ströndunum ok kölluðu Furðusstrandir,4 því at langt var með at sigla. Þá gjördisk vágskorit landit ok heldu þeir skipunum at vágunum.

Þat var þá er Leifr var með Óláfi konungi Tryggvasyni ok hann bað hann boða kristni á Grænlandi5 ok þá gaf konungur honum tvá menn skozku. Hét karlmaðrinn Haki en konan Hekja. Konungr bað Leif taka til þessara manna ef hann þyrfti skjótleiks við, því at þau váru dýrum skjótari.6 Pessa menn fengu þeir Leifr ok Eiríkr til fylgðar við Karlsefni.

En er þeir höfðu siglt fyrir Furðusstrandir, þá létu þeir ena skozku menn á land ok báðu þau hlaupa í suðrøtt ok leita landskosti ok koma aprtr áður þrjú degr væri liðin. Þau váru svá búin at þau höfðu þat klæði er þau kölluðu kjafal,7 þat var svá gjort at hattr var á upp ok opit at hlíðum ok engar ermar á ok kneptt í milli fóta; helt þar saman knappr ok nezla, en ber váru þau annars staðar. Þeir kósttuðu akkerum ok lágu þar þessa stund.

Ok er þríf dagar váru liðinir hljópu þau af landi ofan ok hafði annat þeira í hendi vínber en annat hveiti sjálfsáit.8 Sagði Karlsefni at þau þöttusk fundit hafa landskosti göða. Tóku þeir þau á skip sitt ok fóru leiðar sinnar, þar til er varð fjarðskorit. Þeir logðu skipunum inn á fjórð <inn. Par var ey ein út fyrir ok váru þar straumar mikil ok eyna; þeir kölluðu hana Straumsey. Fugl var þar svá margr at trauð mátti fæti niðr koma í milli eggjanna. Þeir heldu inn með fíðrínunum ok kölluðu hann Straumsfjörð ok báru farminn af skipunum ok bjuggusk þar um. Þeir höfðu með sér alls konar fé9 ok leituðu sér þar landsnytja. Fjöll váru þar ok fagrt var þar um at litask. Þeir gádu einskis nema at kanna landit. Þar váru grós mikil. Þar váru þeir um vetrinn ok gjördisk vetr mikill, en ekki fyrir unnit, ok gjördisk illt til maturins, ok tókus af veiðarnar. Þá fóru þeir út í eyna ok ventu at þar mundi gefa nokkut af veiðum eða rekum. Þar var þó lítit til matfanga en fé þeira varð þar vel. Síðan hétu þeir á Guð, at hann sendi þeim nokkut til matfanga ok var eigi svá brátt við látit sem þeim var annt til.

33 fengu skjól 557. 35 ok heldu written twice in 557. 39 Hekja written ‘hækia’ or ‘hecia’ in 557. 41 Leifi 557. 42 written enu 557. 45 bjafal 557. hattr| hattrínn 557. 50 vínker 557. 51 þörtisk 557. 53 fjörðinn 557. 61 veiðirnar 557.
Þórhallr hvarf á brott ok gengu menn at leita hans. Stóð þat yfir þrjú dóegr í samt. Á hinu fjórða dóegr fundu þeir Karlsefni ok Bjarni hann Þórhall á hamargnípu einni. Hann horfði í lopt upp ok gapði hann bæði augum ok munni ok nösum ok klóraði sér ok klýpti sikk ok þulði nokkut. Þeir spurðu þvi hann væri þar kominn. Hann kvað þat öngu skipta; bað hann þá ekki þat undrask, kvezk svá lengst lifat hafa at þeir þurftu ekki ráð fyrir honum at göra. Þeir báðu hann fara heim með sér. Hann gjörði svá.

Litlu síðar kom þar hvalr, ok drifu menn til ok skáru hann, en þó kenndu menn eigi hvat hval<ə> þat var. Karlsefni kunni mikla skyn á hvölum ok kenndi hann þó eigi. Þenna hval suðu matsveinar ok átu af ok varð þó öllum illt af.

Þá gengr Þórhallr at ok mælti: ‘Var eigi svá at hinn rauðskeggjaði varð drjúgar en Kristr yðvarr? Petta hafða ek nú fyrir skáldskap minn, er ek orta um Þór fulltrúann. Sjáladan hefri hann mér brögðízk.’

Ok er menn vissu þetta vildu öngvir nýta ok köstuðu fyrir björg ofan ok snueru sinu máli til Guðs miskunnar. Gaf þeim þá út at róa ok skorti þá eigi birgðir.10

Um várit fara þeir inn í Straumsfjörð ok hofðu þong af hváutveggja landinu, veiðar af meginlandinu, eggver ok útróðra af sjónum.11

.

Chapter 10

Karlsefni fór suðr fyrir land ok Snorri ok Bjarni ok annat líð þeirra. Þeir fóru lengi ok til þess er þeir kvámu at á þeiri er fell af landi ofan ok í vatn ok svá til sjóvar. Eyrar váru þar miklar fyrir árósinum, ok mátti eigi komask inn í ánna nema at háflæðum. Sígluðu þeir Karlsefni þá til áróssins ok kolluddu í Hápi12 landit. Þar fundu þeir sjálfsána hveitíakra þar sem laugðir váru, en vínviðr allt þar sem holta kenndi. Hverr lækir var þar fullr af fiskum. Þeir gjörðu þar grafið sem landit møttisk ok flódít gekk efst; ok er út fell váru helgir fiskar í grofnum. Þar var mikill fjöldi dýra á skógi með öllum móti. Þeir váru þar hálfan mánuð ok skemmtu sér ok urðu við ekki varir. Fé sitt hofðu þeir með sér.

Ok einn morgin snemma, er þeir lituðusk um, sáu þeir nú húðkeipa ok var veift trjánum af skipunum ok lét því líkast í sem í hálmþústum ok ferr sólarsinnis. Þá mælti Karlsefni:

‘Hvat mun þetta tákna?’

Snorri svarar honum: ‘Vera kann aþ þetta sé friðartákn ok tókum skjöld hvítan ok berum í móti.’

Ök svá gjörðu þeir. Pá eru hinir í móti ok undruðusk þá, ok gengu þeir á land. Þeir váru smáir menn ok ililligir ok illt hofðu þeir hár á hofði. Eygðir váru þeir mjók ok breiðir í kinnunum ok dvölðusk þar um stund og undruðusk. Reru síðan í brett ok suðr fyrir nesit.

Þeir hofðu gjört búðir sínar upp frá vatninu ok váru sumir skálarnir nær megílandinu en sumir nær vatninu. Nú váru þeir þar þann vetr.

Par kom alls engi snjár ok allr fénaðr gekk þar úti sjálfala.

Chapter 11

<E>n er vára tók, geta þeir at líta einn morgin snemma at fjöll ö húðkeipa reri sunnan fyrir nesit, svá margir sem kolum væri síti ok var þá veift á hverju skipi trjánum. Þeir brugðu þá skjöldum upp ok tóku kaupstefnu sín á millum ok vildi þat fólk helzt kaupa raðt klæði. Þeir vildu ok kaupa sverð ok spjót en þat boðnuðu þeir Karlsefni ok Snorri. Þeir hofðu ófölvulan belg fyrir klæðit ok tóku spannarlangt klæði fyrir belg ok bundu um hofðuð sér, ok fór svá um stund. En er mínka tók klæðit, þá skáru þeir í sundr svá at eigi var breiðara en þvers fingrar breitt. Gáfu þeir Skrælingar jafnmikítt fyrir eða meira.

Pat bar til at griðungr hljóp ór skögi, en þeir Karlsefni áttu, ok gull hátt við. Þeir fælask við, Skrælingar, ok hlaua út á keipana ok reru suðr fyrir land. Varð þá ekki vart við þá þrjár víkur í samt. En er sjá stund var liðin, sjá þeir sunnan fara mikinn fjölda skipa Skrælinga, svá sem straumr stœði. Var þá veift trjánum öllum rangsöelis ok yla allir Skrælingar hátt upp. Pá tóku þá rauða skjöldu ok báru í móti. Gengu þeir þá saman ok borgðusk. Varð þar skothröð horð. Þeir hofðu ok valslöngur, Skrælingar. Pat sjá þeir Karlsefni ok Snorri at þeir færðu upp á stóngum, Skrælingarnir, knött mikinn ok blána at lit ok fló upp á land yfir lidit ok lét illiliga við þar er niðr kom. Við þetta sló ötta miklum yfir Karlsefni ok á lið hans, svá at þá fýsti einskis annars en
halda undan ok upp með ánni ok til hamra nokkurra. Veittu þeir þar viðþoku harða.

Freydís kom út ok sá er þeir heldu undan. Hon kallaði:

‘Pví renni þér undan slíkum «a»uvirðismónnum, svá gildir menn er mér þætti líkilt at þér maettið drepa þá svá sem búfé? Ok ef ek hefða vápn þætti mér sem ek munda betr berjask en einnhverr yðvar.’

Þeir gáfu öngvan gaum hvat sem hon sagði. Freydís vildi fylgja þeim ok varð hon heldr sein, því at hon var eigi heil. Gekk hon þá eptir þeim í skóginn er Skraelingar søkja at henni. Hon fann fyrir sér mann dauðan, Þorbrand Snorrason, ok stóð hellusteinn í hofði honum. Sverðit lá hja honum, ok hon tók þat upp ok byzk at verja sík með. Pá koma Skraelingar at henni. Hon tek brjóstit upp ör serkinum ok slettir á sverðit. Þeir fælask við ok hlaua undan ok á skip sín ok heldu á brottu. Þeir Karlsefni finna hana ok lof-a happ hennar.

Tveir menn fellu af Karlsefni, en fjórir af Skraelingum, en þó urðu þeir ofriliði bornir. Fara þeir nú til búða sinna ok ðhuga hvat fjölmenni þat var er at þeim sötti á landinu. Sýnisk þeim nú at þat eina mun líðit hafa verit er á skipunum kom, en annat líðit mun hafa verit þver-synningar.

Þeir Skraelingar fundu ok mann dauðan ok lá öx hjá honum. «Einn þeira tók upp öxina ok hóogr með tré, ok þá hvver at ððrum, ok þótti þeim vera gersini ok bítæ vel.» Einn þeira hjó í stein ok brotnaði öxin. Þótti honum þá öngu nýt, er eigi stóð við grjótinu, ok kastaði niðr.

Þeir þóttusk nú sjá, þótt þar væri landskostir góðir, at þar mundi jafn-an- ófriðr ok ötti á liggja af þeim er fyrir bjuggu. Bjuggusk þeir á brott ok ætluðu til síns lands. Sigldu þeir norðr fyrir ok fundu fimm Skraelinga í skinnhjúpum sofanda ok hofðu með sér skrokkra ok í dýraramerg dreyra blandinn. Virtu þeir svá at þeir mundu gjørvir af landinu. Þeir drápu þá.

Síðan fundu þeir nes eitt ok á fjölda dýra. Ok þann veg var nesit at sjá sem mykiskán væri, af því at dýrin lágu þar um vetrna.

Nú koma þeir í Straumsfjörð ok er þar alls gnóttir. Er þat sumra manna sögn at þau Bjarni ok Freydís hafi þar eptir verit ok tíu tigir manna með þeim ok hafi eigi farit lengra, en þeir Karlsefni ok Snorri hofðu suðr farit ok fjórir tigir manna ok hafi eigi lengr verit í Höpi en vart tvá mànúðu ok hafi hit sama sumar aprt komit.

154 en þeir 557. 159 fjöldi 557. written vag 557. 161 gnóttir konar 557. 164, 165 hafi hafðir 557.
Karlsefni fór á einu skipi at leita Þórhalls, en liðit var eptir, ok föru þeir norðr fyrir Kjalarnes, ok berr þá fyrir vestan fram ok var landit á bakbord þeim. Par váru eyðimerkr einar. Ök er þeir höfðu lengi farit fellr <á> af landi ofan ór austri ok í vestr. Þeir løg<ð>u inn í árósin þok lágu við hinn syðra bakkann.

Pat var eitt morgin. Sjá þeir Karlsefni fyrir ofan rjóðit flekk nokkurn svá sem glitaði við þeim ok eptu þeir á. Pat hræðisk ok var þat einfætingr ok skýzk ofan þangat sem þeir lágu. Porvaldr, son Eiríks hins rauða, sat við stýri ok skaut einfætingr õr í smáþarma honum. Þorvaldr dró út órínæn ok mælti:

‘Feitt er um ístruna. Gott land hófum vér fengit kostum en þó megum vér varla njóta.’

Porvaldr dó af sári þessu litlu síðar. Pá hleypr einfætingr á braut ok norðr aprí. Þeir hljópu eptir einfætingi ok sáu hann stundum. Ók því næst sem hann leitaði undan, hljóp hann út á vág eitt. Pá hurfu þeir aprí.

Pá kvað eitt maðr kviðling þenna:

Eltu seggir,
allsatt var þat,
einn einfæting

ofan til strandar.
En kynligr maðr
kostaði rásar

hart of stopi<rv>.
Heyðu, Karlsefni!

Þeir föru þá í brott ok norðr aprí ok þóttusk sjá Einfætingaland. Vildu þeir þá eígi lengr hættta líði sínu. Þeir ætluðu þll <ein> fjöll, þau er í Hópi váru ok <þessi> er <nú> fundu þeir. Fóru þeir aprí ok váru í Straumsfirði hinn þriðja vetr.

Gengu menn þá mjók sleitum. Sóttu þeir er kvánlausir váru í hendr þeim er kvángadir váru. Þar kom til hit fyrsta haust Snorri, son Karlsefnis, ok var hann þá þrívetr er þeir fóru á brott.25

Höfuðu þeir sunnanveðr ok hittu Markland ok fundu Skrælinga fimm; var einn skeggjaðr ok tvæ konur, þórn tvau. Tóku þeir Karlsefni til sveinanna26 en hitt komsk undan ok sukkú í jörð niðr. En sveinana höfuðu þeir með sér ok kenndu þeim mál ok váru skýðir. Þeir nefndu móður sína Vætildi ok þóður Óvægi. Þeir sognu at konungar stjórnudu Skræelingalandi. Hét annarr Avaldamon, en annarr hét Valdídida.27 Þeir kváðu þar engi hús ok lágu menn í hellum eða holum. Þeir sognu land þar óðru megin gagnvart sínu landi ok gengu menn þar í hvítum klæðum ok öptu hátt ok báru stangir ok fóru með flíkr. Þat ætla menn Hvítramannaland.28

Nú kvámu þeir til Grønlands ok eru með Eiríki rauða um vetrinn.29
Notes

1 This is the first mention of Vínland in Eiríks saga rauða. The subsequent account of Þorfinnr karlsefni’s voyage contains various place-names, as follows: (a) (referring to Greenland and in addition to the term Grœnland itself): Vestribyggð (line 20; cf. notes 27 and 29 to Text VIII above), Bjarneyjar (lines 20, 21); (b) (referring apparently to lands in the west beyond Greenland): Vínland (lines 2, 4), Helluland (line 25), Bjarney (line 28), Markland (lines 29, 198), Kjalarnes (lines 33, 167), Furðustrandir (lines 34, 42), Straumsey (line 54), Straumsfjörðr (lines 56, 83, 161, 194), Hóp (lines 90, 193), Einfœtingaland (line 191), Skrælingaland (line 203), Hvítramannaland (lines 206–07). 544 also refers to Írland it mikla (cf. note 28 below). In connection with the names listed under (b), two issues arise: (i) how far they were genuine place-names used for localities on the North American continent or islands off it, and (ii) how far any of those that are genuine can be identified with actual places or areas in North America. As to (i), we can be relatively certain that e.g. Markland was a genuine place-name and that e.g. Einfœtingaland was not (cf. note 24 below). Cf. also note 4 below. In connection with (ii), it should be noted that it is extremely difficult or impossible to locate any of the place-names which may be genuine with any degree of certainty. This applies, for example, to Kjalarnes, found both in Eiríks saga rauða and in Grœnlendinga saga ch. 4. On the other hand, it is quite likely that the place-name Markland was used for Labrador. And for some conjecture as to where Hóp could have been, see note 12 below. Cf. Perkins (2004, 55–57).

2 Þórhallr veiðimaðr is obviously a fictional character. He conforms to the stereotype of the recalcitrant and often mischievous heathen who sometimes appears in the sagas and comes to bad end. One of his main roles in the narrative of Eiríks saga rauða is to act as a vehicle for two verses in ch. 9, which in turn have their own special function (cf. note 11 below). The word veiðimaðr could be used of both fishermen and hunters but was particularly used of whalers. Cf. Perkins (1976, 65–66, 70).

3 Lack of concord between verb and subject is found also in lines 32 and 161; this is not all that uncommon in Old Norse when the subject
follows the verb, cf. Text XXIV, lines 4, 14–17, 28–29, 51–52 and note 2 below and NION I, 3.9.8.2.

4 It seems unlikely that the word Furðustrandir was ever used by the Norsemen as a place-name for any locality or geographical feature in North America. The reason the author of Eiríks saga rauða had for placing these beaches of such length between Greenland and Vínland may have been to represent Vínland as much further south and thus much closer to Africa than it really was. This may have been in line with current geographical theory which regarded Vínland as an extension of Africa (cf. the geographical treatise (landalýsing) mentioned in the introduction, p. 281 above). This may also explain why the saga placed a uniped in Vínland; cf. lines 173–81 and note 24 below. But any certainty on a matter like this is impossible. See further Perkins (1976, particularly pp. 82–85).

5 The account (in Eiríks saga rauða ch. 5) of King Óláfr Tryggvason (on whom see note 33 to Text VIII above) bidding Leifr preach Christianity in Greenland and of Leifr subsequently fulfilling this mission is in all probability entirely unhistorical. Cf. HOIC 100–01; Ólafur Halldórsson (1981).

6 The adjective skozkr is sometimes used in Icelandic sources in the sense ‘Irish’ and this meaning may be intended here. Skozkir menn seem to have had a reputation for being fleet-footed; cf. Eyrbyggja saga, ch. 18 (ÍF IV 1985, 33) where we are told of a man called Nagli, described as mikill maðr ok fóthvatr et skozkr at kyni. Cf. Nansen (1911, I 339–43); Jones (1986, 283–85).

7 Andrew Breeze (1998, 5–6) argues that kjafal is a corruption of an early Irish word cochall (itself from Latin cucullus) which has a sense of ‘cowl, hood, hooded cloak’. On 557’s reading bjafal, cf. ÍF IV (1985, 424, note 10), and its reading vínker (an error for vínber) in line 50 below.

8 Adam of Bremen (see Introduction above), Grænlendinga saga and Eiríks saga rauða all imply that grapes grew in the place called Vínland (Adam of Bremen calls it Winland) and Adam and Grænlendinga saga (ÍF IV 1985, 253) more or less specifically connect the name given to
the country with the presence of grapes there. There has been much discussion of the grapes of Vínland. A number of scholars have argued that the Norsemen did not find wild grapes in North America and that their appearance in the sources must have some other explanation. It has, for example, been suggested that the accounts of grapes are purely literary borrowings and go back to accounts of the Insulae Fortunatae (or similar legendary places) in Isidor of Seville’s *Etymologiae* and classical sources (cf. Nansen 1911, I 345–84; II 1–65). But such arguments are to some extent anticipated and countered by, for instance, Adam’s own statement on this matter. Nor is there any good reason for believing that berries of some sort (rather then grapes proper) are referred to. And an interpretation of the first element of the name *Vínland* as originally the word *vin* f. (with a short vowel; cf. C–V 707) meaning ‘pasture’, may be confidently dismissed. Further, there is probably no good reason for rejecting the sources’ statement on this matter. Wild grapes (e.g. riverbank grapes, *Vitis riparia*) do grow in eastern North America, at present as far north as the St Lawrence River and New Brunswick. In the more favourable climatic conditions of the Middle Ages they were perhaps to be found rather further north than they are today. They were remarked upon by some of the early post-Columbian explorers of the area, for example Jacques Cartier, who explored the St Lawrence in the 1530s (cf. Gathorne-Hardy 1921, 154–59; Jones 1986, 123–24). Thus the Norsemen could well have reached the areas where grapes grew. The references to self-sown wheat (*hveiti sjálfsáit* in line 50, *sjálfsánir hveitiakrar* in line 90; cf. Adam of Bremen’s ‘unsown crops’) is more difficult to explain and there is no mention of it in *Grænlendinga saga*. It is true that Cartier reports fields of wild cereals on the St Lawrence. But identification with any known North American plant appears rather uncertain. The suggestion that the accounts of wheat in Vínland were indeed literary borrowings from legends of the Insulae Fortunatae (or similar places) to pair with its grapes, which may have existed in reality, is not implausible. Cf. Perkins (2004, 59–60).

9 Both *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grænlendinga saga* imply that the Norsemen took livestock with them on their expeditions to Vínland (cf. lines 95 and 119–20). There is, however, little or no archaeological evidence for this.
The implication of the saga’s account here is clearly that by composing poetry in honour of his patron Þórr (cf. Þórr fulltrúinn, line 79), Þórhallr has persuaded the god to strand a whale as food for the starving company. Certainly there is evidence elsewhere that praise-poetry was composed in honour of Þórr, that the god was thought of as something of a hunter and killer of whales and that he had the control over wind and wave necessary to beach a whale. But the Norsemen had various other forms of magic for luring fish and other sea-animals (e.g. seals) to land as well. For example, Adam of Bremen tells how the inhabitants of northernmost Norway employ ‘a powerful mumbling of words’ to draw whales to land. Nor was such magic the preserve of the Norsemen: for example, in Coon (1974, 129–30) there is a description of how a whale ritualist of the Nootka tribe of Indians (Vancouver Island) sought to get whales to drift ashore by a grisly process involving a human corpse. This he did after four days of ritual fasting in a remote shrine overlooking the sea from which whales could be seen. See further on this passage in Eiríks saga rauða, Perkins (2000, 223–30).

In ch. 9 of Eiríks saga rauða (omitted in the present selection) we are told how Þórhallr veiðimaðr, apparently disappointed by the absence of wine at Straumsfjørðr, breaks away from the main expedition with nine others and heads north in search of Vínland. He is storm-driven by a westerly wind across to Ireland and there is brutally beaten and enslaved and dies. Before he sets sail, two stanzas in dróttkvætt are quoted, which Þórhallr is said to have declaimed. In the first of these, which the prose tells us was uttered as Þórhallr was carrying water on board his ship, he complains that despite being promised the finest drink, no wine has touched his lips; he has rather to wield a bucket. The second verse is an exhortation to put out to sea and to leave others boiling whales on Furðustrandir, though in the prose of the saga, it is in Straumsfjørðr that meat from the stranded whale is cooked. An older school of saga-criticism, which took the sagas far more seriously as history than is now customary, believed that these two verses were composed more or less under the circumstances described in the saga. They have even been claimed to be among ‘the first recorded American poetry’. But in fact it is very unlikely that the occasion for the original composition of the verses was that
described in the prose of the saga and, as remarked in note 2 above, Þórhallr veiðimaðr is not to be regarded as a historical character. On the other hand, they were probably not composed by the author of the saga either and we can only guess at the circumstances of their origin. It is possible that the first verse was composed while the bailing of a ship was in progress. The second verse may have been used amongst groups of men engaged in hunting whales and processing their blubber (cf. Perkins 1976, 69–82). At all events, although the author of the saga probably formed his fictitious narrative partly to fit these verses, he also cunningly intended his audience to take them as corroboration of such details of his narrative as Þórhallr’s disappointment at the lack of wine at Straumsfjørðr and the Furðustrandir of lines 34 and 42, which had their own special function in his account (cf. note 4 above).

