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CONTENTS

<i>HÁRBARÐSLJÓÐ</i> : PARODY, PRAGMATICS AND THE SOCIO-MYTHIC CONTROVERSY. Martin Arnold	5
THE CULT OF ST BLAISE IN ICELAND. Margaret Cormack	27
THE CONSTRUCTION OF DIPLOMACY IN THE VARIOUS ACCOUNTS OF SIGVATR ÞÓRÐARSON'S <i>BERSQGLISVÍSUR</i> . Gareth Lloyd Evans	49
SNORRI VERSUS THE COPYISTS: AN INVESTIGATION OF A STYLISTIC TRAIT IN THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITIONS OF <i>EGILS SAGA</i> , <i>HEIMSKRINGLA</i> AND THE <i>PROSE EDDA</i> . Haukur Þorgeirsson	61
TWO MAJOR GROUPS IN THE OLDER MANUSCRIPT TRADITION OF <i>NÍTÍÐA SAGA</i> . Sheryl McDonald Werronen	75
NORDIC MEDIEVAL TEXTS: BEYOND 'LITERATURE' AND 'SOURCES'. REFLECTIONS ON EXPANDING INTERDISCIPLINARY BORDER-ZONES. Lars Boje Mortensen	95
JÓNAS KRISTJÁNSSON	113

REVIEWS

NINE SAGA STUDIES. THE CRITICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE ICELANDIC SAGAS. By Ármann Jakobsson. (Joanne Shortt Butler)	116
THE LEGENDS OF THE SAINTS IN OLD NORSE-ICELANDIC PROSE. By Kirsten Wolf. (Richard Cole)	118
ALTWESTNORDISCHE FARBSEMANTIK. By Georg C. Brückmann. (Anatoly Liberman)	121
FJÖLD VEIT HON FRÆÐA. UTVALDE ARBEID AV ELSE MUNDAL. Edited by Odd Einar Haugen, Bernt Øyvind Thorvaldsen and Jonas Wellendorf. (Kirsten Wolf)	123
REVISITING THE POETIC EDDA. ESSAYS ON OLD NORSE HEROIC LEGEND. Edited by Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington. (Michael Hart) ..	125
THE NORDIC APOCALYPSE. APPROACHES TO <i>VQLUSPÁ</i> AND NORDIC DAYS OF JUDGEMENT. Edited by Terry Gunnell and Annette Lassen. (David H. Varley)	128

THE METERS OF OLD NORSE EDDIC POETRY. COMMON GERMANIC INHERITANCE AND NORTH GERMANIC INNOVATION. By Seiichi Suzuki. (Haukur Þorgeirsson)	131
THE POETIC EDDA III. MYTHOLOGICAL POEMS. Edited and translated by Ursula Dronke. (John McKinnell)	133
SKALDIC POETRY OF THE SCANDINAVIAN MIDDLE AGES I. POETRY FROM THE KINGS' SAGAS 1. FROM MYTHICAL TIMES TO C.1035. Edited by Diana Whaley. (Erin Michelle Goeres)	139
HÁKONAR SAGA HÁKONARSONAR. BŒGLUNGA SAGA. MAGNÚSS SAGA LAGABÆTIS. Edited by Sverrir Jakobsson, Þorleifur Hauksson and Tor Ulset. (Edward Carlsson Browne)	142
MEDIEVAL TRANSLATIONS AND CULTURAL DISCOURSE. THE MOVEMENT OF TEXTS IN ENGLAND, FRANCE AND SCANDINAVIA. By Sif Ríkharðsdóttir. (Erin Michelle Goeres)	145
FRANCIA ET GERMANIA. STUDIES IN <i>STRENGLEIKAR</i> AND <i>ÞIDREKS SAGA AF BERN</i> . Edited by Karl G. Johansson and Rune Flaten. (Sif Ríkharðsdóttir)	147
SETTLEMENT AND LORDSHIP IN VIKING AND EARLY MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA. Edited by Bjørn Poulsen and Søren Sindbæk. (Chris Callow)	150
THE VIKING AGE. IRELAND AND THE WEST. PAPERS FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIFTEENTH VIKING CONGRESS, CORK, 18–27 AUGUST 2005. Edited by John Sheehan and Donnchadh Ó Corráin. (Denis Casey)	152
FAMILIA AND HOUSEHOLD IN THE MEDIEVAL ATLANTIC PROVINCE. Edited by Benjamin T. Hudson. (Helen Imhoff)	154
NORSE GREENLAND. SELECTED PAPERS FROM THE HVALSEY CONFERENCE 2008. Edited by Jette Arneborg, Georg Nyegaard and Orri Vésteinsson. (Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough)	156
EARLY CORNISH SCULPTURE. By Ann Preston-Jones and Elisabeth Okasha. (John Hines)	159
GODS AND SETTLERS. THE ICONOGRAPHY OF NORSE MYTHOLOGY IN ANGLO-SCANDINAVIAN SCULPTURE. By Lilla Kopár. (Victoria Whitworth)	160
RUNES. A HANDBOOK. By Michael P. Barnes. (Tom Birkett)	163

HÁRBARÐSLJÓÐ: PARODY, PRAGMATICS AND THE SOCIO-MYTHIC CONTROVERSY

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Introduction

HÁRBARÐSLJÓÐ IS A SIXTY-STANZA EDDIC POEM containing what, in general terms, can be regarded as a flyting exchange, a ritualised verbal contest in which the contestants use various strategies to demean each other.¹ Suggestions for the date of the poem's composition are various and range from the late tenth century to the early thirteenth century. The drama of *Hárbarðsljóð* rests on the verbal duel between the Norse god Þórr and a ferryman calling himself Hárbarðr (Grey-beard). As Hárbarðr is given as a byname for Óðinn in *Grímnismál* (st. 49/7), and as both the *Poetic Edda* and the *Prose Edda* are consistent in identifying Þórr as the eldest son of Óðinn, this particular flyting exchange concerns a rivalry between father and son.² Yet because Þórr remains oblivious throughout of the true identity of his adversary, he could be regarded as being at a disadvantage, having declared his own identity almost from the outset (st. 9).

The prose introduction to the poem tells us that Þórr *fór ór austurvegi* 'was travelling from the east', so returning to Ásgarðr from the land of the gods' chief antagonists, the races of giants and trolls. In order to shorten his journey home, Þórr needs to cross a stretch of water, the characteristic 'sundering flood' of many such tense encounters in early Germanic literature (Clover 1979, 125–26) but Hárbarðr and his boat are at the other side. Þórr, who does not seem to see himself in a supplicant position, begins aggressively, addressing Hárbarðr as *sveinn sveina* 'a boy's boy' (st. 1), who in return calls Þórr *karl karla* 'a peasant's peasant' (st. 2). Thus the haughty Hárbarðr refuses to ferry Þórr and the

¹ The poem is preserved whole in Codex Regius (GKS 2365 4to), and from stanza 17/7 to the end in the Arnarnagnæan manuscript AM 748 4to. This study uses the edition of Gustav Neckel and Hans Kuhn (1962, 78–87). Translations are based on those of Carolyne Larrington (1996).

² Some earlier critics had tended toward the view that Hárbarðr's behaviour suggests that he is more likely to be Loki than Óðinn. For an argument to this effect published in 1889, see Reaves 2010.

insults turn to threats of physical violence over the first fourteen stanzas, chiefly from Þórr. Thereafter, the exchanges in much of the rest of the poem are characterised by vaunting speeches, each god claiming to have performed greater feats. While Þórr's boastings centre exclusively on his triumphs as a warrior, Hárbardr's boastings frequently concern his sexual prowess and his mastery of magical practices. Much, however, of what is claimed by both gods is unremarked elsewhere in Old Norse sources and is therefore obscure to us, such as, for example, Þórr's reference to an attack made on him by *Svárang's synir* 'Svárangr's sons' (st. 29). As Hárbardr refuses to comply with Þórr's demand to be ferried, the end result is that Þórr has no alternative but to take the long way home, for which he has to ask directions from Hárbardr. All critics have, to a greater or lesser degree, judged that Hárbardr ultimately wins the contest and that Þórr is humiliated.