12 Place-names are often presented in this way in Old Norse writings (i.e. in the dative case preceded by the preposition normally used with them); cf. Text XV:33–34 above and NION I, 3.1.8 (p. 54).

While attempting to locate the various places mentioned in the Vínland Sagas is a hazardous business (cf. note 1 above), it is not impossible that Hóp was a genuine place-name and also not impossible that it referred to a locality on the south-western side of the Gulf of St Lawrence, more specifically around the mouth of the Miramichi River in New Brunswick. Here there are lagoons, sheltered from the sea by protective sandbars, to which the Old Norse word hôp might be applicable (see C–V 281; cf. Wallace 2003, 381 for an aerial photograph). It is in this area that some scholars would locate Vínland (e.g. Ferguson 2001). Wild grapes are found there, and also the place-name Baie du Vin apparently given by post-Columbian French settlers referring to them (cf. Crozier 2003, 336). A large concentration of Micmac Indians was also to be found there (cf. note 13 below). Nevertheless, no certain identification of Hóp can be made on the basis of these facts.

13 With the arrival of these nine skin boats (húðkeipar) at Hóp, the Skrælingar are introduced into Eiríks saga rauða and later in the saga (lines 153–54) we are told that it is fear of Skræling hostility that causes Karlsefni and his band to abandon their attempt to settle in Vínland. The Skrælingar are mentioned in various other Old Norse
sources, including Ari’s Íslendingabók (see Text VIII, lines 69–71), Grænlendinga saga and Historia Norwegiae (see History of Norway 2001, 3). The etymology of the word Skrælingar is uncertain but it very probably had pejorative connotations. The Norsemen certainly used it of the Inuit (Eskimo) peoples they came into contact with in Greenland. But they doubtless also had some contact with Native American (American Indian) peoples as well as Inuit in the parts of the North American mainland (with Newfoundland) they visited, and they appear to have used the word also of them. The accounts of Skrælingar in Eiríks saga rauða and in Grænlendinga saga may reflect such encounters. There seem to have been Dorset Inuit at least in Labrador at the time. And the Native American peoples the Norsemen might have come across could have been (the ancestors of) the Innu in Labrador, the Beothucks (now extinct) in Newfoundland or the Micmacs in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. Cf. Odess et al. (2000); McAleese (2003).

The Norsemen would have regarded the húðkeipr (‘skin boat’) as the traditional vessel of Skrælingar. One might here here think first of the umiaks of the Inuit rather than Indian canoes made of birch-bark. But both the Beothucks and the Micmacs seem to have had canoes covered with moose or deer skins and were also practised canoeists, and at least the Micmacs were traders and evidently owned canoes in largish numbers (cf. lines 110–11 and 122–23). See also note 30 to Text VIII.

Modern scholarship has expended much effort and ingenuity on attempting to square Norse accounts of the Skrælingar in the two Vínland sagas with what is otherwise known about the Inuit and Native Americans who inhabited these parts (cf. e.g. Gathorne-Hardy 1921, 173–95 for a traditional approach; and for a more modern one, Sverrir Jakobsson 2001). There is much that seems realistic in the saga’s descriptions. For example, the account of trade between the Norsemen and Skrælingar (lines 112–18) seems fairly true to life. The Skræling interest in red cloth makes one think of the Beothuks of Newfoundland whose predilection for the colour red probably gave rise to the expression ‘Red Indians’. The incident described in lines 149–52 gives quite a realistic picture of a person unacquainted with iron weapons (as both the Native Americans and Inuit of the area would have been; cf. lines 113–14). The dýramergr dreyra blandinn (‘marrow from animal bones mixed with blood’) which the five sleeping Skrælingar
have with them in bark containers (lines 155–57) has been interpreted as some form of pemmican used as iron rations by certain Native American tribes while out hunting (cf. Gathorne-Hardy 1921, 179). Much less convincingly, the large sphere used as a weapon by the Skrælingar (lines 126–28) has been compared with some sort of ballista thought to have been used by an Algonquin people (cf. ION 219, note to lines 378–81). Unfortunately, the physical description of the Skrælingar in lines 103–04 (where 544 has svartir for 557’s smáir) is hardly illuminating. And there are certainly various suspect elements in the accounts of the Skrælingar in Eiríks saga. For example, the names given to four of them in lines 201–03 were clearly invented on the basis of Norse name-elements or other European names (cf. note 27 below). The accounts of them in Eiríks saga could well be influenced by stories of exotic peoples encountered by Norsemen on their journeys east of Scandinavia (e.g. in Muslim countries). And when we find that the Skræling arrow which kills Þorvaldr Eiríksson in ch. 4 of Grœnlendinga saga is shot by a uniped in ch. 12 of Eiríks saga rauða, we see that the inhabitants of Norse America were in danger of joining the ranks of the fantastic peoples known to saga-authors from the learned literature of medieval Europe.

14 As in other cultures, in the Old Norse world anticlockwise motion (cf. rangsælis, line 123) had sinister or baleful associations. Conversely, clockwise motion (sólarsinnis) would have been regarded as auspicious and conducive to good fortune. The (saga’s) mention of the waving of pieces of wood (by the Skrælingar) may be some reminiscence (based on observation) of the movement of paddles on (an) Indian or Inuit canoe(s).

15 We hear elsewhere of the display of white shields and red shields (line 124) as tokens of peace and hostility respectively (cf. the terms friðskjöldr, ‘peace-shield’ and herskjöldr, ‘war-shield’); cf. also line 112 above and Text VI above, line 104 and note 11. But for red shields as ‘peace-shields, see Shetelig and Falk (1937, 401).

16 en (er in 544) here looks as though it might be being used as a relative pronoun; cf. ÍF IV (1985, 429, note 4); C–V 128. But in this instance at any rate, it is better regarded as anacoluthon (‘— and Karlsefni and his people owned it —’).
17 This pronoun presumably refers to the Norsemen.

18 It is not certain who is referred to here. It is possible that Porbrandr Snorrason is an error for Snorri Porbrandsson, mentioned earlier as Porfinnr karlefni’s partner and one of the leaders of the expedition (e.g. lines 3, 86, 100, 114). Certainly we never hear what eventually became of Snorri Porbrandsson at the end of the saga (though cf. lines 161–65). Alternatively (but perhaps less probably), we must assume that Snorri Porbrandsson had with him a son called Porbrandr on the expedition and that it is he who is referred to here, although he has not been mentioned earlier (cf. Introduction, p. 285 above). See also ÍF IV (1985, 383–84 and 437); Perkins (2004, 50–51).

19 This episode, in which Freydís appears to put the Skrælingar pursuing her to flight by slapping her naked breast with a sword, has mystified commentators. For discussion, cf. Barnes (2001, 27–30 and references).

20 This pronoun refers to Karlsefni and his band; cf. Jansson (1945, 73, 163–64, 167).

21 The words in brackets are supplied here from 544. Sven B. F. Jansson (1944, 144; cf. 73) regarded them as an addition by the redactor of the version in 544, but Ólafur Halldórsson (ÍF IV 1985, 430, note 11) is probably right in thinking that they (or words of similar meaning) were omitted by the scribe of 557.

22 544 has Guðríðr, which is perhaps more logical. Guðríðr Porbjarnardóttir, wife of Porfinnr karlfeni, plays a major part in both Eiríks saga rauða and Grænlendinga saga and is in all probability a historical figure. She was mother of the Snorri who was born on this expedition (cf. lines 196–97).

23 Cf. note 11 above.

24 In chapter 4 of Grænlendinga saga (ÍF IV 1985, 256), Þorvaldr, son of Eiríkr rauði, dies from an arrow-wound sustained in a skirmish with the Skrælingar; this account may even have some basis in historical fact (cf. Perkins 2004, 47 and 61). Here in ch. 12 of Eiríks saga rauða,
it is a uniped who shoots the fatal arrow into Þorvaldr’s entrails. The most plausible explanation for the introduction of this uniped is that according to medieval Icelandic notions of geography Vínland was thought to be an extension of Africa and unipeds were believed to live in Africa (cf. Jones 1986, 285; Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson 1965, 15 and 39; Barnes 2001, 27–28; see p. 281 above). The verse about the uniped (lines 183–90) has been the subject of an essay by Ian McDougall (1997), who produces good reasons for believing that it is an adaptation of a riddle about a pen. The uniped (einfætingr) represents the pen itself and the men (seggir) who chase it are the fingers of the hand holding it; the ‘shore’ (strønd) down to which the men chase the pen would be the bottom margin of the page or the writing surface in general. McDougall adduces parallels from other Icelandic and Old English riddles. The verse might have been introduced by the author of the saga to give support to the place-name Einfætingaland, which is probably fictitious and may even have been invented by the author of the saga himself (cf. notes 1, 4 and 11 above). Þorvaldr’s words in lines 177–78 resemble those attributed to Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld Bersason, mortally wounded by an arrow at the Battle of Stiklarstaðir (Stiklestad) (see ÍF XXVII 393; VI 276; Hkr 520–21; cf. also ION 219, note to line 434; Perkins 1976, 87, note 46).

Snorri, like his father Þorfinnr karlsefni and mother Guðrídur Þorbjarnardóttir, may have been a historical figure and was quite possibly the first European known by name to have been born on the North American mainland, or at any rate in Newfoundland (cf. note 22 above; Perkins 2004, 64).

This story, in which two Skræling boys are captured and taken back to Greenland, is perhaps not unrealistic. Jacques Cartier, the post-Columbian explorer of the St Lawrence, returned to France with two captured natives after his first voyage to these parts in 1534. For further similar instances, see Baitsholts (2003, 366 and references there).

The names of the mother and father of the Skræling boys are inventions made up from Norse words or name-elements (cf. Barnes 2001, 30, note 81; Perkins 2004, 51–53). Vætildr: vætr f. means ‘spirit’; (h)ildr is common as the second element in a number of Norse women’s
names (e.g. Bryn(h)ildr); Óvägir is related to the adjectives óvægr, ‘unmerciful’ and óväginn, ‘unyielding’ (cf. the attested personal name Óphyrmir related to óphyrmir, ‘merciless man’ and óphyrmiligr, ‘unmerciful, harsh’). And the names of the two kings whom the boys say rule Skrælingaland, Avaldamon and Valdidida (in 557; Avaldidida in 544), are probably based on those of the king of Garðaríki, Valdamarr or Valdimarr, and his consort Allogía (mentioned, for example, in OddrÓT 23). It has been suggested that the boys’ report that Skrælingaland was ruled by two kings may reflect the situation in Norway between 1261 and 1263: Hákon Hákonarson was king 1217–63, while his son Magnús was crowned in 1261 and died in 1280 (see Helgi Guðmundsson 1997, 63, note 42).

28 544 adds eða Írland it mikla ‘or Ireland the Great’ after Hvítramanna-land. Írland it mikla is also mentioned in Landnámabók (ÍF I, 162; cf. BS 61). There we are told that it lay six days’ sailing (sex dægra sigling) west of Ireland and near Vínland.

29 The account of Þorfinnr’s expedition to Vínland finishes here. The two following chapters (13 and 14) into which the remainder of the saga is conventionally divided tell how the ship captained by Bjarni Grímólfs-son (cf. lines 5 and 162 above) sinks under dramatic circumstances (ch. 13), and of Karlsefni and Guðríðr’s return to Iceland and their descendants. 544 concludes with a genealogy down to Haukr Erlends-son written in in Haukr’s own hand.
Eiríks saga rauða
Óláfs ríma Haraldssonar was composed c.1350–70, and is preserved in the late fourteenth-century manuscript known as Flateyjarbók (GKS 1005 fol.). The poem is the earliest surviving example of what became the most popular literary genre in Iceland between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. Rímur are narrative poems based, in almost every case, on prose sources. They are sometimes referred to as ‘metrical romances’ in English; nearly eighty rímur survive from before 1600, and about half of these are based on riddarasögur, with about another quarter of the corpus based on fornaldarsögur. Óláfs ríma is one of only nine pre-1600 rímur based on Íslandingsögur or (as here) konungasögur. It is also an unusually short example of the genre: most rímur consist of several cantos or fits using different metrical forms, but Óláfs ríma consists of a single ríma of sixty-five stanzas. Unlike many later examples of the genre, Óláfs ríma does not begin with a mansþongr (literally, ‘love song’), a non-narrative introduction in the tradition of courtly love poetry.

Óláfs ríma is composed in feyrskeytt, the most common ríma stanza form. The first and third lines of each quatrain contain four stressed syllables, any two of which (other than the first and second) alliterate with one another. The second and fourth lines of the quatrain contain three stressed syllables, of which the first in each line alliterates with the two alliterating stresses of the preceding odd-numbered line. In addition, the quatrain rhymes abab; the a rhymes are monosyllabic and the b rhymes trochaic.

Foreign literary traditions influenced the development of the rímur (the name of the genre is related to French rime, and already in this first example of the genre there is some emphasis on courtesy (st. 31), and warriors are in one place (st. 24) referred to as riddarar ‘knights’), but the influence of skaldic and eddic poetry is readily apparent, not least in the characteristically native poetic vocabulary employed, though there are also the loan-words fánga, klókr and júngr (Low German), pín (Old Saxon, Old English), stríð in the sense ‘warfare’ (Old Saxon). Heiti and kennings are more common in later rímur than in Óláfs ríma, but poetic diction employed in the poem includes fifteen heiti for ‘king’, and smaller numbers for ‘man/warrior’, ‘battle’, and ‘sword’. The few kennings in Óláfs ríma are all two-element only and simple, conventional ones found frequently in skaldic battle-
Óláfs ríma Haraldssonar

Óláfs ríma Haraldssonar’s poetry; there are six for ‘battle’ (randa glam (st. 38), darra él (st. 41), randa regn (st. 46), darra þing (st. 54), and odda hríð and málma leikr (st. 55; maybe also hjorva gnað (st. 56), one for ‘sword’ (unda naðr (st. 40), one for ‘man/warrior’ (grva meðr, st. 2), and one for ‘breast’ or ‘heart, mind’ (hyggju strendr, st. 19). As Vésteinn Ólason notes (1985, 9), the kenning fálu hestr ‘horse of a giantess’ = wolf) in stanza 41 is the only one in the poem to employ a mythological allusion.

Óláfs ríma is about an important saint, but the poet makes little use of the Christian skaldic diction developed in medieval Icelandic religious poetry; examples include dróttinn himna hallr ‘Lord of the heavenly mansion’; (st. 2), himna gramr ‘King of heavens’; (st. 51); note also bragnigr allra fljóða ‘king of all peoples’; (st. 65) and the description of Óláfr as Kristz et bjarta blóm ‘the bright flower of Christ’; (st. 62). But although the vocabulary of Óláfs ríma is influenced by that of skaldic poetry, the word order is much simpler, and according to Vésteinn Ólason 1985, 9, often ‘comes close to that of the spoken language’.

The poem celebrates St Óláfr, King of Norway (r. 1015–30). It begins with general praise of his achievements, concentrates mainly on an account of events just before and during the Battle of Stiklastaug, in which he was killed by rebellious subjects, and ends (after brief references to his burial, translation and posthumous miracles) with a request that the saint intercede for the poet. St Óláfr, protomartyr and patron of Norway, was a figure of immense religious and ideological importance in medieval Norway and Iceland. He was the subject of a wide range of written texts, including Latin hagiography and historical writing, skaldic battle-poetry, hagiographic skaldic verse, and prosimetric Sagas (for a survey of early Norwegian and Icelandic texts about St Óláfr see Kunin and Phelpstead 2001, xxvi–xli). The high point of this textual tradition is Snorri Sturluson’s Óláfs saga helga, originally composed as an independent Saga and later incorporated in his Heimskringla. Snorri’s Saga provided the source material for Óláfs ríma and so it is the version of the saint’s life referred to in the notes to the text below.

The continuing importance of St Óláfr in the later Middle Ages is attested by his prominence in Flateyjarbók, in which Óláfs ríma immediately follows Einarr Skúlason’s Geisli (1152–53), the skaldic
poem in praise of Óláfr composed to celebrate the establishment of an archiepiscopal see at his shrine in Trondheim. *Flateyjarbók* also includes a much-augmented version of *Óláfs saga helga*. The manuscript ascribes *Óláfs ríma* to Einarr Gilsson, who was briefly a *lögmaðr* (law-man, one of the two highest government officials in Iceland) in the north and west of Iceland in the late 1360s. It has been suggested that Einarr was a friend of Jón Hákonarson, the man who commissioned *Flateyjarbók*, and that *Óláfs ríma* might have been copied into *Flateyjarbók* from the poet’s autograph manuscript (see Björn K. Þórólfsson 1934, 298–99; Rowe 2005, 299). *Óláfs ríma* and *Geisli* were added to the beginning of *Flateyjarbók* by its second scribe, Magnús Pórhallsson, c.1390. Rowe argues that the inclusion of *Óláfs ríma* in the manuscript ‘underscores the points made by the inclusion of *Geisli*: the reader’s focus should be on St Óláfr (and specifically on Óláfr as a martyr and saint, rather than as a king), and the manuscript should contain as many kinds of poetry as possible’ (2005, 300).

This edition of *Óláfs ríma* has been normalised from Finnur Jónsson’s text (1905, 1–9); for a facsimile of *Flateyjarbók* see CCIMA XX. One notable linguistic feature commonly found in the rímur that has been retained in this edition is the frequent apocope of the strong masculine nominative inflectional ending -r; other features of fourteenth-century Icelandic in general that are here retained are the diphthongisation or lengthening of short vowels before -ng and lowering of á to ó after v (except where á is required by the rhyme).

**Bibliography**


Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*. In ÍF XXVII, II 3–415.


Óláfs ríma Haraldssonar er Einar Gilsson kveð

1. Óláfr kóngr þrør ok fríðr
   átti Noregi at ráða;
   gramr var æ við bragna blíðr,
   borinn til sigrs ok náða.

2. Ægglíng helt svó dýran heiðr
   dróttini himna hallar;
   eindi skýr-ir þrøva meiðr
   þöllings frægðir allar.

3. Mildíng hafði mentir þær,
   er mestar vörú í heimi;
   hvergi frægra hilmi fær
   hvórki af gleði né seimi.

4. Fimm hefir kóngr kristnat lónd,
   kann ek þoll at nefna;¹
   gramr vill jafnan rjóða rónd
   ok rángan úsið nefna.

5. Rán ok stuldi refsti hann
   ok ræktar stjórn í landi;
   hilmir lagði á heiðni bann
   ok hefndi stórt með brandi.

6. Gramr nam lógmál setja svá
   at seggir þol-d-u valla;
   dáligan lét hann dauða fá
   dróttinssvikara alla.

7. Rekkar ýfðuz ræsi á móð
   ok rétti harðla sönnum;
   vörú kóngi heimsklig hót
   hafin af sjálfs síns mónnum.
8. Hárekr var fyrir bróghnum bystr, 
béinn at stríða stilli; 
Þórir hundr er þann veg lystr, 
þriði var Kálfr enn illi.²

9. Kálfr var fyrr með kóngi só 
kær í þllum ráðum; 
nú er hann horfinn hilmi frá, 
heiðri sviptr ok dáðum.

10. Þrændir geingu Þóri á hönd, 
þeim var ljúft at herja; 
háleysk þjóð vill rjóða rönd 
ok ríkit kóngi verja.

11. Fylkir ríkr, frægr ok mildr 
fréttir safnað þenna; 
þá vill hilmir hraustr ok gildr 
hvergi undan renna.

12. Bragníng lætr byrja ferð 
bónda³ múg í móti; 
hann vill jafnan hræra sverð 
ok herða skot með spjóti.

13. Siklíng hafði safnat þá 
sínnum gorðum snjóllum; 
lofdúngs kann ek lýði at tjá, 
lángt bar gramr af þillum.

14. Hlýri kóngs var harðla júngr, 
hann vil ek fyrstan nefna, 
víst nam Haraldr⁴ þykkju þúngr 
Þrændum stríð at hefna.

15. ‘Get ek ei hrotta hóggit rönd,’ 
Haraldr talar við garpa,
Óláfs ríma Haraldssonar

‘bindi menn við mínna hónd
mæki þann enn snarpa.’

16. Rǫgnvaldr var mildr ok merkr
með þeim kóngi göða;
Brúsa son nam brigða sterkr
brand í dreyra at rjóða.

17. Finnr Árnason frækn ok hraustr
fylgir jofri sterkmum;
Bjørn stallari tryggr ok traustr
trúr vel ræsi merkum.

18. Sá var annar Árna mögr,
ytår Þorberg kalla,
hann lét stálín stinn ok fogr
í sterkmum hlífum gjalla.

19. Pormóðr var við Kolbrún kendr,
kóngsins skáld it fríða,
sá berr hvassar hyggju strendr
hvar sem garpar stríða.

20. Náðuz menn í niflúngs flokk
nær sem risar at líta;
þeir hafa bragnar brynjurokk
brandi skorit enn hvíta.

21. Geingu fram fyr kóngsins kné
ok kvöddu stilli enn teita;
buðu þeir bæði fylgd ok fé
frægum sjóla at veita.

22. Gramr rěð spyrja garpa þá:
‘Gerir mér heiti at inna;
trú skulu greina seggir svá
at satt megi til þess finna.’

19/2 fríða] MS dýra.
23. ‘Opt hafa þegnar þrjózku hefnt, 
þat mun eingi lasta; 
Gauka-Þóri hafa guunar nefnt 
glaðan ok Hafra-Fasta.’

24. Treystum vér á mátt ok megn, 
er margan riddara prýðir; 
aungva hafa af Ásum fregn 
okkrir sterkir lýðir.’

25. ‘Taki þér heldr helga trú 
himna kóngs með blóma, 
þirðar, kastið villu nú 
ok verið með oss í sóma.’

26. Lýðir gerðu lykt á því 
at leysa þenna vanda; 
skírnarbrunn fara skatnar í 
ok skynda Guði til handa.

27. Þrekstórr kom til þeingils maðr, 
þann frá ek Arnljót heita, 
tók hann skírn ok gekk þó glaðr 
grams í flokkinn teita.

28. Garpar fleiri at fylki renn 
en fyrðar mega þat telja; 
siklíngr nam sæmdarmenn 
sér til liðs at velja.

29. Kálfur hafði múga manns 
merkta völлу víða; 
niðinglign var næsta hans 
niflúng þeim at stríða.

30. Bjálfa klæðiz hörðum Hundr 
ok hans sveitúngar margir; 
þat hafa geysigrimmligt undr 
gert Búfinnar argir.
31. Ræsir talar við Þorgils\textsuperscript{13} þá, 
    þat var mest af prýði:  
    ‘Þér vil ek silfr í sjóði fá  
    þú seð með auma lýði.’

32. Þorgils hugsar þeingils mál:  
    ‘Þér innið framar höti;  
    gef fyr þeira garpa sál  
    er gánga oss í móti.’

33. Herrinn drífr á hilmis fund  
    at heyja ímön stránga;  
    svó var þrútin þeira lund,  
    at þraut varð fram at gánga.