Hárbarðsljóð is in many ways exceptional when compared with other poems in the *Poetic Edda*. First, the poem includes ritual exchange sections broadly identifiable as the ethnic categories *senna* and *mannjafnaðr* which, when considered in the context of other comparable episodes in Eddas, sagas and early Scandinavian histories, appear to flout the usual conventions, not least in what Hárbardr claims as points of honour. Secondly, *Hárbarðsljóð* is a muddle of metrical forms, among which critics have noted chaotically irregular verse lengths in *fornyrðislag*, *málaháttur*, *ljóðaháttur* and *galdralag*, as well as passages in prose. Taken at face value, *Hárbarðsljóð* is a puzzle. Yet the question is 'what kind of a puzzle?' Is it one due to incompetence, thus, 'the most nearly formless of all Eddic poems' (Bellows 1923, 121) or one deliberately and carefully crafted with an identifiable, if unusual, structure? Modern views, two in particular, have supported the latter view but for different reasons.

On the one hand, Carol Clover's article of 1979 argues that *Hárbarðsljóð* is essentially a genre parody, a work of 'sophistication and esthetic control' (1979, 138), in which the flyting exchanges, the term 'flyting' being the one preferred by Clover, are calculated violations of conventions. On the other hand, the study by Marcel Bax and Tineke Padmos (1983) counters Clover's argument, claiming instead that, far from being a genre parody, *Hárbarðsljóð* is better regarded as a complex form of the traditional genre involving 'two competent language users who . . . construct a daring dialogue that does not lack sophistication' (1983, 158–59). Beyond these two studies, which agree on little other than that careful scrutiny of the poem reveals authorial sophistication, virtually nothing of substance has been said about *Hárbarðsljóð*. Be-

tween them, Clover and Bax and Padmos appear to have brought about a critical stalemate.

The first aim of this study is to consider in what ways such differences in interpretation are presented. The poem will then be examined from the point of view of the underlying significance of an Óðinn versus Þórr contest. Much of this discussion will be centred on stanza 24, lines 3-4, where Hárbarðr slights Þórr by claiming that Óðinn is the keeper of fallen earls, whereas Þórr gets only the breed of serfs, for this is where many critics, prior to this particular critical controversy, have seen a socio-mythic context. Interestingly, this is an aspect of *Hárbarðsljóð* which Clover rejects entirely and Bax and Padmos leave unremarked.

Pragmatics versus parody

The most obvious difference between Clover's study and that of Bax and Padmos is one of approach. Clover's formalist analysis of *Hárbarðsljóð*, although in itself amounting to a radical departure from previous scholarship, is nonetheless firmly rooted in Old Norse–Icelandic scholarly tradition. Bax and Padmos, by contrast, are specialists in discourse analysis or, more specifically in this case, historical pragmatics.³ As a consequence, the two approaches begin from significantly different premises. While both Clover and Bax and Padmos see *Hárbarðsljóð* as divided into three distinct sections comprised of sub-sectional sequences, they differ as to where exactly in the poem these sections and sequences begin and end. Clover sees the overarching structure as: stanzas 1–13, a preliminary; stanzas 14–54, the flyting proper; and stanzas 55–60, the conclusion (1979, 131). Bax and Padmos see the structure as: stanzas 1–14, *senna*; stanzas 15–46, *mannjafnaðr*; and stanzas 47–60, 'an aftermath in which the outcome of the foregoing *mannjafnaðr* is effectuated' (1983, 151). These differences of judgement are relatively slight in relation to the first and last sections but, in relation to the internal sequences in the long central section, they become more significant. Much of this depends on where in the sequences the flyting formula *Hvat vanntu þá meðan?* 'What were you doing meanwhile?' is placed.