34. Múginn þessi geysiz gegn  
    gram með sárum vilja;  
    lögðu á orku ok allt sitt megn  
    þófur við land at skilja.

35. Á Stiklastoðum var róman remd\textsuperscript{14}  
    ríkum kóní í móti;  
    þar vóru skópt með høndum hremd  
    ok hørðu kastað grjóti.

36. Hárekr eggjar herlið sitt,  
    heitr mörgum sóma.  
    ‘Lúki garpar geysistrítt  
    gram fyr harða dóma.’

37. Góða sverðit Hneitir hét,  
    hafði gramr til víga;  
    þar fyr margan þeingill lét  
    þegn at jórðu hníga.

38. Gumnar hlaupa geystir fram  
    grams fyr merkit væna,
reisa þannig randa glam
ok rísta skjöldu græna.

39. Gellini tók at geysaz hart
ok gerði rómu stránga;
sannliga lét hann seggja mart
sáran dauða fánga.

40. Árna synir sinn unda naðr
einart drógu af magni;
kendiz ei svó klókr maðr
kæmi hlíf at gagni.

41. Þormóðr nam brytja bráð
bleikum fálu hesti,
varði kónig með dygð ok dáð,
darra él hann hvésti.

42. Þórir hundr þrautar gíldr
þreif sitt spjót it snarpa;
laga var hann ok hóggva mildr
víð harða kónigsins garpa.

43. Þorsteinn hét sá er Þóri viðr
þar nam fram at gánga;
sá var kendr knarrarmiðr,15
kominn í villu stránga.

44. Kóngrinn hjó til Þóris þá,
þat frá ek undrum sætti,
eikki beið hans bjálffann á,
brastr sem grjóti mætti.16

45. Björn stallari bystr ok reiðr
barði Hund í móti;
þíðan hné víð sannan heiðr
seggr á Þóris spjóti.
46. Porgeirr\textsuperscript{17} vóð í randa regn,
raesi náði at finna;
snarr réð kóngr þrójzkum þegn þessi orð at inna.

47. ‘Peygi gerir þú, Porgeir, rétt
at þreyngir mónnum mínnum;
lypta ek þér af lægri stétt,
lokít mun sigri þínurn.’

48. Kóngrin hjó með Hneiti þá,
svó hrauð af eggjum báðum;
Porgeir dauðr á lýngi lá,
lífi sviptr ok dáðum.

49. Porsteinn réð á þæingils kné
þunnið þxi at snída,
síðan lét hann fjörð með fé
ok fell í ánaúð strída.

50. Bjórtum varp sér brandi frá
buðlúnings hónd in mæta,
sjóli bað með sónnu þá
sjálfann Guð sín gæta.

51. Pórir lagði í kónsins kvið
kóldum snótar ráðum;\textsuperscript{18}
hilmis sál tók hæstan fríð
himna grams með náðum.

52. Kálfr hjó til bragníngs bystr
batt sér þúngan vanda,
ramliga var hann á reiði lystr
raesi þeim at granda.

53. Myrkri sló yfir menn ok hjörð
við mildjings dýran dauða,

\textit{49/3 hann} M\textit{S adds} líf.
litu þá hvörki lög né jórð,
 lýð aflar þat nauta.

54. Þá kom Dagr með dreingi sín
darra þing at heyja;
margr hlaut við mikla þín
maðr af sút at deyja.

55. Æsilig var odda þríð, 
undrum frá ek þat gegna, 
mátti ekki meira strið 
af málma leiki fregna.

56. Hraðililig var hjörva gnauð, 
hardar brynjur sprúngu, 
dreingir feingu dapra naut, 
ðór á hlífum súngu.20

57. Stórt var þetta manna mátt, 
með kom hjálp til bragna, 
daufir feingu ok blindir bótt, 
bjúgir heilsu fagna.21

58. Þorgils gyemdi þeimils lík, 
þat fór heldr af hljóði; 
maðr tók sín fyr merkin slík 
af mætu kógsins blóði.

59. Fróni er huldr fylkir mætr 
firðr naut ok grandi; 
líkami kógs var mildr ok mætr 
mánuðr tólf í sandi.22

60. Þeim kom virðum vóndzlig þraut 
at vísis feingu reiði; 
geislar skinu um grund á braut 
grams af dýru leiði.23
61. Lýðir tóku upp líkama hans, lutu þá kóngi snjóllum, hár ok negl var heilags manns hátt at vexti Óllum.

62. Hildíngs taka þá helgan dóm halir í skrán at leggja; nú er Kristz et bjarta blóm ok blíðuz miskunn seggja.

63. Dróttini færði öldingr önd, ýtum líkam seldi; nú er hann Guðs á hægri hønd himins í æzta veldi.

64. Buðláungs heiðr er bjartr ok ríkr bæði um lønd ok geima, fæddiz eingi fylkir slíkr fyrri norðr í heima.

65. Reiðzt þú ei þó, þeingill, þér þyrða ek vísu at bjóða; biðr ek Óláf bjarga mér við bragníng allra þjóða.
Notes

1 The conversion of five (or six) countries is attributed to St Óláfr’s predecessor and namesake, Óláfr Tryggvason, rather than to St Óláfr in several Icelandic and Norwegian sources; the list (and number) of countries varies slightly: see, for example, Historia Norwegiae (Kunin and Phelpstead 2001, 21); Ágrip (1995), ch. 19; OddrÓT, ch. 52; and cf. Snorri’s account of Óláfr Tryggvason’s missionary endeavours in his Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in IF XXVI, chs 47, 53, 73, 95–96.

2 Hárekr ór Þjóttu, son of Eyvindr skáldaspillir, Þórir hundr (‘the dog’), and Kálfr Árnason were prominent chieftains who led the rebellion against King Óláfr. Þórir hundr was, however, one of the first people to recognise Óláfr’s sanctity after his death.

3 Óláfr’s opponents are usually characterised as bœndr, but the leaders of their army were of higher social status.

4 Haraldr Sigurðarson, later known as harðráði (‘hard ruler’), was king of Norway 1046–66. He was Óláfr’s half-brother. On st. 15/3–4 cf. IF XXVII 364.

5 Rǫgnvaldr Brúsason was the son of Earl Brúsi of Orkney. When King Óláfr settled a dispute between rival earls he required Rǫgnvaldr to remain at the Norwegian court in order to ensure that Brúsi kept to the agreement. Rǫgnvaldr remained there for many years; see Óláfs saga helga ch. 102; in Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar in IF XXVIII, ch. 1 Snorri tells how Earl Rǫgnvaldr helped Haraldr Sigurðarson to escape from the battle at Stiklastaðir.

6 Two brothers of Óláfr’s opponent Kálfr mentioned here supported the king, Finnr and Þorbergr (cf. stt. 18 and 40).

7 Earlier in Óláfr’s reign Björn stallari (‘the marshal’) had undertaken a diplomatic mission to try to make peace with the the king of Sweden. He had later visited the king in exile in Russia and reported on the state of affairs in Norway.

8 The court poet Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld figures prominently in the last part of Snorri’s Óláfs saga helga and is also a central character in Fóstbræðra saga. Snorri records how he recited Bjarkamál in fornu
before the battle at Stiklastaðir and later died as a result of wounds received in the battle (Óláfs saga helga chs 208, 233–34). Þormóðr acquired his nickname after dedicating a poem to a woman called Þorbjörg kolbrún (‘coal brow’).

9 Gauka-Þórir and Hafrafasti (Aрафasti in Heimskringla and most manuscripts of Snorri’s separate Óláfs saga helga; Hafrafasti in Flateyjarbók) were brothers and robbers who decided to join Óláfr’s army before the battle, but Óláfr would accept their help only if they first submitted to Christian baptism (Óláfs saga helga chs 203, 205).

10 Arnljótr gellini (cf. stanza 39) was also required to convert to Christianity before Óláfr would accept his help in the battle: see Óláfs saga helga chs 141, 215.

11 renn is presumably for renna, with the -a elided with the vowel at the beginning of the next line so as to preserve the rhyme.

12 The Lappish inhabitants of Finnmark. Lapps were traditionally associated with sorcery. Þórir’s protective magic cloaks are described in Óláfs saga helga ch. 193 (cf. ch. 228).

13 Þorgils Hálmuson, a farmer at Stiklastaðir, fulfilled his promise to bury the king’s body after the battle; cf. st. 58 below and see Snorri’s Óláfs saga helga chs 210 and 236–38.

14 The Battle of Stiklastaðir (or Stiklarstaðir) took place on 29 July 1030. Cf. note 18 to Text VIII above.

15 In Óláfs saga helga ch. 222 Snorri tells how Þorsteinn knarrarsmiðr (‘ship-builder’) fell out with King Óláfr and was punished for his violent crimes by having a large ship he had built confiscated; Þorsteinn vowed to repay the king by being the first to strike him if he could get close enough in the battle against him. Snorri’s account of the fatal blows inflicted on Óláfr by Þorsteinn, Þórir hundr and Kálf Árnason is in Óláfs saga helga ch. 228.

16 I.e. presumably the king’s sword broke. But he is still using Hneitir at 48/1, and his sword is not said to be broken in ÍF XXVII 383–84.
According to Snorri’s account, Óthere of Kvitsstaðir supported the rebels against Óláfr despite having earlier been elevated in social status by the king; see st. 47/3–4 and Óláfs saga helga chs 225, 227.

Cf. the proverb *kold eru kvenna ráð* ‘cold are the counsels of women’ in e.g. Njáls saga (ÍF XII 292); and the episode in Óláfs saga helga ch. 123 (ÍF XXVII 213) where Sigríðr, Þórir hundr’s sister-in-law, urges Þórir to stab the king with the spear that had killed her son Ásbjörn.

Óláfr had exiled Dagr’s father King Hringr of Heiðmork from Norway, but on Óláfr’s own return journey to Norway from exile in Russia he sent word to Dagr that if he were to regain Norway with Dagr’s help he would grant him dominions as great as his ancestors had held there (Óláfs saga helga ch. 199). Dagr’s renewal of the battle following Óláfr’s death is recounted in Óláfs saga helga ch. 229.

Craigie (1952, I 285) suggests that some verses may be missing between stanzas 56 and 57, where the story jumps to the evening after the battle when the first of the miracles took place (Óláfs saga helga ch. 236).

Cf. Matthew 11: 5.

Óláfr’s body was secretly buried in a sandbank by the River Nið near Trondheim (Óláfs saga helga ch. 238).

On the light from St Óláfr’s grave see Óláfs saga helga ch. 238.

The translation of Óláfr’s body took place on 3 August 1031. His remains were enshrined in Trondheim, later the location of the Norwegian archiepiscopal see.

The miraculous growth of the dead saint’s hair and nails is recorded in many texts, including Snorri’s Óláfs saga helga chs 244–45.

The final prayer is presumably for the poet to be saved from the judgment of Christ on doomsday, which is a normal request, rather than from Christ himself.
The passage below is offered as an example of the kind of learned literature collected and edited by Kr. Kålund under the title Alfræði íslenskr. In line with Kålund’s title, material of this type is often known as encyclopedic literature, specimens of which are to be found in Icelandic manuscripts from as early as c.1200, though the majority of the encyclopedic manuscripts that survive are from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It must be stressed that the compilations in which such writing is found, in the Old Norse context, are not encyclopedias in the modern sense. The Middle Ages did indeed produce some influential Latin works of a truly encyclopedic nature in that their authors aimed at giving systematic and comprehensive accounts of lore concerning the whole world and its inhabitants; notable among these are the *Etymologiae* of St Isidore of Seville and the *Imago mundi* of Honorius Augustodunensis, the former being a work from the early seventh century that gained lasting currency throughout Europe, and the latter belonging to the first half of the twelfth century. The *Imago mundi* appears to have been especially popular in medieval Iceland: it is likely that there was a twelfth-century Icelandic translation of it, which has not survived; the fifteenth-century manuscript AM 685 a 4to contains a vernacular adaptation of the first part of the work; and AM 435 12mo, from which the passage below is drawn, refers to the work by name in the paragraph immediately before the one with which the present excerpt begins (*Alfræði* III 98). It can be said in general, however, that the Old Icelandic manuscripts which are compilations of encyclopedic literature function not as full descriptions of the world but as ‘micro-libraries’ (Clunies Ross and Simek 1993) consisting of unsystematised collections of works, or pieces of works, commonly dealing with such subjects as geography, the peoples of the world, the properties of stones, liturgical matters and computus (i.e. calculation, but in particular the art of calculating the correct dates of moveable feasts in the ecclesiastical year). AM 435 12mo, for example, includes sections on computus, the Icelandic calendar and the ceremonial of the Mass, but in addition its first fifteen folios are devoted to the subject of physiognomy.
As expressed pithily by the Peripatetic author of *Physiognomica*, long thought to be Aristotle himself, the basic proposition of the ancient and medieval science of physiognomy was that ‘dispositions follow bodily characteristics’ (Aristotle, *Minor Works* 1936, 85); in other words, the personality of a human individual can be perceived by observing the person’s physical appearance. This idea had been endorsed by the real Aristotle in the *Prior Analytics* (70b 7–38), which was available to the Middle Ages in a Latin translation by Boethius (*Aristoteles latinus* 1962, 5–139). The basis of physiognomy as understood by Aristotle was not simply the observation of human beings and their personalities but rather the drawing of analogies between humans and animals; as Ross’s commentary on Aristotle’s work (1949, 501) puts it, the methodology depends on ‘the inferring of mental characteristics in men from the presence in them of physical characteristics which in some other kind or kinds of animal go constantly with those mental characteristics’. Remnants of this way of thinking can be seen in the references to bears, horses, sea-monsters, snakes, birds, goats and spiders in the passage below (lines 6, 60, 63, 66, 69 and 95–96). For the Middle Ages, perhaps the most influential writer on physiognomy was Marcus Antonius Polemon (c.88–144), whose work on the subject is lost in its original Greek form but survives in Latin and Arabic translations and in a later Greek paraphrase. It is Polemon who is the ultimate source for the material included in the Old Norse passage reproduced here. Contrary to the impression given by Kålund (*Alfræði* III xv), however, the more direct source for the passage is a later Latin work based on Polemon, the *Anonymi de physiognomonia liber*, or something quite like it; this fact is shown by the sequence of the topics discussed, which is radically different from that of Polemon, and by the close correspondence of many sentences. Details of the correlation between the Icelandic text and the Latin works are given in the notes below.

In other types of Old Norse literature, such as sagas of Icelanders and eddic poems, it is quite common for physical characteristics to be mentioned in ways that may imply some kind of significance for the personality or social status of the people who bear them. An interesting topic for further study would be that of the differences and similarities between the beliefs implicit in such references and the system of physiognomic lore outlined here. This is not the place
to enter into such a study, but some pointers have been given in the accompanying notes.

The text is a normalised version of AM 435 12mo, folios 8r–13r, based on Kålund’s transcription (Alfræði III 98–103). The manuscript, which has been dated to c.1500, shares its physiognomic material with another encyclopedic manuscript from Iceland, the Codex Lindesianus (John Rylands University Library, Manchester, Icel I; = L), c.1473, which has been described by Eiríkur Magnússon (1896–97). The passage includes a high proportion of unusual vocabulary, noted by Eiríkur (pp. 11–14) and Kålund (Alfræði III xvi–xvii), including blauthærðr (line 3), fávitugr (line 80), fjórhyrndr (line 32), hugsanarmikill (line 2), ónæmi (line 46), rálítill (line 38; here emended to rólítill), stundanarmikill (line 19), útraudr (line 37), þunnhaerðr (line 3) and þykkhaerðr (line 4). The word trítli (line 39; MS trillti), which does not occur in L, is especially problematical; the reading given here is based on a suggestion made by Kålund (Alfræði III xvii).

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Physiognomy

Svá segja fornir frædimenn, at eptir náttúrligu eðli sé karlanna hugr skjótur ok ákafr í sinni fýst, íðjufullr ok hugsanarmikill, en kvenna hugr miskunnamsar ok óttagjarn. Blauthærðir menn ok þunnhærðir sýna skjótt hugvit; þykkhærðir menn síngjarnir ok óhræddir. Pat hár er þróngir mjók saman ok hrókr nokkut yfir enninu, sýnir grimman hug, ok því samþykkr hárferð á skógbjarnar hröði. Gulur lokkar, þykkvir ok nokkut ljósir, sýna mann ónæman. Dókkjarpir lokkar, ef þeir eru mátiligua þunnir, sýna góðsiðuga menn ok hægt skaplyndi.1

Hoðuð mjók mikit sýnir heimskan mann, en bollótt hoðuð ok skammt övitran ok óminnigan. Lítit hoðuð ok yfir ofan svá sem slétt sýnir lausungar mark ok óvenju. Aflangt hoðuð ok vaðit nokkut svá sem hamarr segir mann vera forsýjalan ok athugasaman.3

Enni þat er mjók er mjótt, segir mann vera ónæman ok grárótt; en þat er mjók er langt, segir lítil skynsemðargrein. Kringlótt enni sýnir reiðan mátt. Lítit enni ok niðrlútt sýnir óframan hug ok lýtalausan. Ferhýrnt enni með mátiligum mikilleik sýnir mann mikilhugaðan með mikilli vizku.4

Ef brún eru flar til bjúgar sem flær koma saman við nefit, merkja glöggván mann ok stundanarmikinn í öllum sínum gerðum; en ef þar verður nokkut mjótt medal, þat sýnir hryggan mann ok óvitran. En ef bjúgleikr brúnanna hneðgisk niðir til augna ok beri niðir af mjók þykkvír kinnr, merkir vanræktar hug. En ef brúna hár eru mjók lónig ok morg, þat merkir grimmann mann ok mikilhugaðan.5

Augu þau sem bjarþliga skína, segja til fagrferðugra sída; en ef þau eru östaðfóst, svá at þau renna stundum skjót, en stundum sé þau kyr, merkja illa hluti válkask í huginum ok vera eigi fram komna.6 Gul augu með skínandi birti merkja djarfann mann ok til illgerða vakran. Mikil augu skjálftandi ok svört merkja drykkjumann ok kvennammann.7 Augu hreinliga svört merkja östyrkan hug ok krapþlausan. Svört augu með rauðum dropum merkja réttlaðan hug, dyggan ok hugvitran.8 Þar sem í svörtum augum sýnask smádropar ákafliga rauðir ok nokkurir fjöðryndir ok nokkurir bleikir, en aðrir gulur, ok hringar þeir, er liggja útan um sjáldrin, hafi á sér blóðslikt, ok sé augun mikil ok birti sú sem fylgir sjáldrunum hrörisk svá sem hrörsk sjáldrin, þvílík augu merkja

12 athugan saman
Þann hug er um fram er allan hrædýra hátt, því at hvat er af óhæfunni má hugsat vera ór þvílíkum augum máttuligt at fremja, ok eigi munu varna við heimamannligu blöði. Þau augu sem mjök útrauð ok þó rólúti,9 birta stillinglarusan ok 〈ó-stoðugan líkam. Snór augu ok snör í trílí,10 ef þau eru vátn, sýna sannsóglan mann, skjótan ok forsíjan í sínnum gerðum. Pau augu sem optíla líkask upp ok aptr, sýna óttafullan hug ok vanmegnan.11 Augu mjök opin merkja heimsku ok óframa, en þau sem mjök eru lukt, merkja hrörlígan hug ok í óllum gjörðum sínnum óstaðfastan.

Eyru þau sem hátt standa ok eru mjök mikil, merkja athugaleysi, heimsku ok óvízku; en mjök lítil eyru hafa illgjórða mark. Mjök kringlótt eyru merkja ónæmi, en afþöng ok þragng merkja ófundar mark; þau sem liggja nær hofðinu sýna leti.12

Feitar kinnr ok mjök þykkvar merkja leti ok ofdrykkju, en hér er mjök eru þunnar merkja illgímr. Kringlóttar kinnr sýna ófund.13

Opnar nasir gefa af sér gleðimark ok styrktar, en þunnar ok langar óstaðfesti ok létteleika. Pat nef er niðr af enni ok fram er hvárki mjök hátt né lágt, heldr jafnt viðr sík ok rétt, sýnr af sér karlmannligt mark með staðfesti ok vízku. Nasir minni en hæfiligt er, er þjófa mark.14

Allt saman andlít, ef þat er kjótsfullt, þykkt ok feitt, merkir óflrifnaðar mark ok munhúgðar. Bjúgleitt andlít visar til undirferli ok vælar meðr sléggð.15

Þunnar varrir, ef hin efri er nökkur meiri en hin niðri, sýnr mikil-hugaðan mann ok sterkan; en þunnar varrir meðr lítil munni sýna óstyrkan hug ok slégan. Ef varrir hanga nökkut svá niðr frá munninum, sýna óþrifnaðar mark, því at þat mark fénnsk á ösnum ok hestum. Lítill munnr hœfri kvenna áliti og þeim hugum er kvennligir eru. Sá munnr er um fram hátt er viðr, sýnr mann gráðgan, ómjúkan ok ómiðlan, því at svá mikit gin hœfri sjóskrímslum.16

Haka sú er nökkut svá er lóngr, sýnr maninn miðr reiðan ok miðr skelfðan. Þeir sem hafa lítil höku eru ómjúkir ok ófundsjúkir; þessa sagði meistari Plato höggormum líka. Nytsamlígra manna haka er vel máttuliga mikil ok nökkut svá ferhyrð. Sú haka er mjök er lóngr, sýnr pretttóttan hug.17

Sú rödd er lík er fugla rödd eðr geita sýnr heimsku mark, en þeir er sínna rödd hefja upp á fugla hátt, eru leittir ok auðveldir. Sú rödd sem er óstyrk ok nökkut grátlög, sýnr hryggun ok grunsemðarfullan hug. Þeira
manna rødd er rennr í nefit, svá at nefit samhljóði røddinni, þeir eru
lygnir ok illgjarnir ok fagna annarra illgjørðum.18

Langr háls ok þunnir merkir þann er illt hugsar. Krínglótttr háls sýnir
hugur kraft ok líkams líttillaeti. Skammr háls er mark þess er djarfr er.
Sá háls er mjökk berr sík réttan sýnir övenju ok þrjótlyndi.19

Brjóst þat sem lengra er en kviðrinn, sýnir vitran mann.20 Brjóst þat
sem með kviðinum er hult miklu hári, merkir östðugan mann útan sið-
læti ok mildi. Brjóst þat er mjökk er hult miklu kjöti, segir ónæma mann
ok fávituga, en ef eitt saman brjóstit hefir hárít, sýnir hugfullan mann.21

Punnar herðar ok uppréttar vísa til þess mans er gjarna síttr um aðra.22

Armleggir, ef þeir eru svá langir at þá er maðrinn stendr með réttum
líkama, taki lengstu fingr mjökk til knjá, þó at áðrir fingr taki eigi jafnlangt,
sýnir líttillaeta menn ok styrsa; en ef fingr eru eigi lengri en á mjoðömina
eda líttla lengra, sýnir illgjarna menn þá er fagna annarra illgjörðum.23

Mjökk skammar hendr ok litlar sýna styrrka menn ok vituga. Feitar
hendr ok meir skammir fingr en hæfiligt er, birta mann ómerkan. Snúnar
hendr ok þunnir sýna málgan mann ok gráðgan. Hvítir negl ok blautir,
sléttr ok þunnir ok líttat rjóðir harðla vel skínandi, segja it hæsta hugvit;
bjúgir negl sýna óvittra ok gráðga. Mjökk samfelldir fingr sýna illgjarman
ok ágjarman, en litlir fingr ok feítir segja djarfan ok ofundsjúkan.
Litlir fingr ok þunnir sýna heiður men.24

Punnar ok þrungvar síður sýna hræddan mann, en kjötmiklar ok
harðar sýna mann ónæman; því eru þar af spekingum kalladar kongur-
váfum líkar.25

Sá hlutr fótleggjar sem undir knénu er, kallask at bókmáli sura; ef
þar er fullt mjökk, svá at þat þyngi fótinn, merkir mann stillingarlausen
ok óhreinan. Blautar surae eru kvensligar.26

Feitir föetr ok skammir sína mjökk óstyrkan mann, en mjökk langir
pretottan, mjökk þunnir ok skammir illgjarman. Þeir er langa föetr hafa
ok stíga hátt ok langt, eru vanir at vera mikilhugaðir menn ok fljótverkr.
Sá er fljótliga geigr ok haldi sér þó svá aptr, lýtr niðr, sem hann beri
allan líkaman bjúgan,27 merkir ofundsjúkan ok slegan. Sá sem hefir
skamma föetr ok berr þá skjótliga, er sagðr vera illgjar ok óstyrkr.28
Svartr skinnslitr segir mann slegan, en hvítr skinnslitr ok nökku
rjóðir segir styrrka menn ok hugfulla. Ákafliga hvítr skinnslitr með bleikum
merkir þrotnanda kraft ok óstyrkt af ofkaldri náttúru. Eldislig skinnslitr
Notes

1 For the probable source of this sentence see Anonymi de physiognomonia liber 4 (hereafter Anon., all references being to section numbers).