There are nine instances of the formula, all of which fall in the central section of the poem (sts 15, 18, 19, 22, 23, 28, 29, 36 and 39). Clover divides this section into five four-stanza sequences, each beginning with Hárbarðr using the formula, and followed, in the next stanza, by Þórr

³ Bax and Padmos make particular reference to Labov 1972, especially ch. 9, 'Rules for Ritual Insults', 297–353; Dundes, Leach and Özkök 1972; and Bax 1981.

using it in response. The following two stanzas of this pattern are most often considered to be a deliberately engineered collapse of the traditional flying form. These sequences, argues Clover, are ‘the most schematic representations of what appears to be an underlying habit of mind’ (1979, 134). Stanzas which Clover considers not to fit this pattern are judged to be either partial or proto-sequences (e.g. sts 47–49), or ‘interstitial verbal byplay’ (sts 26–27 and sts 32–35) (1979, 135). Bax and Padmos identify a much more complex pattern in terms of Turn, Move(s) and Act(s).⁴ In this, the formula opens and closes the sequence, the lengths of which vary from three to eight stanzas. No stanzas are excluded from Bax and Padmos’s pattern. For Clover, who wins or loses a particular exchange sequence is not the point. The real point is the extent to which the traditional flying form is being sabotaged, much of which depends on the contestants’ verbal dexterity. In this case, for Clover, the winner would always be Hárbarðr, for ‘Hárbarðr transcends the genre whereas Þórr doesn’t even rise to its minimal level’ (1979, 139). For Bax and Padmos, who do not recognise anything deviant in the poem, the contestant who wins or loses a sequence is of paramount significance. It is therefore important for Bax and Padmos to make quite clear exactly what particular type of flying characterises each section.

According to Bax and Padmos, the first, *senna* section of the poem entails a strategy which seeks to degrade or intimidate the addressee, while the central, *mannjafnaðr* section entails a strategy which seeks to assert the superiority of the speaker. Simply put, the difference between *senna* and *mannjafnaðr*, respectively, is the same as that between insult or threat, and boast. By contrast, Clover treats both flying categories as aspects of an exchange ‘typically organised in the basic pattern Claim, Denial, and Counterclaim’ (1979, 125).⁵ In Clover’s article on a flying episode in *Beowulf*, she acknowledges that *senna* and *mannjafnaðr* ‘may reflect a bifurcated prehistoric development’, but her ultimate judgement is that they have ‘no distinctive force as generic indicators’ (1980, 445).⁶ This, of course, is not to say that Clover cannot identify the differences between the forms when they are conspicuous. For example, in Þórr’s opening boast at stanza 15 Clover perceives ‘a perfect *mannjafnaðr* form’

⁴ For schematised structures of these exchanges, see Bax and Padmos 1983, 161 and Clover 1979, 134.

⁵ For a comprehensive discussion of the terms *senna* and *mannjafnaðr*, see Swenson 1991. For an influential discussion of *senna*, see Joseph Harris 1979.

⁶ This view is shared by Lönnroth 1978.

but this is the only stanza in *Hárbarðsljóð* where she notes such generic perfection (1979, 131).

At the risk of oversimplifying these methodological differences, Clover analyses the poem in terms of its relationship with, and differences from, other flying exchanges in early Germanic literature ‘whose normal rules were entirely familiar to an early audience—and whose breaches of the rules were, by the same token, recognizable as such’ (1979, 139). Bax and Padmos, alternatively, analyse it as a speech-act event which can be compared to other similar speech-act events, ancient and modern, in order to reveal its conventional, albeit complex, rule-bound nature. As the purpose of the Bax and Padmos approach is to demonstrate the Eddic homogeneity of the poem, it is also, in a sense, to set it outside any historical chronology of early Germanic literature. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that Bax and Padmos make no specific comment on the dating of *Hárbarðsljóð*, except to say that it ‘seems to testify to the existence of verbal duels preventing a physical conflict in an early phase of human history’ (1983, 171). Whilst it is also the case that Clover, too, expresses no precise opinion on the poem’s historical provenance, her argument that it is generic parody presupposes, by definition, a relatively late dating, for, as theorist Linda Hutcheon states, parody ‘subverts the traditional mention/usage distinction’ (1991, 69).