2 For the material on hair see Anon. 14, which includes the reference to the bear (ursus) whereas Polemon ch. XL specifies only a likeness to a wild animal (similitudo ferae agrestis). In connection with this topic it should be noted that hair curling over the forehead seems to have been regarded as an ugly feature in medieval Iceland, since in Kormaks saga (ÍF VIII 210) Steingerðr Þorkelsdóttir refers to this characteristic as the one blemish in the otherwise handsome Kormakr. An emphasis on particularly beautiful hair, however, is often taken to indicate points at which Old Norse literature has been influenced by European romance traditions, as in the case of the description of Sigurðr in Völsunga saga (ed. R. G. Finch 1965, 41), which is probably based on a passage in Pidreks saga (ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954, 255), the latter work being a translation of some German romance. See also the descriptions of various characters in Trójumanna saga (ed. Jonna Louis-Jensen 1963, 64–70), an Icelandic work that dates from the first half of the thirteenth century and is based on a well-known Latin text that the Middle Ages ascribed to Dares Phrygius; the passage gives prominence to the hair colour of each person mentioned, though it is not clear whether personality traits are to be inferred from the descriptions. Colouring, however, is definitely associated with social status, and hence character type, in the eddic poem Rígsþula, which has been dated as early as the eleventh century or as late as the mid-thirteenth and which gives black hair to the prototypical þreilli, whereas it declares the original jarl to have been blond. It is most likely that nobility and beauty are the associations that the author of Njáls saga (ÍF XII 53) has in mind when he says that Gunnarr Hámundarson had thick golden hair, rather than the characteristic that could be inferred from the physiognomic text above.

3 Anon. 16. See also Polemon XXX.
Anon. 17. See also Polemon XXVII.

Anon. 18. See also Polemon XLVIII.

The material on eyes is a greatly abridged version of Anon. 21–44 (see also Polemon I) generally conforming to the sequence of topics in the Latin text but with interpolations. The sources of individual statements, where it has been possible to identify them, are indicated in the notes that follow. The two parts of the paragraph’s first sentence are from Anon. 21 and 23 respectively.

This and the following sentence concerning black eyes are from Anon. 27, which includes references to wild beasts and the slaying of close kindred, which may be reflected in the references to hrædýra hátrr and heimamannlít blóð in lines 35 and 37. In Old Norse literature there is an association between black eyes and Icelandic poets: in Kormaks saga (ÍF VIII 211) the eponymous skald says Svört augu berk in a stanza replying to criticism of this feature made by a handmaid of Steingerð Pórkelsdóttir, the object of the poet’s love; and Heimskringla (ÍF XXVII 140) preserves a stanza by Sigvatr Pórðarson referring to augun þessi íslenzk . . . svörtu, apparently replying to a comment made by a woman in the court of Rǫgnvaldr jarl of Gautland, to the effect that Sigvatr has come with his black eyes to gain the gold ring that the jarl gives him. The latter exchange seems to be somewhat flirtatious, as is the comment in Kormaks saga; but it may also imply an accusation of avarice on the part of the poet, which would accord with the statement in Anon. 27, omitted in the Old Norse text above, that black eyes lucri avidum indicant ‘indicate a person greedy for gain’.

The MS reading rálítill, though it is explained by Eiríkur Magnússon as an otherwise unrecorded term meaning something like ‘with rather indistinct corners’ (rá f. corner), is more likely to be an error in the archetype for rólítill, which fits the context much better.

The MS reading ‘trillti’ is not a known word in Icelandic, but Kålund in the introduction to Alfræði III (p. xviii) suggests a link with Norwegian trilla, trilta ‘toddle, run’, Modern Icelandic trítila ‘mince,
trot’. Cf. also trítill ‘top’; ‘urchin’. It might then be dative of trítill m., meaning ‘small movements’, and here it has accordingly been emended to tríli. Alternatively the word might be *trilt n., with the same meaning, and the text would then require no emendation.

11 Anon. 41.

12 Anon. 47. See also Polemon XXIX.

13 Anon. 49. See also Polemon XXVIII.

14 Anon. 51, but here the correspondence is closer to Polemon XXVI, which includes a reference to the mark of thieves. Note that in Njáls saga (ÍF XII 7) it is the eyes rather than the nose that can carry physical signs of a propensity to commit theft, since Hrútr Herjólfsson, on seeing Hallgerðr Þóskuldsdóttir for the first time, asks hvaðan þjófsaugu eru komin í ættir várar ‘whence thief’s eyes are come into our family’.

15 Anon. 50. See also Polemon XXVIII.

16 Anon. 48, but the passage is closer to Polemon XXV, which includes a reference to crocodiles, corresponding to sjóskrimsl.

17 Anon. 52 refers to snakes but not to Plato; Polemon XXIV does not mention either.

18 The material on the voice corresponds to Anon. 78, though the Latin text refers to sheep rather than geitr. Polemon LII mentions neither sheep nor goats.

19 Anon. 53–55, Polemon XXIII. There appears to be some confusion or corruption here as both Latin texts declare a short neck to be a sign of timidity.

20 Anon. 63. See also Polemon XV.

21 Anon. 73. See also Polemon XLIV.

22 Anon. 58. This statement is not present in the corresponding passage of Polemon, XX.
23 Anon. 59. See also Polemon XXI.

24 Anon. 59–60. See also Polemon III–IV. Concerning the words samfelldir fingr, Kálund (Alfræði III xvii) declares that they answer to the phrase digitos cum unguibus cohaerantes ‘joined fingers with nails’ in Polemon IV; in fact, however, the sentence in which they occur is a rendering of digiti cum coniuncti sunt et cohaerent, immundum hominem significant ‘when fingers are conjoined and cohere, they signify an impure man’ (Anon. 60). The phrase litlir fingr ok feitir, in the emended text above, corresponds to digiti . . . parvi et crassi ‘small and thick fingers’ in Anon. 60 and provides a clear antithesis with litlir fingr ok þunnir, which correspond to digiti . . . parvi et tenues ‘small and slender fingers’.

25 Anon. 65. The Latin word corresponding to kongurváfa is rana ‘frog’. This is not in Polemon, and it is possible that the Latin text used by the Norse compiler had a spelling for rana that he took for the Greek άράχνη ‘spider’, and he perhaps understood the simile to refer to thinness of limbs. At this point the Old Norse text omits material relating to the back, lower spine, pelvis, thigh and knee found in Anon. 66–70.

26 Anon. 71 mentions σφυρα ‘ankles’ rather than sura ‘calf’. The final sentence, to the effect that soft calves are womanish, corresponds to one in Anon. 72, which actually refers to feet. See also Polemon VII.

27 ‘. . . and yet holds himself backwards, bowing down, so that he carries his whole body curved.’ This rather confusing description appears to mean that the person bends himself in the middle with head and knees forward, putting his body in the shape of a C.

28 The first sentence of this paragraph corresponds to one in Anon. 72; the rest relates to Anon. 75. See also Polemon V and L.

29 Anon. 79. See also Polemon XXXVI. The phrase með bleikum (line 106) does not have a correlative in the corresponding sentences of either Latin text.
XXIV: KONUNGS SKUGGSJÁ

Konungs skuggsjá, or Speculum regale, was written in Norway, most probably in the 1250s, in the form of a dialogue between a father and his son, the former answering the latter’s questions. It is in three parts, the first dealing with matters of interest to a merchant, the second with life at court and how a king’s retainer should behave, and the third with the duties of the king, especially his duties as a judge. The work is anonymous, but it may safely be assumed that the author was a cleric closely associated with the royal circle, who probably wrote his ‘king’s mirror’ for the enlightenment of King Hákon Hákonarson’s sons, Hákon the Young (1232–57) and Magnús (1238–80), the latter of whom, Magnús the Lawmender, succeeded his father in 1263.

Konungs skuggsjá is preserved in some sixty manuscripts, both Norwegian and Icelandic; their interrelationship is discussed in Holm-Olsen 1952, 116–79 and Holm-Olsen 1987, 12–17. The text of the extract below reflects that of the so-called main manuscript, AM 243 b α fol., as edited in Holm-Olsen 1983, 48–49; it has also been collated with the relevant folios (62–64) of that manuscript as edited in facsimile by Flom (1915). The manuscript was written in Norway, most probably in Bergen, in c.1275 (Holm-Olsen 1983, xii). In the extract as edited here, Norwegian spellings and word-forms have been retained, as in the extract from Fagrskinna (cf. p. 59 above), though with the main differences that short, open e is represented by ø (corresponding to the long sound æ), and the Norwegian i-mutation of au by øy (often written øy).

The extract, from the second part of Konungs skuggsjá, is of great historical sociolinguistic interest for the light it throws on the uses of the singular, dual and plural forms of the first and second person pronouns (cf. Gr 3.2, 3.2.1) in the spoken language(s) of Norway and Iceland in the thirteenth century (cf. Gr 1.2). As Helgi Guðmundsson (1972, 39) notes: ‘Of course the usage in question may not have been precisely the same in Iceland as in Norway, but in view of the close connections between the two countries at that time it cannot have been widely divergent.’ The father is here advising the son on the appropriate uses of the pronominal forms. The plural is to be used in addressing the king (lines 3–4) or an influential person (57–58) or someone who deserves respectful treatment (61), such as a chieftain (72–75); this has become established as the custom among wise and
courteous men (59–60). One should however guard against using the plural with reference to oneself when speaking to the king (4–6), or (it is implied) to anyone of higher rank than oneself, lest it be thought that one considers oneself the equal of such a person (82–84). Even when talking to an equal or to an inferior one should not seek to elevate oneself by speaking of oneself in the plural (84–86). Only a fool would refer to himself in the plural and to the king in the singular when addressing the king (4–6).

In other words, the first and second person plural forms, used respectively with reference to oneself and to the one addressed, are both felt to be honorific. Although in Konungs skuggsjá as a whole the father and son do not always follow in their own dialogue the father’s recommendations as given here, as Helgi Guðmundsson (1972, 41) has noted, they do so in the extract itself: the son uses the plural in addressing the father (lines 22–23, 54), while referring to himself in the singular (22, 24, 50, 54), and the father addresses the son in the singular (1–10, 12–13, 25–26, 30, 47–49, 82–85), while also referring to himself in the singular (25–26, 29–32). It is true that the father uses first person plural forms at lines 28, 34, 40 and 42, but it seems clear that in doing so here he is speaking neither of himself as an individual, nor of just himself and his son, but of mankind (or at least Christendom) in general. When he is speaking of just himself and his son, on the other hand, he uses dual forms, as at lines 47 and 49. In this last respect, i.e. in using the dual to refer to just themselves, father and son are not entirely consistent, either, in Konungs skuggsjá as a whole, as Helgi Guðmundsson (1972, 46) has also noted, though Helgi’s examples give the impression that the father is more consistent in this respect than the son. In the brief speech within the father’s speech with which the extract opens, where the father is indicating to the son how the king should be addressed (lines 10–12), the father naturally follows his own rules in presenting the son as addressing the king in the plural and as referring to himself in the singular.

There is however one exception to the father’s rule that a superior should be addressed in the plural, as the son diffidently points out to him (lines 15–24), i.e. that it is customary to address God in the second person singular. At lines 18–19 and 20–21 the son gives examples of what his experience has led him to regard as, respectively, the correct and incorrect uses of the personal pronoun in addressing the Almighty.
The father’s reply, which is also somewhat diffident, since he claims that this is a matter more for theologians than for him (25–29), confirms by implication the accuracy of the son’s observation in acknowledging that the question here raised deserves an answer (29–31). The father then explains this particular usage in terms of the singularity of the Christian God as opposed to other gods (32–39), an explanation which accords interestingly with one recently offered, in the context of the history of English but expressed in relatively general terms, by Smith (1991, 135). It may however be noted that Strang (1970, 139–40), also writing in the context of English while expressing herself in general terms, explains this usage by reference not to so much to the singularity of God as to His specialness. Once the use of the plural pronoun for polite address to a single person has been introduced into a language, she argues, it is likely to snowball, since in cases of doubt one would rather be polite than risk giving offence. The use of the plural to a single human superior would thus acquire the status of what Strang calls a central function, from which the use of the singular in addressing God, who is regarded as a special case, would become an exception.

In response to the question, asked by the son at lines 14–15 and again at lines 54–57, of why influential people should be addressed in the plural, the father justifies this on the grounds, firstly, that it is an old-established practice (57–61), and secondly that the plural form of address appropriately reflects the plurality of the responsibilities of those addressed. Chieftains, for example, are responsible for many more people than just themselves and their households (61–75), and the king does not function alone, but is surrounded by a retinue of counsellors (77–81). This explanation of the use of the plural in addressing a superior also accords interestingly with explanations by modern writers on language as to how this practice may have arisen. Pointing out that the polite use of the plural to refer to a single addressee ‘seems to be very general in unrelated languages’ (including Hungarian, Quechua, Tamil and many African languages), Brown and Levinson (1987, 198–99, cf. 202) suggest two possible motives for it: first, it provides the addressee with a ‘let-out’ in allowing him, theoretically at least, to interpret the address as not necessarily directed specifically at him; and second, it enhances his sense of status in treating him as the representative of a group rather than as a relatively powerless individual. Comparable to this second motive would be the motivation
for the use of the high-status or ‘royal’ first person plural ‘we’, against the use of which, in the extract (lines 4–6, 82–86), the father advises the son, the implication being that it is appropriately used only by people of very high or responsible status.

Brown and Gilman (1960, 255–61) described the semantic evolution, as they saw it, of second person singular and plural pronoun forms, calling them respectively T and V (from Latin tu and vos) in French, English, Italian, Spanish and German, and maintaining that in these languages a set of norms crystallised in T and V usage at different stages between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. This set of norms, which they called the power semantic, involved the downward and upward use of T and V, respectively, between people of unequal social status, and the use of V and T respectively between equals of the upper and lower classes. (A later development, they argued, was the solidarity semantic, whereby an intimate T came to be used between people not necessarily of equal status but sharing the same views and/or behaviour dispositions; they left unexplained, however, the use of T for addressing God.) Helgi Guðmundsson (1972, 60–61) noted examples in Old Norse-Icelandic of a distinction between ordinary (i.e. non-honorific) and honorific uses of the first and second person pronouns from as early as the tenth century (in skaldic poetry), attributing it to influence from Central and Southern Europe, while at the same time recognising it as a widely attested feature; he also showed (1972, 94–99) that, in Icelandic, an increased honorific use of the second person plural pronoun in the seventeenth century led to the need for an unequivocally defined ‘ordinary’ plural. As a result, the second person dual pronouns gradually acquired plural meaning, as did also, mainly by analogy, the first person dual pronouns. Thus the Icelandic dual pronouns lost their dual meanings and came to be used as ordinary plurals, whereas the old plural forms vér, pérr etc. were reserved exclusively for honorific use. The resulting situation is reflected in present-day Icelandic by the use of viðr (< við) ‘we’ and þiðr (< þið) ‘you’ in plural meanings, and by the genitive forms okkar, ykkar in the meanings ‘our’ and ‘your’ (pl.) respectively; honorific vér and pérr, however, are now found for the most part only in the written language. Icelandic is unusual in using old dual forms in plural meanings, but a parallel development has taken place in Faroese (Helgi Guðmundsson 1972, 122–24).
XXIV: Konungs skuggsjá

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XXIV: KONUNGS SKUGGSJÁ

Faðir: . . . Nú kann svá til at þéta at konungr mælir til þín nokkur orð,1 þá skalt þú þat varaz vandliga í andsvørum þínum at eigi margfaldir þú engi þau atkvæði er til þín horfa, þó at þú margfaldir svá sem til byrjar óll þau atkvæði er til konungs horfur.2 En enn hældr skaltu þat varaz, sem fól kann stundum at henda, at eigi margfaldir þú þau atkvæði er til þín horfa, en þú einfaldir þau er til konungsins horfa.

En eft svá kann til at verða at konungr mælir til þín nokkur orð, þau er þú némir eigi ok þarftu annat sinni eptir at fréttu, þá skalt þu hvárki segja ‘há’ né ‘hvát’, hældr skalt þú ekki meira um hafa en kvēđa svá at orði: ‘Hērra’. En eft þú vilt hældr spyrja með fleirum orðum: ‘Hērra minn, látið yðr eigi firi þykja at ek spyrja hvát þér mæltur til mín, því at <ek> nam þi gorla.’ Ok lát þek þó sem fæstum sinnum þat henda at konungr þurfi optar en um sinn orð at hérma firi þér aðr en þú némir.

Sunr: Hvær skynsemd er til þess at þá er þetr at óll atkvæði sé margfaldat, þau er mæla skal til ríkismanna, hældr en einfaldat? En eft maðr biðr beinar sinnar til Guðs, er allum er frémrí ok hæri, þá eru einfaldat í hverri bonn þá þau atkvæði er til hans horfa, ok kvēðr svá at orði hvērr er sína bonn flytr við Guð: ‘Pú, Dróttinn minn, allsvalandandi Guð, höyrðu bonn mína ok miskunna mek betr en ek sé vē<o>dr’. En engan mann höyri ek svá taka til orðs: ‘Pér, Dróttinn minn, höyrið bonn mína ok gørið þetr við mik firi sakar miskunnar yðarrar en ek sé vēdr’.

Nú veit <ek> eði at allfröddlig sé spurning mín. En þó, með því at þér hafið lofat mér at spyrja slíks sem mek forvitnar, þá vænti ek þó góðrar órlausnar sem fyrr, þó at ek spyrri þønskliga.

Faðir: Víst vil ek þat gjarra allt firi þér skýra er ek em til fórr, en eigi veit ek hví þú forvitnar þetta mál svá gjörsamlega við mek at firi þat skal skynsemd væita hversu atkvæðum er skipat í helgum bonum, því at lærifður várir mundu þar kunna þetr svara um þá luti er til guðdómsins er en ek. En með því at hver spurning lítr jamnan til svara, þá vil ek skýra þetta mál firi þér með skjótri reðu, svá sem mér sýniz vænligast, ok vil ek því fyst svara er mér þykk viðaetast væra.

Nú ætla ek firi því svá skipat atkvæðum í helgum bonum at hældr sé einfaldat en margfaldat ákall guðlegs nafs, at allir þeir er á Guð trúra skili þat til fulls at vér trúum á éinn Guð sannan, en eigi á marga falsguða, sem heiðnir menn trúdu forðum á sjau guða. Kallaðu svá at
činn guð stýrði himnaríki, en annarr himintunglum, hinn þríði þessum heimi ok ávextum jardar, hinn fjórði hófum ok vótnum, en hinn fímti vindum ok lofti, hinn sétti mannviti ok málsþeki, en hinn sjauindi hleviti ok dauða.3

Nú skulum vèr firi því göfga činn Guð, þann er allar sképnur þjóna, ok biðja til hans með einföldu atkvæði, at eð þýðiz flærðsimar guðar til várra ákalla firi þat at vèr margfaldim atkvæði at fleiri væri guð en činn i ákalli guðlegs nafns.4 Peðsir lutur ganga ok til at skammsýnir menn mætti þat hyggja at fleiri vèr i guð en činn eð með margfaldadu atkvæði væri á hans nafn kallat, ok er þat réttliga tilskipat ok vitrlega at einföld trú ok heilög hafi ekki rúm eða villustíg at ganga af rétrri þjöðgatu. Nú eð þér skilz eði til fulls þessi reða, þá meðum vèn þenn fleira til finna. En eð þessi reða má þek leiða til fullrar skilningar, þá meðum vèl vèkja okkarri reðu til andsvara um þá luti aðra er þú spurdír.

Sunr: Peðsir lutur skiljaz mér vèl ok þykki mér vèra bæði sannligir ok þó nauðsynlegir at firi því skal5 hèldr einfaldaz en margfaldaz òll atkvæði til Guðs at hvárki meði rétt trú spillaþ firi margfalt atkvæði ok eði meði slægir úvinir undir þýðaz þat ákall er einföld trú ok rétt vísar þeim ífrá. En ek vil nú at þer skýríþ þat firi mér er ek spurdí um vèraldar ríkismenn, hví òll atkvæði þètti þètr til þeirra margfaldat en einfaldat?

Fādir: Þar er þó eðru firi svarat, at firi þá sok þykki þètr vèra mælt til ríkismanna með margfaldu atkvæði hèldr en einfaldu, at høveðskir menn hafa þat funnit firi andvèðu, ok hèfim þat síðan snúiz til síðvenju meðr allum vitrum mønnum ok høveðskum þeim til sømdar søm vèð er mælt, ok til þess er kominn at þíggja sømdar atkvæði. En þættu eðni funnu þeir til, er frá andvèðu skipaðu þessum atkvæðum, at ríkismenn eru eði søm eðingverr annarra, sá er firi sér eðinum þèrr áhyggjum ok sínu hýsí ok á firi fà menn svør at vèta. En høfðingjar þéra áhyggjum firi òllum þeim er undir þeim eru at þjónustu eða at vèldi, ok hafa þeir eði eðis mæns svør í munni, hèldr eði þeir firi marga svør at vèta, ok eð göðr høfðingi fèll fírra, þá er eði søm eðis mæns missi, hèldr er þat mikil missa allum þeim er af honum tóku upphald eða sømdir, ok er søm allir vèrði minni firi sér, síðan er þeir missa høfðingja síns, en þeir vèru mèðan hann lífði, nema því at eðis at þá komi annarr í stað er þeim só jamvèl viljaðr søm hinn er frá fell.
Nú með því at hófðingjar halda upp með mórgum hvártveggja sæmdum ok andsvormum ok margfaldri áhyggju, þá er þat vel til leggjandi þeim til sæmdar at kenna þá með margfóldu atkvæði í allri rœðu frá því er til þeirra þarf at rœða er smæri eru ok minni firi sér.6 En þessir lutir eru þeir enn er þá váru til funnir eða huggleiddir, er þetta var fyrsta sinni til síðar tækit, at konungar eða aðrir ríkismenn þá eru eði eðir saman í ráðagerð sinni, hældr hafa þeir með sér marga aðra vitra mænn ok gofga; ok man þá svá sýnaz, ef til hófðingja verðr mælt meðr margfaldu atkvæði, at þá sé eði til konungs eðis mælt, hældr til allra þeirra er í ráðagerð eru með hánum ok hans eru ráðgjarar. Ek gat þess ok nokkut í hinu fyrra orði at þú skalt viðr því sjá at þú margfaldir annur þau atkvæði er til þín horfa, at eði viðir þú þek jamnan hinum er þú rœðir viðr ok meiri er en þú. En þó at þú rœðir viðr jammaka þinn eða minna mann en þú sér, þá bær þér þek sjálftum at virða þik með margfaldaðu atkvæði.
Notes

1 Nú followed by verb and subject in inverted word order, even when the verb is not subjunctive, makes the opening clause conditional (‘Now if it should come about that . . .’), and the main clause usually then opens with a correlative þá or ok. There are three examples of this in the extract from Grágás, XXVII:12, 16, 45 below.

2 Lack of concord between subject and verb is not all that uncommon in Old Norse prose, but it is normally found only when the subject and verb are widely separated in the sentence and the verb precedes the subject (as in lines 16–17, where the lack of concord is between subject and participle, and 51–52), and especially when the subject consists of a sequence of conjoined subjects (see NION I, 3.9.8.2). There are examples in other texts in this book in I:26–27 (see commentary), XIX:23, XXI:18, 32 and 161. But it is remarkable that in this extract there are several examples of lack of concord where the verb does not precede the subject, as here and in lines 14–15 (where the lack of concord is again between subject and participle) and 28–29. Even though another of the principal manuscripts of this text, AM 243 a 4to, has regular concord in all these cases except the one corresponding to that of lines 28–29, where it has horfír instead of er, it seems unlikely that they are all the result of scribal error. Nor does it seem a possible solution to take the verbs in lines 4, 14–15 and 29 as impersonal, especially since horfa is clearly not impersonal in lines 3 and 17, and nor is eru éinfaldat in line 16. What is further remarkable in this text is that the first three examples all concern the word atkvæði ‘verbal expression’ ‘mode of address’. Since it is an abstract noun, the plural may not have been perceived to have any difference in meaning from the singular, and the grammatical plural may well have been taken by the scribe on occasion as a ‘logical singular’.

3 According to Finnur Jónsson (‘Indledning’, 1920, 60), it is the gods of classical (as opposed to Old Norse) mythology that are meant here; he tentatively suggests that the seven gods in question are, respectively, Jupiter, Sol, Liber (or Saturn), Neptune, Mercury, Apollo and Pluto. He also offers the alternative suggestion that the deities in question may be those associated with the days of the week, without, however, making it clear whether he is thinking of classical or Germanic deities in
this context. On the former, see Graves (1958, 15–17, 27–30, 258–60); on the latter, see Hagen (1836) and Strutynski (1975).

4 The syntax of this rather tortuous sentence is not entirely clear. While *firi því . . . at* in lines 40–41 can be taken to mean ‘for this reason . . . that’, i.e. ‘so that’, ‘in order that’ and *firi þat at* in line 42 to mean ‘because’, ‘as a result of the fact that’, the second *at* in line 42 perhaps means ‘as if’, ‘on the assumption that’.

5 Cf. note 2.

6 It is difficult to see how the last clause links to the rest of the sentence, and if the *er* is relative, what the antecedent is. The meaning may be ‘. . . in every speech about what needs to be spoken to them (by those who) are lower in rank and of less importance’ or ‘. . . in every speech about what needs to be spoken to them when they (the speakers) are lower in rank and of less importance’. On the other hand, Finnur Jónsson (1926, 84) and Meissner (1944, 121; though not Larsson 1917, 190) understand *frá* to mean ‘as distinct from’ and take *peirra* as the antecedent of the particle *er* that occurs later in the line, giving a meaning something like ‘. . . in all speech, as distinct from (differently from?) the speech needed for addressing those who are lower in rank and of less importance’.
Hamðismál is the last poem in the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda, and its content forms the last episode in the legend cycle of Sigurðr and the Burgundian royal family, of whom Guðrún, Hamðir and Sörli are the last survivors.

It is probably one of the earliest surviving eddic poems, although in an anonymous traditional poem it is always possible that different stanzas may be of various dates and authorship. However, it has been convincingly argued by Magnus Olsen (1936, 123–30) and Ursula Dronke (1969, 214–17) that this poem is deliberately echoed several times in some skaldic verses attributed to Torf-Einarr, Jarl of Orkney, which probably date from around 890 (Skj B I 27–28). In celebrating his own revenge for the killing of his father by Hálfdannr, son of King Haraldr hárfagri of Norway, Einarr refers to himself as a fjórðungr ‘quarter’ of the force represented by himself and his brothers (Torf-Einarr st. 2/4), just as Hamðismál refers to the brothers decreasing their force at fjórðungi ‘by a third’ (line 55). This image of brothers forming equal fractions of an overall unit is not found elsewhere in ON verse. Immediately after this, Einarr tells his men to throw stones on the body of his dead enemy (st. 2/5–8) and then declares how glad he is that geirar . . . bitu ‘spears bit’ the ruler’s son (st. 3/1–4). This looks like a deliberately ironic echo of Jörmunrekkr’s recognition that geirar ne bíta ‘spears do not bite’ the brothers and they must be stoned (line 92); again, the combination of geirar with the verb bíta is not found anywhere else in ON verse. Finally, looking forward to further conflict, Einarr says that his enemies do not know hverr ilflorna arnar / undir hlýtr at standa ‘who will have to stand under the heel-thorns (i.e. claws) of the eagle’ (st. 4/7–8); this is probably indebted to lines 106–07 of Hamðismál, as we can see from the verb standa, which seems surprising in Einarr’s verse but makes perfect sense in Hamðismál’s image of the heroes standing on the dead like eagles perching on the slain.

More tentatively, Dronke suggests (1969, 213–14) that some lines of Hamðismál may already have been familiar to the earliest known skaldic poet, Bragi Boddason (flourished c.850). Bragi’s Ragnarsdrápa is a poem of thanks to his patron for the gift of a ceremonial shield painted with mythological and legendary scenes, one of which was the brothers’ attack on Jörmunrekkr’s hall (Ragnarsdrápa 3–6, Skj B I 1–2). One phrase in Ragnarsdrápa (3/5) resembles Hamðismál 83 (rósta varð í
ranni ‘there was tumult in the hall’), and the image of the qóskálir ‘ale-cups’ (Ragnarsdrápa 4/5–6, Hamðismál 83–84) rolling among the blood and severed limbs is similar in the two poems. However, both of these may have been commonplace elements that could be expected in any poetic description of this scene, and in other respects Bragi’s account seems significantly different from the version in Hamðismál. For example, he seems to say that Jórmunrekkr was asleep when the brothers arrived in his hall. It seems most likely that Ragnarsdrápa and Hamðismál are independent of each other, and therefore that Hamðismál (or at least major elements of it) should be dated to c.890 or a little earlier.

Like some other early eddic poems (e.g. Atlakviða), Hamðismál, from the standpoint of the ‘classical’ Icelandic poetry of the late tenth century onwards, is rather irregular in metre, with stanzas and lines of varying lengths. Most of it is in the traditional fornyrðislag metre, ‘the metre of ancient words (or deeds?)’, with two stressed syllables in each half-line, usually with only one of those in the first half-line bearing alliteration. One stanza is in the radically different ljóðaháttr ‘metre of (magic) songs’, in which each pair of half-lines is followed by a single heavy half-line that alliterates only within itself (lines 102–05; see note 35). Some individual half-lines, while not technically irregular, show heavy concentrations of unstressed syllables including unstressed finite verbs (e.g. lines 21a, 62a). Line 66 has no alliteration at all, but this may be due to a nom. pl. noun or adjective having dropped out of the first half-line. Elsewhere, the alliteration does not always conform to the conventions of later Icelandic verse, and hr- is made to alliterate with r- in line 90, hv- with v- in line 100 (but with h- in lines 12 and 73) and sv- with s- in lines 9 and 32. The normal rule is that it is the first stressed syllable in the second half-line (i.e. the third in the whole line) that carries the alliteration, but in lines 77, 78 and 88 the alliteration is carried by the final stressed syllable of the line. This may be because the word order of these lines has been subject to scribal alteration. Line 32 has double transverse alliteration (Hitt – hyggju, Sórtl – svinna), but this is probably a deliberate ornament rather than an irregularity. The poem is in a bad state of preservation, and many of these ‘irregularities’ may be the result of scribal corruption; others may be due to the early date of composition, when the rules may not have developed the strictness that became customary
in later Icelandic poetry. Since the poem shows great brilliance in other respects, it is unlikely that they reflect the incompetence or carelessness of the poet.

The legend of the death of Jormunrekkr grew out of the fall of the historical Ostrogothic king Ermanaric in 375 AD. According to his contemporary, the historian Ammianus Marcellinus (1935–39, Book xxxi, ch. 3; Hamilton 1986, 415), Ermanaric was a warlike king whose many heroic exploits had made him a terror to his neighbours. Ermanaric was hard hit by the violence of this unexpected storm (i.e. an invasion by the Huns). For some time he endeavoured to stand his ground, but exaggerated reports circulated of the dreadful fate which awaited him, and he found release from his fears by taking his own life. Ammianus clearly does not tell the whole story of the historical events, and perhaps did not know the details, but the king’s terrified suicide seems surprising, for his successors did not immediately collapse before the Hunnish onslaught, but organised an orderly retreat to the line of the River Dniester. This suggests that the historical Ermanaric may have been decrepit with age or physically disabled, though we have no contemporary evidence for or against this.

The next source on Ermanaric is the Ostrogothic historian Jordanes, who wrote his Getica c.550, basing his work on that of Cassiodorus (who was also of Gothic origin and wrote c.520, i.e. about 150 years after the events). Jordanes’s account runs as follows (1882, 91–92, §§ 315–19; my translation):

Hermanaricus King of the Goths had, as we related above, become the conqueror of many peoples, but while he was thinking what to do about the arrival of the Huns, the perfidious nation of the Rosomoni, whom he had then enslaved along with others, took this opportunity of betraying him. And so the King, stirred up with rage, ordered that a certain woman of that nation who is remembered by the name Sunilda should be tied to wild horses because of her husband’s treacherous desertion of him, and that she should be torn to pieces by having them driven in different directions. In vengeance for their sister, her brothers Sarus and Ammius attacked Hermanaricus in the side with iron; wounded in this way, he dragged out his wretched life with a disabled body. Hearing of his miserable state, Balamber King of the Huns moved his forces into the territory of the Ostrogoths; certain Visigoths had also planned among themselves to separate themselves from alliance with the Ostrogoths.
Meanwhile Hermanaricus, unable to bear either the pain of his wound or the incursions of the Huns, died at a great age and full of days in the one hundred and tenth year of his life. His death gave the Huns the opportunity to gain victory over those Goths who, as we have said, occupied the eastern region and were known as Ostrogoths.

This account introduces the prototypes of Svanhildr, Ham›ím and S›rli and the sibling relationship between them, although it makes Svanhildr the wife of a rebellious tribal leader rather than of the J›rmunrekkr figure himself. It also gives her a manner of death similar to that in the poem, though not identical with it. Dronke (1969, 193–96) argues persuasively that there is no essential contradiction between the accounts of Ammianus and Jordanes, and that the latter could be substantially historical, but we have no real evidence either for or against this view. Despite his ferocious treatment of Sunilda, Jordanes seems, unlike the poet of Ham›ísmál, to admire Hermanaricus and to sympathise with him against both the Huns and the treacherous Rosomoni. This may explain why he says nothing of the suicide, which might have seemed dishonourable, and instead stresses the king’s achievements and his great age. There is no reason to doubt that Sunilda may have been a historical woman, and the name Sarus was also known among the Goths (it was also the name of a commander of the Ostrogothic military forces in Ravenna c.500, see Randers-Pehrson 1983, 108), but it is a little suspicious that both Ammius and Sarus can be interpreted as functionally meaningful names. Ammius corresponds to OE hama ‘skin’ and ON ham›ífir may mean ‘the one provided with a hamr (skin or form of another creature)’ or ‘the mail-coated one’, and Sarus seems to be related to OE searu ‘craftiness’, ‘skill’, ‘armour’ and OHG saro ‘mailcoat’. In Ham›ísmál the brothers seem to be immune to weapons, and in Skáldskaparmál, Völsunga saga and Saxo Grammaticus, Guðrún provides them with armour or an enchantment that makes them invulnerable to weapons. If the names of the brothers mean ‘the one with a skin’ and ‘the armoured one’, they may have been invented to describe their role, in which case the names of the actual historical revengers, if they existed, have been forgotten, as the tribal name Rosomoni was soon to be.

It is clear that Svanhildr’s affair with Randvér and the treacherous role of Bikki were not part of the story known to Jordanes, and there is no evidence either for the tragic killing of Erpr in his time. But Randvér,
Erpr and Jónakr are all mentioned in *Ragnarsdrápa*, and by the time of the poet of *Atlakviða* (possibly c. 900), Bikki must have become a byword for treachery, since Atli’s treacherous warriors (in another story altogether) can simply be called *Bikka greppar* ‘Bikki’s men’ (*Atlakviða* 14/3). At some time between c. 550 and c. 850, therefore:

1) Svanhildr became the wife of Jórmunrekkr himself;

2) Randvér (possibly ‘shield-warrior’) was invented to supply the young wife with sexual temptation along the lines of the Phaedra story;

3) Bikki (who as Becca King of the Baningas receives what looks like a blameless mention between Eormanric (Jórmunrekkr) and Gífica (Gjúki) in the OE *Widsið* 19) became the traitor who caused the lovers’ deaths;

4) Erpr (‘swarthy’) was invented as the bastard brother who offers to help as hand helps hand or foot helps foot, but is murdered for his pains.

It is worth noticing that the poet of *Hamðismál* feels no necessity to tell the whole of this story. His focus is on the compulsion to heroic revenge and the mistakes of his two protagonists, and for this purpose Bikki could be completely ignored and the affair between Svanhildr and Randvér reduced to the mere fact of their violent deaths. So far as either he or Bragi tells the tale, they might have been falsely accused (as they are in Saxo’s version of the story).

Later versions of the Scandinavian strand of the legend can be found in *SnE*, *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 42 (1998, 49–51), *Völsunga saga* chs 40–42 (1943, 87–91; 1990, 106–09) and (in a more complicated form) in Saxo Grammaticus VIII, ch. x, 7–14 (1931–35, I 233–35; 1979–80, I 256–58). For the very different traditions of Ermanaric in Old English and Middle High German, see Brady (1943).

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Spruttu á táí tregnar íðir
gréti álfa in glýstómu.
Ár um morgin manna bólva
súrir hverjar sorg um kveykva.

VARA ÞAT NÚ NÉ Í GÆR,
þat hefir langt líðit síðan;
er fátt fornara, fremr var þat hálfu,
er hvatti Guðrún, Gjúka borin,
sonu sína unga at hefna Svanhildar.

‘Systir var ykkur Svanhildr um heitin,
sú er Jórmunrekkr jóm um træddi
hvíptum ok svörtum á hervegi,
grám, ganglósum Gotna hrossum.

Eptir er ykr þrungit þjóðkonunga,
lífið einir ér þátta ættar minnar.

Einstæð em ek orðin sem ósp í holti,
fallin at frændum sem fura at kvisti,
vaðin at vilja sem viðr at laufi,
þá er in kvistskøda kömr um dag varman.

* * *

Hitt kvað þá Hamdir inn hugumstóri: ‘Litt myndir þú þá, Guðrún, leyfa dáð Höguna,
er þeir Sigurd svefni ór vöðu.
Saztu á beð, en banar hlógu.

Bøkr váru þínar inar bláhvítu
ofnar völundum — flutu í vers dreyra.
Svalt þá Sigurðr, saztu yfir dauðum,
glýja þú ne gáðir; Gunnarr þér svá vildi.
Atla þóttiz þú stríða at Erps morði
ok at Eitils aldrlagi — þat var þér enn verra.

Svá skyldi hverr þórum verja til aldrлага
sverði sárbeitu at sér ne stríddit.'12

Hitt kvað þá Sørli — svína hafði hann hyggju —
‘Vilkat ek við móður máulum skipta.
Orð þíkkir enn vant ykru hváru.
Hvers biðr þú nú, Guðrún, er þú at gráti ne færat?

Bræðr grát þú þína ok buri svása,13
niðja náborna leidda nær rógi.
Okr skaltu ok, Guðrún, gráta báða,
er hér sitjum feigir á mörum; fjarro munum deyja.’

Gengu ór garði gǫrvarir at eiskra.
Liðu þá yfir, ungir, úrig fjöll,
mörum húnlenzkum morðz at hefna.

Fundu á stræti stórbrögðóttan.
‘Hvé mun jarpskammr okr fultingja?’

Svaraði inn sundrmœðri; svá kvá veita mundu
fulting frændum sem fótr þórum.
‘Hvat megi fótr fæti veita,
né holdgróin hønd annarri?’

Þá kvað þat Erpr einu sinni
— mær um lék á mars baki:
‘Iltt er blauðum hal brautir kenna.’
Kóðu harðan mjök hornung vera.14

Drógu þeir ór skíði skíðijárni,
mæks eggjar at mun flagði.15
Þverðu þeir þrótt sinn at þröðjungi —
létu mög ungan til moldar hiðga.

36 leiða. 49–52 between 42 and 43.
Skóku loða, skálmir festu, ok goðbornir smugu í guðvefi.

Fram lágu brautir; fundu vástígu ok systur son\(^{16}\) sáran á meiði, vargrtré vindköld vestan bœjar.

Trýtti æ trönu hvót,\(^{17}\) títt varat bíða.\(^{18}\)

Glaumr var í höllu, halir ölreifir, ok til gota\(^{19}\) ekki gerðut heyra áðr halr hugfullr í horn um þaut.

Segja fóru Jǫrmunrekki at sénin váru seggir und hjálmum: ‘Rœðið ér um ráð, ríkir eru komnir! Fyr mátkum hafið ér mönnum mey um tradda.’

Hló þá Jǫrmunrekkr, hendi drap á kampa, beiddiz at bröngu, bodvaðiz at víni;\(^{20}\) skók hann skörr jarpa, sá á skjöld hvítan, lét hann sér í hendi hvarfa ker gullit.

‘Sæll ek þá þættumk ef ek sjá knættta Hamði ok Sǫrla í höllu minni.

Buri mynda ek þá binda með boga strengjum, goðbörn\(^{21}\) Gjúka festa á gálga.’

Hitt kvað þá hróðrgloð,\(^{22}\) stóð of hleðum,\(^{23}\) mæfingr mælti við móg þenna.\(^{24}\)

\[\begin{array}{ll}
\text{Hitt kvað þá hróðrgloð,} & 22 \\
\text{stóð of hleðum,} & 23 \\
\hline
\text{Mega tveir menn einir tíu hundruð Gotna} & 81 \\
\text{binda eða berja} & 26 \\
\text{í borg inni há?} & \\
\end{array}\]

Styrr varð í ranni, stukku ðolskálir, í blóði bragnar lágu, komit ór brjósti Gotna.

62 bíðja. 81 hundruðum.
Hitt kvað þá Hamðír inn hugumstóri:
‘Æstir, Þormunrekkr, okkarrar kvámu, bræðra sammæðra,²⁷ innan borgar þinnar.
Fœtr sér þú þína, þöndum sér þú þínnum,²⁸ Þormunrekkr, orpit í eðl heitan.’

Pá hraut við inn reginkunngi,²⁹
baldr í brynju, sem björn hryti: ‘Grýtið ér á gumna, allz geirar ne bíta,
eggjar né járn Jónakrs sonu.’

‘Böl vanntu, bróðir, er þú þann belg leystir: opt ór þeim belg³⁰ boll ráð koma.
Hug hefðir þú, Hamðír, ef þú hefðir hyggjandi;
mikils er á mann hvern vantar er manvits er.

Af væri nú haufuð ef Erpr lifði,³¹
bróðir okkarr inn böðfrækni er vit á braut vágum,
verr inn vígfrækni³² — hvöttumk at dísir —,
gumi inn gunnhelgi — gördumz at vígi.’³³

‘Ekki hygg ek okr vera úlfa døemi,
at vit mynim sjálfr um sakask
sem grey norna,³⁴ þau er gráðug eru
í auðn um alín.³⁵

Vel høfum vit vegit, stóndum á val Gotna ofan, eggmøðum, sem ernir á kvisti.
Góðs høfum tírar fengit, þótt skylim nú eða í gær³⁶ deyja.
Kveld lifir maðr ekki eptir kvið norna.’

Það fell Sørli at salar gafli,
en Hamðír hné at húsbaki.³⁷

Þetta eru kölluð Hamðismál in fornú.

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94 before this speech Hitt kvað þá Hamðír inn hugumstóri: (but the speaker here must be Sørli, since the þú in line 94 is certainly Hamðír).
100 varr inn viðfrækni.
102 ykr.
Notes

1 The tá was a strip of beaten earth outside the main door and along the front of Norse houses. It was a traditional place for private conversations and could be used figuratively to refer to them, cf. Morkinskinna (1932, 89; 2000, 151): ok heimtask nú á tá inir vitrustu menn, ok hafa tal milli sín ‘Some of the wisest men were assembled and took counsel’. Here it probably refers to the secrecy of the discussion between Guðrún and her sons.

2 Sijmons and Gering (1883–1931, III.ii 428) take græti álfa as a kenning for morning (because dwarves, who may be identical with ‘dark elves’, are turned to stone if the daylight touches them, as at the end of Alvíssmál), but no comparable kennings have been found. It is more probably a reference to the female family spirits (dísisir or fylgjur, perhaps originally the spirits of dead ancestors; see Turville-Petre 1964, 221–31, and McKinnell 2005, 198–200) who were believed to preside over the fortunes of a household. Here they may be said to weep because of the coming extinction of the family. This statement contrasts with the more negative view taken by Hamðir and S órgl, who blame the dísir for having provoked their own killing of Erpr (see line 100). See also note 15 below.

3 Early morning is a traditional time for brooding grief in Germanic literature; cf. Beowulf lines 2450–62 (1941, 92; 1999, 77–78); The Wife’s Lament lines 35–36; The Wanderer lines 8–9 (Hamer 1970, 74–75; 174–75).

4 According to the Lex Burgundionum (1892, 43) ‘Law of the Burgundians’ (c.500), Góbica (= ON Gjúki) was the founder of the Burgundian royal dynasty. In legend, Gjúki is the father of Gunnarr, Hógni and Guðrún, but only the first of these is clearly based on a historical person (King Gundaharius, killed by the Huns in 437; for sources, see Dronke 1969, 34–36). The figure of Guðrún may be indirectly derived from Ildico (= Hild), who according to Jordanes (1882, 123; §§ 617–19) was the wife whom Attila the Hun had just married on the night he died in bed of a nosebleed in 453. As Dronke demonstrates, a rumour soon grew up that Attila had been murdered by his new wife, and if her motive was assumed to be a Burgundian desire for revenge on the Hunnish king, it would be natural to give her name a
first element that began with G, like other Burgundian royal names. This explains why the heroine in German versions of the story is called Kriemhilt. But in ON sources, Grímhildr (literally ‘mask-battle’) becomes the name of the heroine’s mother, and the almost synonymous Guðrún (literally ‘war-secret’, or perhaps ‘god-secret’) has been invented for the heroine herself, possibly because the extra character of the mother was needed to explain the magic potion that causes Sigurd to fall in love with Guðrún and forget his previous love for Brynhildr.

5 According to the cycle of legend related in the Poetic Edda and in Vǫlsunga saga, Guðrún was married three times, first to the hero and dragon-slayer Sigurðr, whom she loved and by whom she had Svanhildr; next to Atli (= Attila the Hun), whom she murdered, along with their two sons Erpr and Eitill; and finally to King Jónakr, the father of her sons Hamðir and Sǫrli. On the death of Svanhildr, see Introduction above.

6 There were no paved military roads in Scandinavia. The important motif of roads and paths may have survived from earlier German or Old English versions of the story because of the idea that the stones finally ‘take vengeance’ for the blood of Erpr having been shed on them; see lines 43, 59 and 92.

7 It was a traditional summer task of women on Norwegian farms to strip small branches from the trees during warm weather; twigs and pine needles were then dried and used for kindling and bedding, while deciduous leaves were fed to the farm animals (see Dronke 1969, 227).

8 A stanza must be missing here, since line 21 implies that Guðrún has just compared her sons’ courage unfavourably with that of her dead brothers Gunnarr and Hǫgni (for whose heroic death seeAtlakvíða). This lost stanza may have been used by the poet of st. 3 of the later poem Guðrúnarhvǫt (Dronke 1969, 146) which immediately precedes Hamðismál in the Codex Regius:

‘Urðua it glíkir þeim Gunnari, ‘You have not become like Gunnarr and his brother, né in heldr hugðir sem var Hǫgni. nor equipped with courage as Hǫgni was. Hennar munduð it hefna leita, You would have tried to avenge her ef it móð ættið minna brœðra, if you had the heart of my brothers, eða hardan hug Húnkonunga.’ or the firm mind of the Hunnish kings.’
Most of this may in fact come verbatim from *Hamðismál*, as the following stanza of *Guðrúnarhvölt* certainly does (cf. lines 20–24 of this edition of *Hamðismál*), but this cannot be regarded as certain. The only element in it which is probably not indebted to the lost stanza of *Hamðismál* is its reference to ‘Hunnish kings’ (probably an allusion to Sigurd, who is of Hunnish origin only in later German and Norse tradition). But the lost stanza may have included the same implication that because they are not sons of her beloved Sigurd, Guðrún places a lower value on the lives of Hamðir and Sǫrli than on that of Svanhildr. This would help to motivate their sense of rage at the way she taunts them into undertaking their suicidal venture, and the adjective *hugum-stóri* ‘mighty in courage’ which is applied to Hamðir immediately afterwards suggests her unfairness in accusing them of cowardice (though it may also be a fixed epithet that was commonly attached to him; cf. line 85).

9 Before the arrival of Latin literacy in the Germanic world there were no ‘books’ in the modern sense of the word. This is one of a number of instances in Old Norse where *bók* seems to refer to pieces of embroidered cloth (in this case bed-covers); cf. also *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* 49/7–8, where the dying Brynhildr offers *bók ok blæju, bjartir vāðir* ‘an embroidered cloth and coverlet, bright clothes’ to any one of her maids who is prepared to die with her, and cf. the verb *gullbóka* ‘to embroider in gold’ in *Guðrúnarkviða* II 14/6. For the argument that the modern use of the word may be derived from a comparison of manuscript illumination with embroidery, see Dronke (1969, 228).

10 Völundr is familiar as the legendary master-craftsman of the Germanic world and the protagonist of *Völundarkviða*, but the word occasionally appears, as here, as a common noun meaning ‘craftsman’ (cf. also *Merlinusspá* II, 7/2 and Snorri Sturluson, *lausavísa* 4/8; *Skj* B II 25, 89). It is not clear whether or not these instances are derived from the proper name, whose etymology is obscure (largely because it is difficult to derive ON *Völundr*, OF *Galans* from the same root as OE *Wêlund/Wêland*, MHG *Wielant*). It is possible that they may indeed have different origins, with the common noun *völundr* being related to ON *val*, *vol*, OHG *wala* ‘choice’ (cf. ON *velja* ‘to choose’), hence ‘one who makes choice things’, while forms of the name with a long
front vowel could have come about by association with the noun vél ‘device, trick’. In that case, the proper name Völundr may be derived from the common noun rather than vice versa.

11 In lines 21–27 Hamðir reminds Guðrún that the brothers she has praised were also the murderers of Sigurðr. As the compiler of the prose links in the Codex Regius points out at the end of Brot af Sigurðarkviðu (PE 201), there were various versions of how Sigurðr died. In Brot itself and in Guðrúnarkviða I the brothers kill him out of doors and report his death to Guðrún, but the poet of Hamðismál prefers the tradition shared by Sigurðarkviða in skamma, in which they kill him when he is asleep in bed with her. In Sigurðarkviða in skamma and Völsunga saga the murder is actually carried out by Gothormr, the younger brother of Gunnarr and Hǫgni, who has not sworn an oath of foster-brotherhood with Sigurðr as they have. This may be an elaboration from a time later than that of Hamðismál, or this poet may simply have omitted it for the sake of brevity; whether they did the killing themselves or not, Gunnarr and Hǫgni were responsible for Sigurðr’s death.

12 In lines 28–31 Hamðir points out that Guðrún ought to realise that some revenges are too costly to the revenger to be worthwhile, as when she herself slaughtered Erpr and Eitill, her sons by Atli, as part of her annulment of their marriage following his murder of Gunnarr and Hǫgni. Ironically, Hamðir and Sǫrli will soon murder another Erpr, Jónakr’s son by another woman, and one instance of the name may have been borrowed from the other. However, since its meaning (‘swarthy’, cf. OE eorp ‘dark’, ON jarpr ‘brown’) is appropriate to both of them (with Erpr in Hamðismál even being called jarpskammr ‘the short brown man’), it is not possible to tell which if either is the original. The fact that the name lacks the vowel-breaking that was normal in this word suggests either that it fossilised at an early stage or that it has been borrowed from Old High German or Old Saxon, where this change did not take place (cf. OE eorðe, ON jórð, but OHG, OS erda ‘earth’).

13 This phrase is curiously echoed in Atlakviða st. 39, which claims that Guðrún never wept for either her brothers or her sons. The tradition that Guðrún could not weep later became fixed (see Brot, closing
prose, and most of Guðrúnarkviða I), but it is not possible to say whether or not it already existed when Hamðismál was composed.

14 In the Codex Regius, lines 48–51 are placed at the beginning of the encounter between Erpr and his brothers (before line 43 in this text), but this seems an obvious mistake. Line 43 clearly introduces the scene, which Hamðir and Sǫrlí begin by decrying Erpr’s offer of help (presumably because they regard him as an outsider and beneath them). His reply that he would help them as one foot or hand helps the other recalls versions of the story in which they later stumble on the way to carry out their revenge and realise the truth of his words (see SnE Skáldskaparmál ch. 42, Völsunga saga ch. 44 and cf. Dronke 1969, 199–202). The poet may have omitted the latter half of this motif for the sake of brevity, and/or because it was so well known that it could be assumed from Erpr’s words here. However, their killing of him is well motivated by his suggestion that they are cowardly (using what is probably a proverb). They have had to endure this damaging insult from their mother, but will not tolerate it from their bastard brother.

15 The flagð ‘ogress, giantess, hag’ here may be either Hel, the female figure who presides over the world of the dead, or a malicious dís who wants to see the destruction of the family. If the first interpretation is right, the idea may be akin to that in Ynglingatal 7 (Skj B I 8), where Hel is said to enjoy (sexual) pleasure from the body of King Dyggvi. The second would suggest that the poet agrees with the view expressed by one of the brothers that the dísir provoked them to kill Erpr (line 100; but see line 2 above for a very different view, also in the mouth of the narrator).

16 Strictly, Þormunrekkur’s son Randvér (see Bragi, Ragnarsdrápa 3, c.850; Skj B I 1) is their half-sister’s stepson, but the emotional shock is reinforced by citing the sister’s son relationship, which was particularly sacred in Germanic society. According to Skáldskaparmál ch. 42 and Völsunga saga ch. 42, Svanhildr and Randvér were tempted into planning to marry each other by Þormunrekkur’s evil counsellor Bikki, who then informed on them, with the result that both were executed. In Hamðismál Randvér has evidently been wounded as well as hanged, which may suggest an Odinic sacrifice; cf. Hávamál st. 138, Gautreks saga ch. 7 and Turville-Petre (1964), 47.
17 Hanged and slain men are often indicated by reference to the carrion birds that feasted on them, but this is a strange example, because the crane is not a carrion bird. It should probably be understood as an abbreviation of some such kenning as blóðtrani ‘blood-crane’ (i.e. raven), cf. Óttarr svarti, Knútsdrápa 8/3 (Skj B I 274).

18 The Codex Regius reading biðja ‘to ask (for something)’ makes no sense here, and is probably a scribal error for bíða ‘to wait, linger’.

19 gota is a poetic word, but may refer either to (Gothic) horses (a sense also found in a runic verse on the Rök stone, c.900) or to warriors (originally ‘Goths’); in this latter sense it is used of the Burgundians in Grípißpá 35/6, Brot 9/4, Atlakviða 20/3, and Guðrún’s mother Grímhildr is called gotnesk kona ‘Gothic woman’ in Guðrúnarkviða II 17/2. But in Hamðismál it seems unlikely that it refers to Hamðir and Sórlí, since this would introduce an unnecessary confusion with Jórmunrekkr and his men, who actually are Goths and are referred to as such (though always with the alternative gen. pl. form Gotna) in lines 81, 84 and 105. The reference is probably to the sound made by the brothers’ approaching horses.

20 The vocabulary of this line is unusual and probably deliberately exotic, as part of the portrait of an arrogant foreign ruler. In ON beíða usually means ‘to demand’, but the context of beíddisk here seems rather to demand the sense ‘stirred himself up’, which is common in the corresponding words in OHG, OS and OE; the word here could either be a survival from an older version of the story in one of these languages or a deliberate exoticism introduced by this poet. The word brøngu is found nowhere else in ON verse, but may be related to MLG prank ‘battle, quarrel’, and could be another foreign borrowing. The verb bøðva is also found nowhere else, though it is obviously derived from the feminine noun bøð ‘battle’, of which there are about fifteen examples in skaldic verse.

21 The MS reading here could be interpreted either as góð børn Gjúka ‘good children of Gjúki’ (Sijmons and Gering, Kuhn in PE, among others) or as godbørn Gjúka ‘divinely descended children of Gjúki’. As Dronke points out (1969, 234) the latter is metrically more satisfactory, and is formally paralleled in Þórðr Særeksson’s description
of Skaði as godbrúðr (lausavísa 3/6, Skj B I 304). Most Germanic royal families claimed divine ancestry, though in this context Jörmunrekkr may be mocking this claim.

22 The word hróðrglød ‘(woman) pleased by glorious behaviour’ is not found elsewhere, but for such similar compounds as hróðraudígr ‘rich in glory’, hróðrfinginn ‘devoted to glory’, hróðrfúss ‘eager for glory’, see LP 286–67, and for flugglød ‘rejoicing in flight’ (a name for an arrow), see LP 143. -glød is also found as the second element in some female personal names (e.g. Menglød, the half-giantess who befriends the hero in Orms þáttr Stórólfssonar; and there is another Menglød in the late eddic poems Grógaldr and Fjölsvinnsmál), but there is no evidence that hróðrglød is a proper name here, though some editors have regarded her as the mother or mistress of Jörmunrekkr. Nor is it likely that it refers to Guðrún, as argued by Sijmons and Gering (1888–1931, III.ii 440), since this scene is taking place at Jörmunrekkr’s court, far from the home of Guðrún (see line 39). The speaker seems to be simply an anonymous woman (or possibly one of the disir of line 100) whose function is to admire the two young heroes.

23 A hleði was a wooden shutter or sliding door to a lokrekkja ‘closing bed, sleeping cubicle’ in the hall; it was sometimes used by women as a way of peeping into the hall without being seen themselves (e.g. Kormaks saga ch. 3), and in this case it may explain how a woman in Jörmunrekkr’s court can express a viewpoint that she would hardly dare to state openly.

24 Several different emendations have been suggested here, to við mogu sína ‘to her sons’ (assuming that the speaker is Guðrún, see above), við mog svinnan ‘to the wise young man’ or við mogþegna ‘to the young knights’), but the MS reading makes sense (‘to that young man’), and should not be emended merely because it is surprising to find a singular here. It probably refers to Hamðir, the leader of the brothers.

25 This line seems disjointed, with no explanation of its opening því at ‘because’; a line has probably been lost before it. Both halves of the line are metrically deficient. Some re-writings have been suggested: því er þar hætta ‘one ought to desist from that (which) . . .’; því átt at heita ‘you ought to promise that (which) . . .’, því áttat heita
'you ought not to promise that (which) . . .' — all excellent suggestions, and improvements metrically, but for the fact that they are not what the MS appears to say.

hlýðigi: -gi is an originally emphatic particle used after a negative that came to be used as a negative particle when the ne was lost (e.g. mannsgi ‘no one’). Apart from emendations, the only possibility for hlýði is that it is an otherwise unknown feminine noun meaning ‘silence’ (cf. hljóðr adj. ‘silent’). The line might then be translated ‘. . . because they are vowing what would be no silence (i.e. not kept quiet) — sc. a famous deed’, except that in this sense heita requires an object in the dative, not accusative case, and the line is probably corrupted beyond help other than emendation.

26 The brothers are not literally trying to bind the Goths, but to kill them; binda ok berja seems to have been a generalised phrase meaning ‘to gain complete victory over (someone)’.

27 This word is tragically ironic in the middle of Hamðir’s ill-advised speech of exultation over his enemy, since it contrasts with sundrmæðri (line 45) and thus reminds us of the crucial absence of Erpr from the revenge.

28 For the motif of hands and feet, see lines 46–48 and note 14 above. Erpr’s absence and Hamðir’s vaunting delay the decapitation of Jœrmunrekkur long enough to give him time to tell the Goths how to kill the brothers. They are invulnerable to weapons (see Introduction), so they can only be killed by stoning.

29 reginkunnugi is usually taken to refer to Jœrmunrekkur’s divine ancestry (cf. reginkunnnum, referring to runes in Hávamál 80/3; áskungar, referring to the norns in Fáfnismál 13/4), and this must be part of the sense, but Dronke convincingly suggests that reginkunnigr here also has the sense ‘knowledgeable about divine powers’ and refers to the common belief that dying men could acquire supernatural perception (and the ability to curse their enemies effectively; cf. also Fáfnismál).

30 flann belg leystir may refer to Hamðir opening his own mouth in lines 86–89, which offered the delay that enabled Jœrmunrekkur to
give the orders that led to the death of the brothers. But belg is only otherwise used in this sense in a proverbial metaphor for an old man as a bag from which words pour out, cf. Hávamál st. 134, and in line 95 the reference is certainly to Jòrmunrekkr speaking in lines 92–93. Some editors have emended the first half of line 95 (Sijmons–Gering to opt ór belg orðgum ‘often from a talkative bag’; Dronke to opt ór raðdom belg ‘often from a red (i.e. bleeding) bag’), but neither seems necessary, even though Dronke cites a prose parallel in Njáls saga ch. 91. What Sòrli means is that this particular ‘bag’ (i.e. Jòrmunrekkr) often speaks words that have evil consequences. If belg in line 94 also means Jòrmunrekkr, er flú flann belg leystir would have to mean ‘when you left that bag free to speak’.

31 It is not clear which brother is speaking here. Lines 94–97 are clearly spoken by Sòrli; it makes sense for Hamòir to have the last word (i.e. lines 106–09); and lines 102–05 look like a rejoinder to the previous lines. One might see lines 98–101 as a continuation of the speech in which Sòrli blames Hamòir and 102–05 as Hamòir’s rather self-excusing reply (as I have done here). Alternatively, lines 98–101 may be Hamòir’s belated realisation of his mistakes (as Dronke assumes), in which case lines 102–05 look like a conciliatory reply by Sòrli. Unfortunately, one’s view of the end of the poem seems likely to depend on which interpretation is adopted, and I can see no reliable way of choosing between them.

32 Codex Regius varr inn víð frœkni makes no sense; vígfrœkni ‘bold in killing’ (Neckel–Kuhn and Dronke) would be parallel in form and meaning to bóðfrœkni in the preceding line, and thus seems preferable to víðfrægi ‘widely famous’ (Bugge and Sijmons–Gering).

33 Sijmons–Gering and Dronke emend to gòrdumk ‘they made me’, to produce a grammatical parallel to hvòttumk in the previous line, but ‘we forced ourselves to the killing’ is quite possible for gòrdumz. ‘We prepared ourselves for a killing’ also makes reasonable sense (more or less the equivalent of ‘we did do the killing’), and would acknowledge that even if the brothers were provoked by the dísir, they know that they must ultimately take the responsibility for Erpr’s death themselves.
‘Norns’ bitches’ are obviously she-wolves, though no exact parallel has been found. Dronke points out that the poet avoids suggesting that wolves are the Norns’ ‘steeds’ because that would associate the Norns with giantesses and troll-women (such as Hyndla, who rides a wolf in *Hyndluljóð* st. 5).

Unlike the rest of the poem, lines 102–05 are in *ljóðaháttr* ‘the metre of (magic) songs’ (see Introduction) which is also used in didactic or proverbial poems such as *Hávamál*. The different metre here has led to speculation that these lines may have been added by another poet, but the change of metre could be due merely to the content, which resembles proverbial advice (cf. *Fáfnismál*). On other metrical irregularities in the poem, see Introduction.

í gær usually means ‘yesterday’, but Dronke suggests on the basis of one case in Gothic that it may here have an archaic sense ‘tomorrow’, or more generally ‘some other day’.

Dronke (1969, 190–92) sees a dichotomy between the attack in the hall and the fact that the brothers ultimately die outside the building, and concludes that lines 110–11 may be the work of another poet. But their deaths outside the hall can be explained in several other ways (e.g. they tried to fight their way out; they were rushed outside because it was easier to stone them there; they had to get outside so that the stones could complete their ‘revenge’; see note 6 above), and her supposition seems unnecessary.
**XXVI: NJÁLS SAGA**

*Ngíls saga* (referred to in the manuscripts as *Brennu-Ngíls saga* ‘Saga of Ngíll of the Burning’) was probably written 1275–90. It is the longest and in many ways the greatest of the Sagas of Icelanders, combining several originally separate narratives and involving a large number of characters from all over Iceland, although the main events are located in the south-west of the country.

The two extracts reproduced here represent the climaxes of the first two parts of the saga: the extraordinary fight to the death of the great warrior Gunnarr, and the burning in his house of Gunnarr’s friend Ngíll and his sons. The feuds leading up to these events are largely disparate, but the two parts (which some have thought derive from two separate sagas) are linked both by the friendship and common desire for peace of the contrasting heroes, and thematically. This is clear from the overt comparison made, in the preamble to the burning at Bergþórhvall, between the burners and the more honourable attackers who had scorned to resort to the use of fire against Gunnarr (B, lines 60–66). The two parts of the saga are separated by the so-called *Kristni þáttur*, recounting the conversion of Iceland to Christianity, in which Ngíll is given a leading (but no doubt fictitious) role; this section forms a pivot between the perspectives of the two parts, contrasting the noble pagan Gunnarr with his Christian, indeed almost saintly friend — whose killers are also Christian. The last part of the saga relates the lengthy quest of Ngíll’s son-in-law Kári, who survives the burning, to track down and kill the burners one by one, before he is finally reconciled with their leader Flosi.

This reconciliation is symptomatic of the fact that violence in the saga is more often a response to the demands of honour, in particular the duty of revenge, than the result of personal animosity. The leaders of both attacks are represented as upstanding men forced by these imperatives to take an action they regret. Flosi is a sincere Christian; Gizurr inn hvíti Teitsson, who leads the attack on Gunnarr, figures later in the saga as one of the first to bring Christianity to Iceland (a historical reality confirmed by *Íslendingabók*; his son Ísleifr was to be Iceland’s first bishop). Gizurr is drawn into the feud by the need to avenge those reluctantly killed by Gunnarr. This theme is introduced to the saga by the sequence of incidents in which Gunnarr and Ngíll struggle to maintain their friendship in the face of the attempts of
their wives to draw them into a feud. Although they share a militant
determination to protect their husbands’ honour literally to the death,
these women are contrasted by their attitudes to their marital situation:
Bergþóra famously declares her determination not to be separated in
death from the man she was married to when young (B, lines 163–
64), whereas Hallgerðr proudly sacrifices each of her three husbands
after a slight on her honour. Móðr Valgarðsson too, described more
than once as slægr ok illgjarn ‘cunning and ill-disposed’ (ÍF XII 70,
119), plays an unequivocally villainous role in both the first and the
second parts of the saga, fomenting quarrels and acting as a ringleader
in the attack on Gunnarr. He is said to be envious of Gunnarr, to
whom he is related (their mothers were first cousins according to the
saga’s genealogy). Once again Christianity forms the fault-line
between the morally upright and the disreputable, since Móðr and
his father, Valgarðr inn grái, are prominent among the opponents to the
Conversion (ch. 102). Christianity changes the saga’s perspective, but
does not simplify it. The Christian burners are seen as more unscrupulous
than their pagan predecessors who had attacked Gunnarr; and Njáll
himself, though his death is infused with hagiographical overtones,
remains bound by the ethic of revenge, choosing to die because he is
too old to avenge his sons and will not live with shame. The overwhelming
desire for harmony, shared by Gunnarr and Njáll even before the
coming of the new faith, is set against the demands of the traditional
code of honour, but this simple equation is complicated by conflicts
of family loyalty, sexual desire and the ambiguous role of the law.

Njáls saga survives in nineteen medieval manuscripts (dating from
between 1300 and 1550) as well as numerous later copies, demonstrating
its popularity throughout its history (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1953). None
of these early manuscripts is complete and some are no more than
fragments. The text used in these extracts is that of Reykjabók (R),
the earliest extant manuscript, written around 1300. This and the
manuscripts related to it cite more skaldic verse than the other
manuscript groups, both in the body of the text and written later in
the margins. The saga is also included in the fourteenth-century
Möðruvallabók (M) (see pp. 36, 192 and 239 above), which has
supplied some readings in the text. The chapter headings are those of
R, written in a different but contemporary hand to that of the text, but
the chapter numbers are those conventional in editions and translations.
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XXVI A: THE DEATH OF GUNNARR

Chapter 76: Atreið til Hlíðarenda

Um haustit sendi Móðr Valgarðsson orð at Gunnarr mundi vera einn heima, en lið allt mundi vera niðri í Eyjum at lúka heyverkum. Riðu þeir Gizurr hvíti ok Geirr goði austr yfir ár þegar þeir spyrðu þat, ok austr yfir sanda til Hofs. Pá sendu þeir orð Starkaði undir Príthyrningi, ok fundusk þeir þar allir er at Gunnari skyldu fara, ok réðu hversu at skyldi fara. Móðr sagði at þeir mundu eigi koma á övart Gunnari nema þeir teki bónda af næsta bæ, er Þorkell hét, ok léti hann fara nauðgan með sér at taka hundinn Sám ok færi hann heim einn á bœinn.1

Fóru þeir síðan austr til Hlíðarenda, en sendu eptir Þorkatli. Þeir tóku hann høndum ok gerðu honum tvá kosti, at þeir mundu drepa hann, ella skyldi hann taka hundinn, en hann kóri heldr at leyfa líf sitt ok fór með þeim. Traðir váru fyrir norðan garðana at Hlíðarenda, ok námu þeir þar staðar með flokkin. Bóndi Þorkell gekk heim á bœinn, ok lá rakkinn á húsum uppi, ok teygir hann rakkan á braut með sér í geilar nokkurar. Í því sér hundrinn at þar eru menn fyrir fyrir, ok leypr á hann Þorkel upp ok greip náran. Þundr ór Tröllaskógi hjó með óxi í høfuð hundinum svá at allt kom í heilann. Hundrinn kvað við hátt svá at þat þótti þeim með óðrum miklum vera, ok fell hann dauðr niðr.2

Chapter 77: Víg Gunnars frá Hlíðarenda

Gunnarr vaknaði í skálanum ok mælti, ‘Sárt ertu leikinn, Sámr fóstri, ok bút svá sé til ætlat at skammt skyli okkar í meðal.’ Skáli Gunnars var gerr af viði einum ok súðþaktr útan ok gluggar hjá brúnásunum ok snúin þar fyrir speld. Gunnarr svaf í lopti einu í skálanum ok Hallgerðr ok mödir hans. Pá er þeir kómu at, vissu þeir eigi hvárt Gunnarr mundi heima vera, ok báðu at einnhverr mundi fara heim fyrir ok vita hvers víss yrði. En þeir settusk niðr á völlinn. Þorgrímur Austmaðr gekk upp á skálan. Gunnarr sér at rauðan kyrtil bar við glugginn, ok leggr út með atgeir á hann miðjan. Þorgrímr skruppu fætrnir ok varð lauss skjöldrinn, ok hrataði hann ofan af þekjunn. Gengr hann síðan at þeim Gizuri er þeir sátu á vellinum. Gízurr leit við honum ok mælta:

18 at M, er R.  19–20 words supplied from M.
‘Hvárt er Gunnarr heima?’
Þorgrímr segir, ‘Vitið þér þat, en hitt vissa ek, at atgeirr hans er heima.’
Síðan fell hann niðr dauðr.
Þeir söttu þá at húsunum. Gunnarr skaut út òrum at þeim ok varðisk vel, ok gátu þeir ekki at gert.4 Þá hljópu sumir á húsín ok ætluðu þaðan at at sökja. Gunnarr kom þangat at þeim òrunum, ok gátu þeir ekki at gert, ok fór svá fram um hríð. Þeir tóku hvíld ok söttu at í annat sinn. Gunnarr skaut enn út, ok gátu þeir ekki at gert ok hrukku frá í annat sinn.
Þá mælti Gizurr hvíti, ‘Sökjem at betr, ekki verðr af oss.’
Gerðu þá hríð ina þríðju ok váru við lengi. Eptir þat hrukku þeir frá.
Gunnarr mælti, ‘Þr liggir þar úti á vegginum, ok er sú af þeir kallaðr, ok skal ek þeir skjóta til þeira, ok er þeim þat skømm ef þeir fá g<e>ig af vápnum sínun.’
Móðir hans mælti, ‘Ger þú eigi þat, at þú vekir þá, en þeir hafa áðr frá horfif.’
Gunnarr þreif þórina ok skaut til þeira, ok kom á Eílíf Þnundarson, ok fekk hann af sár mikit. Hann hafði staðit einn saman, ok vissu þeir eigi at hann var sæðr.
‘Hónd kom þar út,’ segir Gizurr, ‘ok var á gullhringr, ok tók þr er lá á þekjunni, ok mundi eigi út leitað viðfanga ef gnógt væri inni, ok skulu vér nú sökja at.’5
Móðr mælti, ‘Brennu vér hann inni.’
‘Pat skal verða aldri,’ segir Gizurr, ‘þótt ek vita at líf mitt liggi við. Er þér sjálfrátt at leggja til ráð þau er dugi, svá slegr maðr sem þú eft kallaðr.’
Strengir lágu á vellinum ok váru hafðir til at festa með hús jafnan.
Móðr mælti, ‘Tóku vér strengina ok berum um ássendana, en festum aðra endana um steina, ok snúum í vindása ok vindum af ræfit af skálanum.’
Þeir tóku strengina ok veittu þessa umbúð alla, ok fann Gunnarr eigi fyrir en þeir hofðu undit allt þakit af skálanum. Gunnarr skýtr þá af boganum svá at þeir komask aldri at honum. Þá mælti Móðr í annat sinn at þeir mundi brenda <Gunnar inni>.
Gizurr mælti, ‘Eigi veit ek hví þú vill þat mæla er engi vill annarr, ok skal þat aldri verða.’

Í þessu bili hleypr upp á þekjuna Þorbrandr Þorleiksson ok högg<\r
í sundr bogastrenginn Gunnars. Gunnarr þrífr atgeirinn báðum höndum
ok snýsk at honum skjótt ok rekr í gegnum hann ok kastar honum á
völlinn. Pá ljóp upp Ásbrandr, bróðir hans. Gunnarr leggr til hans
atgeirinum ok kom hann skildi fyrir sik. Atgeirr renndi í gegnum
skjöldinn «ok í meðal handleggjana. Snaraði Gunnarr þa atgeirinn
svá at klofnatí skjöldrinn», en brotnudda báðir handleggirnir, ok fell
hann út af vegginum. Ádr hafði Gunnarr sárt átta menn, en vegit þá
tvá. Pá fekk Gunnarr sár tvau, ok sog-du þat allir menn at hann brygði
sér hvárki við sár né við bana.

Hann mælti til Hallgerðar, ‘Fá mér leppa tvá ór hári þínu, ok snúið
þit móðir mín saman til bogastrengs mér.’6

‘Liggir þér nokkut við?’ segir hon.

‘Líf mitt liggr við,’ segir hann, ‘því at þeir munu mik aldri fá sótt
meðan ek kem boganum við.’

‘Pá skal ek nú,’ segir hon, ‘muna þér kinnhestinn,’7 ok hirði ek aldri
hvárt þú verr þik lengr eða skemr.’8

‘Hefir hverr til síns ágætis nokkut,’ segir Gunnarr, ‘ok skal þik þessa
eigi lengi biðja.’

Rannveig mælti, ‘Illa ferr þér, ok mun þín skómm lengi uppi.’

Gunnarr varði sík vel ok fræknliga ok særir nú aðra átta menn svá
stórum sárum at morgum lá við bana. Gunnarr verr sík þar til er hann
fell af móði. Þeir særðu hann morgum stórum sárum, en þó komsk
hann ór höndum þeim ok varði sík þá lengi, en þó kom þar at þeir
drápu hann. Um vörn hans orti Porkell Elfaraskáld í vísu þessi:9

Spurðu vér hvé varðisk
vígmóðr kjalar slóða
Glaðstýranda geiri,
Gunnarr, fyrir Kjöl sunnan.
Sóknrýrir vann sára
sextán viðar mána
hríðar herðimeiða
hauðrmen, en tvá dauða.

Gizurr mælti, ‘Mikinn öldung hofum vér nú at velli lagit, ok hefir oss
erfitt veitt, ok mun hans vörn uppi meðan landit er byggt.’

68 Þorleiksson M, Porkelsson R. 73–74 words supplied from M. 95
glaðstýranda M; gnýsteirandi (written -adni) R. 98 viður R.
Síðan gekk hann til fundar við Rannveigu ok mælti, ‘Villtu veita mólnnum várum tveimr jórð, er dauðir eru, ok sé hér heygðir?’

‘At heldr tveimr, at ek munda veita yór öllum,’ segir hon.

‘Várkunn er þat,’ segir hann, ‘er þú mælir þat, því at þú hefir mikils misst,’ ok kvað á at þar skyldi öngu ræna ok öngu spilla. Fóru á braut síðan.

Pá mælti Þorgeirr Starkaðarson, ‘Eigi megum vera heima í búum várum fyrir Sigfússonum, nema þú, Gizurr, eða Geirr sér suðr hér nökkura hríð.’

Notes

1 The dog Sámr (the name means ‘dark-coloured’) was a gift to Gunnarr from Óláfr pái (a major figure in Laxdœla saga), who claimed to have been given it on his journey to Ireland (ch. 70). It has been pointed out that, if this story were true, the dog would have been more than thirty years old when Gunnarr received it (Finnur Jónsson 1908, 156). Óláfr credits the dog with great intelligence in discerning between friend and enemy and a readiness to lay down its life for its master, effectively anticipating its role in warning Gunnarr of the attack.

2 For the construction of the typical Icelandic farmhouse at this period, see Byock 2001, 358–68 (though the buildings discussed there are constructed of turf, as was usual, rather than the overlapping boards of Hlíðarendi). The brúnásar (referred to by Byock as ‘rafter-bracing roof beams’) were two beams running along the tops of the rows of interior pillars; these beams supported the rafters at the point where the pitch of the roof changed from steep to shallow, supporting the weight of the roof (especially heavy if made of turf) and allowing the use of shorter timbers for rafters. The gluggar were probably unglazed skylights in each side of the sloping roof just below the brúnásar.

3 The atgeirr is an unusual weapon, apparently a large and heavy spear with a cutting edge on its head, like a halberd, used mostly for thrusting and hewing, but occasionally also thrown; Gunnarr’s ability to do this demonstrates his unusual strength and skill as a warrior (Falk 1914, 62–83). Gunnarr wins the weapon in a battle against a Viking on his travels in the Baltic, and is said to carry it ever afterwards; it has special powers, making a resounding noise as an omen of its impending use in a killing (ch. 30).

4 The saga’s hyperbolic account of Gunnarr’s fighting prowess includes special mention of his skill in archery: ‘Hann skaut manna bezt af boga ok hœfði allt þat, er hann skaut til’ (ch. 19); it is also referred to in ch. 17 of Hœnsa-Póris saga (ÍF XII, 53 note 1).

5 Eyrbyggja saga (ch. 47) refers to this incident, attributing this observation to Geirr goði. The mismatch between Gunnarr’s intention to shame his opponents by injuring them with their own weapon, and his attackers’ assumption that he has simply run out of ammunition, recognises his heroic status.
Stories of bowstrings made of women’s hair (and the use of these stories as illustrations of loyalty) can be found in classical sources, such as *Historia Augusta* from c.400 AD:

Nor can we fail to mention the extraordinary loyalty displayed by the Aquileans in defending the Senate against Maximinus. For, lacking bowstrings with which to shoot their arrows, they made cords of the women’s hair. It was said that this once happened at Rome as well, whence it was that the Senate, in honour of the matrons, dedicated the temple of Venus Calva (i.e. the Bald). (*Scriptores Historiae Augustae* III 377–78)

See note 4 to the extract from *Laxdœla saga*, p. 199 above. Each of Hallgerðr’s three husbands slaps her face, and in each case the humiliation leads to his death.

Here a verse is added in the margin of *R*, introduced with ‘Gunnarr kvað þá vísu’. This verse is included in an appendix in *ÍF* XII 477. For the marginal verses in *R*, thought to have been added to the manuscript by its earliest readers, see Nordal 2005.

Porkell Elfaraskáld is not known from elsewhere, and this is the only verse attributed to him. It has been suggested (Salberger 1973) that his nickname means ‘poet of the traveller (*fari*) to the Elfr (the River Elbe, known as Göta älv in modern Sweden)’, alluding to Gunnarr’s exploits in Sweden as related in chs 29–30, where he acquires the *atgeirr*. 
Nú er þar til máls at taka at Bergþórhváli, at þeir Grímr ok Helgi fóru til Hóla — þar váru þeim fóstruð børn — ok söguðu möður sinni at þeir mundu ekki heim um kveldit. Þeir váru í Hólum allan daginn. Þar kömu fátækar konur ok kváðusk komnar at langt. Þeir bræðr spurðu þær tíðinda. Þær kváðusk engi tíðindi segja.

‘En segja kunnu vör nýlundu nökkurra.’

Þeir spurðu hver sú væri ok báðu þær eigi leyna. Þær söguðu svá vera skyldu.

‘Vér könum at ofan ör Fljótshlíð, ok sá vör Sigfússonu alla ríða með alvæpni. Peir stefndu upp á Priðirningshálsla, ok váru fimmtán í flokki. Vér sá m- ok Grana Gunnarsson ok Gunnar Lambason, ok váru þeir fimm saman. Þeir stefndu ina sömu leið, ok kalla má at nú sé allt á for ok flaugun um heraðit.’

Helgi Njálsson mælti, ‘Þá mun Flosi kominn austan, ok munu þeir allir koma til móts við hann, ok skulu vit Grímr vera þar Skarpheðinn er.’

Grímr kvað svá vera skyldu, ok fóru þeir heim.

Þenna aptan inn sama mælti Bergþóra til hjóna sinna, ‘Nú skulu þér kjósa yðr mat í kveld, at hverr hafi þat er mest fýsir til, því at þenna aptan mun ek bera síðast mat fyrir hjón mín.’

‘Þat skyldi eigi vera,’ segja þau.

‘Þat mun þó vera,’ segir hon, ‘ok má ek miklu fleira af segja ef ek vil, ok mun þat til merkja at þeir Grímr ok Helgi munu heim koma áðr menn eru mettir í kveld. Ok ef þetta gengr eptir, þá mun svá fara fleira sem ek segi.’

Síðan bar hon mat á borð. Njáll mælti:

‘Undarliga sýnisk mér nú. Ek þíkjumsk sjá um alla stofuna, ok þíki mér sem undan sé gaflveggrinn, en blóð eitt allt borðit ok matrinn.’

Þá fannsk þllum mikit um þetta nema Skarpheðni. Hann bað menn ekki syrgja né láta þórum herfíligum látom svá at menn mætti orð á því gera.

‘Ok mun oss vandara gert en þórum at vér berim oss vel, ok er þat at vánnum.’

1 No chapter division in R. The preceding chapter heading is Frá Flosa ok brennumönnum.
Þeir Grímr ok Helgi kómu heim áðr borðin váru ofan tekin, ok brá mönnunum mjök við þat. Njáll spurði hví þeir færð svá hverft, en þeir sogðu slíkt sem þeir hofðu frétt. Njáll bað óngvan mann til svefns fara ok vera vara um sik.

Chapter 128: Viðtal Njáls ok Skarpheðins

Nú talar Flosi við sína menn: ‘Nú munu vér ríða til Bergþórshváls ok koma þar fyrir matmál.’

Þeir gera nú svá. Dalr var í hválnum, ok riðu þeir þangat ok bundu þar hesta sína ok dvolðusk þar til þess er mjök leið á kveldit.

Flosi mælti, ‘Nú skulu vér ganga heim at bænum ok ganga þróngt ok fara seint ok sjá hvat þeir taki til ráðs.’

Njáll stóð úti ok synir hans ok Kári ok allir heimamenn ok skipuðusk fyrir á hlæðinu, ok váru þeir nær þremur tígu. Flosi nam stað ok mælti:

‘Nú skulu vér at hyggja hvat þeir taka ráðs, hví at mér lízk svá, ef þeir standa úti fyrir, sem vör munim þá aldri sótta geta.’

‘Pá er vár fór ill,’ segir Grani Gunnarsson, ‘ef skulum eigi þora at at sækja.’

‘Pat skal ok eigi vera,’ segir Flosi, ‘ok munu vér at sækja þótt þeir standi úti. En þat afroð munu vér gjalsa, at margir munu eigi kunna frá at segja hvárir sigrask.’

Njáll mælti til sinna manna, ‘Hvat sjái flér til, hversu mikit lið þeir hafa?’

Þeir hafa bæði mikit lið ok harðsnúit,’ segir Skarpheðinn, ‘en því nema þeir þó nú stað at þeir ætla at þeim muni illa sækjask at vinna oss.’

‘Pat mun ekki vera,’ segir Njáll, ‘ok vil ek at menn gangi inn, því at illa sóttisk þeim Gunnarr at Hlíðarenda, ok var hann einn fyrir. En hér eru hús rammlig, sem þar váru, ok munu þeir eigi skjótt sækja.’

‘Petta er ekki þann veg at skilja,’ segir Skarpheðinn, ‘því at Gunnar sóttu heim þeir hofðingjar er svá váru vel at sér at heldr vildu frá hverfa en brenna hann inni. En þessir munu þegar sækja oss með eldi ef þeir megu eigi annan veg, því at þeir munu allt til vinna at yfir taki við oss. Munu þeir þat ætla, sem eigi er ólíkligt, at þat sé þeira bani ef oss dregr undan. Ek em ok þess ofúss at láta svæla mik inni sem mel-rakka í grei.’

57 bæðiþ bæðit R.
Njáll mælti, ‘Nú mun sem optar, at þér munuð bera mik ráðum, synir mínir, ok virða mik engis. En þá er þér váruð yngri þá gjörðuð þér þat eigi, ok fór yðart ráð þá betr fram.’

Helgi mælti, ‘Gerum vör sem faðir várr vill. Pat mun oss bezt gegna.’

‘Eigi veit ek þat víst,’ segir Skarphedinn, ‘því at hann er nú feigr. En vel má ek gera þat til skaps fóður mínns at brenna inni með honum, því at ek hræðumsk ekki dauða minn.’

Hann mælti þá við Kára, ‘Fylgjumsk vel, mágr, svá at engi skilisk við annan.’

‘Þat hefi ek ætlat,’ segir Kári, ‘en ef annars verðr auðit þá mun þat verða fram at koma, ok mun ek ekki mega við því gera.’

‘Hefndu vár en vör þín,’ segir Skarphedinn, ‘ef vör lifum eptir.’

Kári kvað svá vera skyldu. Gengu fleir því inn allir ok skipust í dyrrin.

Flosi mælti, ‘Nú eru fleir feigir, er fleir hafa inn gengit, ok skulu vér heim ganja sem skjótast ok skipask sem þykkvast fyrir dyrrin ok geyma þess at engi komisk í braut, hváركi Kári né Njálssynir, því at þat er várr bani.’

Þeir Flosi kómu nú heim ok skipust umhverfis húsín, ef nokkurar væri laundyr á. Flosi gekk framan at húsunum ok hans menn. Hróaldr Ózurarson hljóp þar at sem Skarphedinn var fyrir, ok lagði til hans.

Skarphedinn hjó spjótit af skapti fyrir honum ok hjó til hans, ok kom óxin ofan í skjöldinn, ok bar at Hróaldi þegar allan skjöldinn, en hyman sú in fremri tók andlitit, ok fell hann á bak aptr ok þegar dauðr. Kári mælti:

‘Lítt dró enn undan við þik, Skarphedinn, ok ertu vár freknastr.’

‘Eigi veit ek þat víst,’ segir Skarphedinn, ok brá við grónum ok glotti at.11 Kári ok Grímr ok Helgi logðu út morgum spjótum ok særuðu marga menn. En Flosi ok hans menn fengu ekki at gert.

Flosi mælti, ‘Vér hófum fengi mikinn mannskaða á mónnum várum. Era margir sárir, en só vegginn er vör mundum sízt til kjósa. En nú þat sét at vör getum þá eigi með vápnum sóttta. Er só nú margr er eigi gengr jafnskórlíga at sem létu. En þó munu vör nú verða at gera annat ráð fyrir oss. Era nú tvéðr kostir til, ok er hvárgi góðr: só annarr at hverfa frá, ok er þat vár bani; hinn annarr at bera at eld ok brenna þá inni, ok er þat stórr ábyrgðarlutr fyrir Guði, er vör erum menn kristnir sjálfir.12 En þó munu vör þat bragðs taka.’

99 it added after sárir R.
Chapter 129: Bœjarbruni at Bergþórhváli

Þeir tíku nú eld ok gerðu bál mikit fyrir dyrunum. Pá mælti Skarpheðinn:

‘Eld kveykvið þér nú, sveinar, eða hvárt skal nú búa til seyðis?’
Grani Gunnarsson svarar, ‘Svá skal þat vera, ok skaltu eigi þurfa heitara at baka.’

Skarpheðinn mælti, ‘Því launat þú mér, sem þú ert maðr til, er ek hefnda fðður þíns, ok virðir þat meira er þér er óskylðara.’

Pá báru konur sýru í eldinn ok sløktu niðr fyrir þeim. Kolr Þorsteins-son mælti til Flosa:

‘Ráð kemr mír í hug. Ek hefi sét lopt í skálanum á þvertrjám, ok skulu véð þar inn beru eldinn ok kveykva við arfasátu þá er hér stendr fyrir ofan húsín.’

Síðan tíku þeir arfasátuna ok báru í eld. Fundu þeir eigi fyrir, er inni váru, en logaði ofan allr skálinn. Gerðu þeir Flosi þá stór bál fyrir þllum dyrum. Tök þá kvennaflókit illa at þola, þat sem inni var.

Njáll mælti til þeira:

‘Verðið vel við ok mælið eigi æðru, því at él eitt mun vera, ok skyldi langt til annars slíks. Truíð þér ok því, at Guð er svá miskunnsamr at hann mun oss eigi bæði brenna laða þessa heims ok annars.’

Slíkar fortölur hafði hann fyrir þeim ok aðrar hraustligri. Nú taka þll húsín at loga. Pá gekk Njáll til dyra ok mælti:

‘Hvárt er Flosi svá nær at hann megi heyra máli mitt?’

Flosi kvazk heyra mega. Njáll mælti:

‘Villt þú nokkut taka sættum við sonu mína eða lofa nokkurum mónnum útgongu?’

Flosi svarar, ‘Eigi vil ek við sonu þína sættum taka, ok skal nú yfir þúka með oss ok eigi fyrir frá ganga en þeir eru allir dauðir, en lofa vil ek útgongu konum ok þornum ok húsírhlum.’

Njáll gekk þá inn ok mælið við flókit, ‘Nú er þeim út at ganga þllum er leyft er. Ok gakk þú út, Þórhalla Ásgrímsdóttir, ok allr lýðr með þér, sá er lofat er.’

Þórhalla mælti, ‘Annarr verðr nú skilnaðr okkarr Helga en ek ætlaða um hrið, en þó skal ek eggja fðður minn ok bræðr at þeir hefni þessa mannskaða er hér er gerr.’

117 þar written þr with superscript abbreviation for ar R. 111 fyrr written f with superscript i (= fírr or fírir) R. 114 fyrr written f with superscript i (= firr or firir) R. 117 lofat er written twice R.
Njáll mælti, ‘Vel mun þér fara, því at þú eptir góð kona.’
Síðan gekk hon út ok mart lið með henni.
Ástríðr af Djúpárbakka mælti við Helga Njálsson, ‘Gakktu út með mér, ok mun ek kasta yfir þik kvenskikkju ok falda þik með hofuðdúki.’
Hann talðið undan fyrst, en þó gerði hann þetta fyrir þeim þeira.
Ástríðr vafið hofuðdúk at hofþið Helga, en Þórhildr kona Skarphedíns lagði yfir hann skikkjuna, ok gekk hann út á meðal þeira, ok þá gekk út Þorgerðr Njálssdóttir ok Helga, systir hennar, ok mart annat fólk.
En er Helgi kom út, mælti Flosi, ‘Sú er há kona ok mikil um herðar er þar fórr. Takið þana ok haldið henni.’
En er Helgi heyrði þetta, kastaði hann skikkjunni. Hann hafði haft sverð undir hendi sér ok hjó til manns, ok kom í skjöldinn ok af spordinn ok fótinn af manninum. Pá kom Flosi at ok hjó á hálssinn Helga svá at þegar top af hofuðit.
Flosi gekk þá at dyrum ok kallaði á Njál ok kvazk vildu tala við hann ok Bergþóru. Njáll gerir nú svá. Flosi mælti:
‘Útgöngu vil ek bjóða þér, Njáll bóndi, því at þú brennr ómakligr inni.’
Njáll mælti, ‘Eigi vil ek út ganga, því at ek em maðr gamall ok lítt til búinn at hefna sona minna, en ek vil eigi lifa við skómm.’
Flosi mælti þá til Bergþóru, ‘Gakktu út, húsfreyja, því at ek vil þik fyrir öngan mun í mannin ok þegar endan hafðu í manninum.
Bergþóra mælti, ‘Ek var ung gefin Njáli. Hefi ek því heitit honum at eitt skyldi ganga yfir okkr bæði.’
Síðan gengu flau inn bæði. Bergþóra mælti:
‘Hvat skulu vit nú til ráða taka?’
‘Ganga munu vit til hvílu okkarrar,’ segir Njáll, ‘ok leggjask niðr; hefi ek lengi værugjarn verit.’
Hon mælti þá við sveininn Þórð Kára-són, ‘Þik skal út bera, ok skaltu eigi inni brenna.’
‘Hinu hefir þú mér heitit, amma,’ segir sveinninn, ‘at vit skyldim aldri skilja meðan ek vilda hjá þér vera, en mér þikkir miklu betra at deyja með ykkur þóðr Njális en lifa eptir.’
Hon bar þá sveininn til hvílunnar. Njáll mælti við brytja sinn:
‘Nú skaltu sjá hver vit leggjumsk niðr ok hversu ek by um okkr, því at ek ætla heðan hvergi at hrærask, hvárt sem mér angrar reykr eða bruni. Máttu nú nær geta hver beina okkarrar er at leita.’

150 hana M.
Hann sagði svá vera skyldu.

Þar hafði slatrát verit uxa einum, ok lá þar húðin. Njáll mælti við brytjann at hann skylendi breiða yfir þau húðina, ok hann hét því. Þau leggjask nú niðr bæði í rúmit ok leggja sveininn í millum sín. Þá signdu þau sik ok sveininn ok fálu Guði þond sína á hendi ok mæltu þat síðast svá menn heyrði. Þá tók brytinn húðina ok breiddi yfir þau ok gekk út síðan.17 Ketill ór Mörk tók í móti honum ok kippti honum út.18 Hann spurði vandliga at Njáli, mági sínum, en brytinn sagði allt ít sanna. Ketill mælti,

‘Mikill harmr er at oss kveðinn, er vér skulum svá mikla ógæfu saman eiga.’

Skarpheðinn sá er faðir hans lagðisk niðr ok hversu hann bjó um sík. Hann mælti þá:

‘Snemma ferr faðir várr at rekkju, ok er þat sem ván er: hann er maðr gamall.’

Þá tóku þeir Skarpheðinn ok Kári ok Grímur brandana jafnskjót sem ofan duttu, ok skutu út á þá, ok gekk því um hríð. Þá skutu þeir spjótum inn at þeim, en þeir tóku þoll á lopti ok sendu út aptr. Flosi bað þá hætta at skjóta, ‘því at oss muni þoll vápnaskipti þungt ganga við þá. Megu þer nú vel bíða þess er eldrinn vinnr þá.’

Þeir gera nú svá. Þá fellu ofan stórviðinir ör ræfrinu.

Skarpheðinn mælti þá, ‘Nú mun faðir minn dauðr vera, ok hefir hvárki heyrt til hans styn né hósta.’

Þeir gengu þá í skálælandann. Þar var fallit ofan þvertré ok brunnit mjök í miðju. Kári mælti til Skarpheðins:

‘Hlauþ-tu hér út, ok mun ek beina at með þér, en ek mun hlaupa þegar eptir, ok munu vit þá báðir í brott komask ef vit breytum svá, því at hingat leggr allan reykinn.’

Skarpheðinn mælti, ‘Þu skalt hlaupa fyrri, en ek mun þegar á hæla þer.’

‘Ekki er þat ráð,’ segir Kári, ‘því at ek komisk vel annars staðar út þótt hér gangi eigi.’

‘Eigi vil ek þat,’ segir Skarpheðinn. ‘Hlauptu út fyrri, en ek mun þegar eptir.’

‘Þat er hverjum manni boðit at leita sér lífs meðan kostr er,’ segir Kári, ‘ok skal ek ok svá gera. En þó mun nú sá skilnaðr með okkr
verða at vit munum aldri sjásk síðan, því at ef ek hleyp ór eldimum, þá
mun <ek> eigi hafa skap til at hlaupa inn aprtr í eldinn til þín, ok mun
þá sína leið fara hvárr okkar.’

‘Pat hlægir mik,’ segir Skarpheðinn, ‘ef þú kemsk á brott, mágr,
attu mun hefna mín.’

Pá tók Kári einn setstokk loganda í hænd sér ok hleypr út eptir þver-
trénu. Kastar hann þá stokkinum út af þekjunni, ok fell hann at þeim
er úti váru fyrir. Þeir hlupu þá undan. Pá loguðu klæðin þll ál Kára ok
svá hárit. Hann steypir sér þá út af þekjunni ok stiklar svá með
reykinum.

Pá mælti einn maðr er þar var næstr, ‘Hvárt hljóp þar maðr út af
þekjunni?’

‘Fjarri fór þat,’ segir annarr, ‘heldr kastaði þar Skarpheðinn eldi-
stokki at oss.’

Síðan grunuðu þeir þat ekki. Kári hljóp til þess er hann kom at læk
einum. Hann kastaði sér þar í ofan ok sløkkti á sér eldinn. Síðan hljóp
hann með reykinum í gróf nökkura ok hvíldi sik, ok er þat síðan kölluð
Káragróf.

214 sjásk M, ‘saaz’ R.
Notes

10 The dalr is a depression in the hill (hváll) on which the farmhouse stood. It can still be seen, but is too small to have concealed the 100 men said (in ch. 124) to have taken part in the burning, together with the two horses of each (ÍF XII 325, note 3).

11 Skarpheiðinn is described as having an ugly mouth and protruding teeth (ch. 25), and his grin emphasises his threatening appearance at many points in the saga.

12 The Christianity of the burners is emphasised by their having stopped at the church at Kirkjubœr to pray on their way to Bergþórs-hváll (ch. 126).

13 Grani is the son of Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi, but is said to resemble his mother Hallgerðr in temperament (ch. 75).

14 The use of the chickweed to kindle the fire that will burn Njáll and Bergþóra was predicted by an old servant-woman, Sæunn, but Skarpheiðinn refused to remove it, since fate cannot be avoided (ch. 124).

15 Þórhalla’s father, Ásgrímr Eilliða-Grímsson, and her brother Þórhallr (fostered by Njáll, who taught him law) later conduct the lawsuit against the burners.

16 Þórðr, son of Kári and of Helga Njálsdóttir, has been fostered by Njáll (ch. 109).

17 The ox-hide covering Njáll and Bergþóra provides a rational explanation for the undamaged state of their bodies when they are found, but this state is also used to imply an almost saint-like quality in Njáll (ch. 132).

18 Ketill of Mørk is one of the Sigfússynir, and therefore among Njáll’s attackers; but he is also the husband of Njáll’s daughter Þórgerðr, who has left the house along with the other women of the household (line 148).
Njáls saga
The name *Grágás* (literally ‘grey goose’) is a convenient if somewhat arbitrary label of obscure origin used collectively for the laws of the medieval Icelandic Commonwealth as preserved in a number of manuscripts. The two most important manuscripts are GkS 1157 fol. (also called Codex Regius or, as here, Konungsbók; = K) and AM 334 fol. (also known as Staðarhólsbók; = S). K is normally dated to c.1260, Staðarhólsbók to c.1280. Other manuscripts or fragments which preserve parts of *Grágás* include AM 315 d fol. (two leaves), written perhaps as early as c.1150–75 and one of the oldest Icelandic manuscripts in existence.

Compared with other laws of medieval Scandinavia, *Grágás* is a work of enormous size and detail. In Vilhjálmur Finsen’s edition of 1852, the Konungsbók text of *Grágás* takes up some 460 pages; printed in the same series (also in 1852) with identical format and type, the next longest of the early Scandinavian laws, *Erik’s law of Zealand* (cf. MS 384), covers only about 130 pages.

The contents of K may be roughly divided into fifteen sections, as follows (the symbol § is used for the chapters into which the texts of *Grágás* are divided in Finsen’s editions): (1) Kristinna laga páttur (‘Christian laws section’, §§ 1–19); (2) Píngskapapáttur (‘Assembly procedures section’, §§ 20–85); (3) Vígslóði (‘Treatment of homicide’, §§ 86–112); (4) *Baugatal* (‘The wergild ring list’, § 113) (together with *Griðamál*, ‘Truce speech’, § 114, and *Tryggðamál*, ‘Peace guarantee speech’, § 115); (5) *Lögðogumanspáttur* (‘The lawspeaker’s section’, § 116); (6) Löggréttupáttur (‘The Law Council section’, § 117); (7) *Arfapáttur* (‘Inheritance section’, §§ 118–27); (8) *Ómagabálkr* (‘Dependents section’, §§ 128–43); (9) *Festapáttur* (‘Betrothals section’, §§ 144–71); (10) *Landbrigðapáttur* (‘Land-claims section’, §§ 172–20); (11) *Um fjárleigur* (‘On hire of property’, §§ 221–26); (12) *Rannsóknappáttur* (‘Searches section’, §§ 227–33); (13) *Um hreppaskil* (‘On commune obligations’, §§ 234–36); (14) A section containing miscellaneous articles relating to such diverse matters as verbal injury by poetry or harm from tame bears, §§ 234–54; (15) *Um tíundargjald* (‘On tithe payment’, together with further miscellaneous provisions, §§ 255–68). The texts of K and S differ substantially. Staðarhólsbók does not have sections corresponding to (2), (4), (5), (6), (12), (13), (14) and (15) and the sections it does have appear in the order (1), (7), (8), (9), (11),
(3), (10). But sometimes matter in K in the sections absent in S is paralleled by matter in other sections present in S. Where the matter of the two texts is essentially the same, S is very often more detailed, better organised and has more ‘modern’ content than K. And both S and other manuscripts contain much matter not found in K at all.

A long tradition lies behind the preserved texts of Grágás, stretching back to oral recitations of what must have been essentially heathen law by the first lawspeakers at the Alþingi in the fourth decade of the tenth century (cf. Text VIII (c) and notes 19 and 21 to that text). The acceptance of Christianity in 999 must inevitably have led to profound changes in the law (cf. VIII:123–43). Further, in 1096 or 1097 a law of tithe was introduced (cf. VIII:150–68; HOIC 147–53). And in the period 1122–33, Kristinna laga þátttr was compiled and recorded in written form (cf. HOIC 160–69). Meanwhile, in the winter of 1117–18, at the home of Hafliði Másson at Breiðabólstaðr (in present-day Vestur-Húnavatnssýsla), some, at least, of the oral secular laws had also been committed to writing under the supervision of Bergþórr Hrafnsson, lawspeaker at the time, and other legal experts (cf. VIII:168–80; HOIC 89–93; Laws I 9–13). The result of these men’s work was doubtless the book referred to in K § 117 (cf. Laws I 190–91) as skrá sú er Hafliði lét gera (‘the screed which Hafliði had made’), called Hafliðaskrá by modern scholars, and it is generally supposed that the preserved manuscripts of Grágás (apart from Kristinna laga þátttr) go back in part ultimately to Hafliðaskrá. Law-making did not cease with the appearance of Hafliðaskrá and Kristinna laga þátttr, and texts of Grágás would have proliferated, developed and been expanded in various ways over the period after 1130, not least as a result of new legislation by the Law Council (lögþetts). After Iceland’s submission to the Norwegian king in 1262–64, the main part of Grágás was superseded by Járnþóta in 1271 (itself replaced by Jónsbók in the early 1280s). Kristinna laga þátttr, however, remained in force in the diocese of Skálholt until 1275 and in the diocese of Hólar until 1354, and other sections of Grágás continued to be invoked in cases for which the much briefer Jónsbók provided insufficient guidance.

It is uncertain how Grágás acquired the distinctly literary quality it has in contrast to that of the continental Scandinavian laws of the Middle Ages which are far more oral and primitive in their style. It could well have done so in connection with the first writing down of
the laws in the second decade of the twelfth century (cf. Ólafur Lárusson 1958, 87–89; Laws I 14–15).

Grágás gives us a picture of numerous aspects of life, both everyday and ceremonial, in the medieval Icelandic Commonwealth. In many respects it presents a different and truer picture than many of our other sources (such as the Sagas of Icelanders). The passage selected here as a sample is the ‘Lawspeaker’s section’ (Lógsögumannsþáttr), only preserved in K (pp. 83a17–84a14), where it is the shortest section (consisting of a single chapter, § 116). The lawspeaker would have been a central figure in public life in Iceland during the Common-wealth period and particularly prominent at the meetings of the General Assembly (Alþingi) held every summer at Þingvellir and attended by people from all over the country. He was elected for a term of three summers but could be re-elected. At the annual meetings of the Alþingi he had the important function of presiding at the Law Council, the foremost legislative body in the country. He also had the duty of reciting Pínskapapaþátttr at Lógrberg (‘the Law Rock’) every summer and the rest of the laws over the three-year period of his office. For a fuller account of the lawspeaker’s position within the framework of the constitution of the Icelandic commonwealth, the student is referred to the chapter ‘Form of government’ in HOIC 35–93, supplemented by a reading of Pínskapapaþátttr and Logrèttuþátttr as well, of course, as the passage edited here (see Laws I 53–38, 189–93, 187–88).

There were some 43 lawspeakers from the time of the institution of the Alþingi until 1271 and it is possible to draw up a complete list of them (see p. 389 below and Jón Sigurðsson 1886, 1–4) based on medieval sources such as Íslendingabók and lists in the manuscripts DG 11, which also contains a version of Snorra Edda (see pp. 15–21 above), and AM 106 fol., which also contains a version of Landnámabók (see pp. 255–60 above). The list extends from the shadowy Úlfjótr (cf. VIII:39–41) to Þorleifr hreiðr Ketilsson (cf. III:44 above). It includes such notables as Þorgeirr Þorkelsson Ljósvetningagoði who, according to Ari Þorgilsson (VIII:116–43), played an important role in the conversion of Iceland to Christianity; Skapti Þóroddsson, who held the position longest of all (1004–30) and who must have had some hand in changes to the law resulting from the Conversion and also in the institution of the Fifth Court (fímtardómr, cf. HOIC 70–74; Laws I 83–88, 244–45); the eleventh-century poet Markús Skeggjason
(died 1107; cf. VIII:152 and note 51); and in the thirteenth century three prominent political and literary figures, all members of the Sturlung family, Snorri Sturluson and his nephews Sturla Þórðarson and Óláfr Þórðarson.

Apart from his official function as an authority on legal matters, the lawspeaker would have been a repository for much other information, not only current politics and gossip, but also history, lore and tradition. Indeed, the annual meetings of the Alþingi attended by people from all over the country and with the lawspeaker at the centre of its proceedings must have been a strong force for the preservation of a language that was hardly marked by regional differences and of a vigorous and dynamic oral tradition during the days of the Icelandic Commonwealth. This oral tradition would have concerned the past as well as the present and would have become a rich source for thirteenth-century Icelanders writing about bygone times.

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*M* under Alþingi; Godi; Grágás; Iceland; Laws 2. Iceland.


[A concordance of the Konungsbók text]

For maps of Þingvöllr (with for instance the site of Lögberg marked), see *HOIC* 42, *Laws* I 281, Björn Porsteinsson (1987), 9–11.
XXVII: GRÁGÁS

Lógsögumannspáttir

Svá er enn mælt at sá mæðr skal vera nokkurð ávalt á landi óru er skyldr sé til þess at segja lög mónnum, ok heitir sá lógsöguðar. En ef lógsögunams missir við, þá skal ór þeim fjórðungi taka manna til at segja þingskop upp it næsta sumar er hann hafði síðarst heimili í. 1

Menn skulu þá taka sér lógsögumann ok sýsla þat fóstudag hverr vera skal áðr sakir sé lýstar. 2 Pat er ok vel ef allir menn verða sáttir á einn mann. En ef lógréttumál nokkurð stendr við því er flestir vilja, ok 3 skal þá hluta í hvern fjórðung lógsaga skal hverfa. En þeir fjörðungsmenn er þá hefr hlutir í hag borit skulu taka lógsögumann þann sem þeir verða sáttir á, hvárt sem sór er ór þeirra fjórðungi eða ór þeim fjórðungi nokkurum, þeirra manna er þeir megu þat geta at. Nú verða fjörðungsmenn eigi að sáttir, ok skal þá afl ráða með þeim. En ef þeir eru jafnmargir er lógréttusetu eigu er sinn lógsögumann vilja hvárir, þá skulu þeir ráða er biskup sá fellr í fullting með er í þeim fjórðungi er. 5 Nú eru lógréttumenn nokkurir þeir er níta því er aðrir vilja, fái engan mann sjálfir til lógsogu, ok eigu enskis að þeirra orð at metask. 6

Lógsögumann á í lógréttu at taka, þá er menn hafa ráðit hverr vera skal, ok skal einn mæðr skilja fyrir en aðrir gjalda samkvæði á, ok skal þrjú sumur samfast inn sami hafa, nema menn vili eigi bæytt hafa. 7 Ór þeirri lógréttu er lógsögumaðr er tekinn skulu menn ganga til Logbergs ok skal hann ganga til Logbergs ok setjask í rúm sitt ok skipa Logberg þeim mónnum sem hann vill. En menn skulu þá mæla máulum sínnum.

Pat er ok mælt at lógsogumaðr er skyldr til þess at segja upp lógbáttu alla á þremur sumrum hverjum en þingskof hvert sumar. 8 Lógsögumaðr á upp at segja syknuleyfi óll at Logbergi svá at meiri hlutir manna sé þar, ef því um náir, ok misseristal, ok svá þat ef menn skulu koma fjyrri til Alþingis en tíu vikur eru af sumri, 9 ok tína imbrudagahald ok fóstuganga, ok skal hann þetta allt mæla at þinglausnum.

Pat er ok at lógsogumaðr skal svá gerla þátta alla upp segja at engi viti einna miklugi gorr. En ef honum vinnsk eigi fröðleikir til þess, þá skal hann eiga stefnu við fimm lógmenn í næstu dögur áðr eða fleiri, 10

9 En] The scribe first wrote Ef then altered it to En. 15 fellr] The scribe first wrote er then altered it to fellr. 20 hafa] hafi K.
þá er hann má helzt geta af, áðr hann segi hvern þátt upp; ok verðr hvern maðr útlagr þremr þorkum er ólofat gengr á mál þeirra, ok á þógsogumaðr sök þá.

Lógsogumaðr skal hafa hvert sumar tvau hundruð álna vaðmála af lögréttufjár fyrir staf sitt.11 Hann á ok útlegðir allar hálfar, þær er á Alþingi eru dömdar hér,12 ok skal döma eindaga á þeim öllum annat sumar hér í búandakirkjugarði,13 miðvikudag í mitt þing. Útlagr er hvern maðr þremr þorkum er fé lætr döma, ef hann segir eigi lógsogumanni til ok svá hverir dómsuppsöguváttar hafa verit.

Þat er ok, þá er lógsogumaðr hefr haft lírjú sumur lógsogu, ok skal hann þá segja upp þingskóp it fjórða sumar fóstudag inn fyrra í þingi. Þá er hann ok lauss frá lógsogu ef hann vill. Nú vill hann hafa lógsogu lengr, ef aðrir unna honum, þá skal inn meiri hlutr lögréttumanna ráða.

Þat er ok at lógsogumaðr er útlagr þremr þorkum ef hann kemr eigi til Alþingis fóstudag inn fyrra, áðr menn gangi til Logbergs, at nauðsynjalausu, enda eigu menn þá at taka annan lógsogumann ef vilja.

Notes

1 I.e. some of the material from Þingskapaþáttr (Assembly Procedures Section, Laws I 53–138), and probably some of Lógsogumannsþáttr (The Lawspeaker’s Section, Laws I 187–88) and Lögréttufjátr (The Law Council Section, Laws I 189–93) too.

2 I.e. lögréttumenn (members of the Law Council).

3 I.e. the first Friday of the Assembly, which would have been the one between 19th and 25th June. Cf. Laws I 53–54.

4 Opening a main clause that stands after a subordinate clause (especially one beginning with ef or nú = ef) with ok instead of þá is especially common in legal texts, but also occurs quite widely elsewhere (see lines 13, 17, 43 below and Texts II:21, XXI:38, and cf. Glossary under ok, nú, ef, þá1 and Gr 3.9.9).

38 fyrir] written twice in K at line-division.
5 The Skálaholt bishop had authority over the East, South and West Quarters, the Hólar bishop over the Northern Quarter. Cf. Extract VIII, notes 54–55; Laws I 35–36.

6 I.e. after the three years, a new lawspeaker will be appointed unless men do not wish to have him changed.

7 Cf. Laws I 193.

8 The misseristal would have been the calendar for the coming year. Cf. Misseristal (Calendar), Laws I 51 and Laws I 111–12.

9 Ember Days (imbrudagar) are four groups each of three days at various times of the year observed in the Middle Ages as days of fasting and abstinence.

10 Sc. mælt ‘prescribed (that)’ (cf. lines 25 above and 43 and 48 below; Laws I 12–13).

11 The only source of Law Council funds (lögþettufé) that is mentioned in Grágás is payments for leave to marry within the remoter degrees of kinship (Laws II 55, 60–61, 81), but it may be that all licences had to be paid for. The lawspeaker was the only paid officer under the laws of the Icelandic Commonwealth.

12 See Laws I 80 for an exception to this. It is also stated that he shares in fines imposed at the spring assembly he participates in, and that if he himself is fined for failure to discharge all the duties required of him, half is due to the man who prosecutes him and half to the judges of the case (Laws I 193). Cf. lines 48–51 below.

13 We hear of two churches at Æingvellir during the commonwealth period, one in public ownership which collapsed in a storm in 1118, the other, known as búandakirkja, belonged to the local farmer and would have been a burial church (cf. Laws I 29, footnote 17). It is the churchyard of this latter which must be referred to here and which is often mentioned as the legally prescribed place for payments (e.g., besides here, Laws I 172, 205; cf. Björn Þorsteinsson 1987, 49–54).