As noted above, where the first section of the poem begins and ends is broadly agreed by Clover and Bax and Padmos; nevertheless, their analyses of the particular exchanges in this section are at odds. After the opening exchange of insults between Þórr and Hárbarðr, where Clover sees Hárbarðr’s response as ‘firing back the enemy’s own spear or arrow’ (1979, 136), Þórr appears to adopt a more emollient tone, offering the reward of basic food provisions from his knapsack, a gesture that is ridiculed by the ferryman. Whereas Clover views this as ‘possibly a comic inversion of a more traditional and appropriate offer of gold’ (1979, 130 and 142 n. 30), Bax and Padmos eschew such ironised contexts, regarding it as a typifying ‘request for action’ (1983, 154). These differences in interpretation grow even wider in the exchange following when Hárbarðr tells Þórr that his mother is dead. While this assertion has to be regarded as malicious and untrue, especially given that in stanza 56 Hárbarðr refers to Fiǫrgyn, a byname for Jǫrð, as awaiting her son’s homecoming, Þórr typically seems to take matters literally and replies (st. 5):

‘Þat segir þú nú, er hveriom þiccir
mest at vita . . . ‘

You say now what most people would think great news . . .

For Clover, Þórr's response 'is neither poetic nor complete (he merely records his distress)' (1979, 130), but for Bax and Padmos, 'he effectively wards off the attack' and, what is more, Hárbarðr's subsequent change of subject and tactic in stanza 6 suggests that 'in his [Hárbarðr's] opinion, Þórr has well defended himself' (1983, 155).

The same analytical differences are apparent when Þórr asks the ferryman for his name and is told (st. 10):

‘Hárbarðr ec heiti, hylc um nafn sialdan.’

I am called Harbard, seldom do I hide my name.

Bax and Padmos view the request and the response in terms of a tussle for dominance, for Hárbarðr, having just been threatened by Þórr (st. 9), is nevertheless 'not afraid to say his name' and even feels confident enough to 'give additional information', in as much as he 'seldom' hides his name (1983, 156). Conversely, Clover notes Hárbarðr's 'mock piety' which 'sets the tone for the rest of the piece' (1979, 130). While Clover is conscious throughout of the performative nature of *Hárbarðsljóð*, Bax and Padmos make no mention of it. One consequence of ignoring this context is that Bax and Padmos can conclude that, in this *senna* section, the contestants are evenly matched, both verbally and in terms of knowledge of each other, which they deem to be a precondition for starting a *mannjafnaðr* exchange. It is irrelevant, for Bax and Padmos, that Þórr does not know Hárbarðr's true identity (1983, 157–58).

It is of little consequence whether the next section begins with Hárbarðr's claim that he will be as formidable a foe as Hrungrnir (st. 14), a reference to one of Þórr's most impressive victories over a giant, as Clover's structure determines, or whether it begins with Þórr's boast about this victory, followed by the first use of the formula question (st. 15), as Bax and Padmos's structure determines. The main point of contention rests on whether this section is consistent with traditional forms, particularly in respect of Hárbarðr's swagger about his sexual prowess, which often include his claims to have had sexual encounters with females of the very species that Þórr seeks to annihilate: the giants. Clover considers such boasts by Hárbarðr to be an unprecedented violation of the flyting form, wherein one contestant accuses the other of indulging an indolent 'soft life', the way of the sexually preoccupied stay-at-home, compared to their own heroic 'hard life', the way of the warrior adventurer (1979, 127–29). As Clover points out, such an accusation is crucial in deciding the outcome of a flyting exchange, the contestant charged with leading a soft life typically being the loser. However, as Bax and Padmos rightly

observe, in *Hárbarðsljóð* the soft life is claimed as a point of pride by the speaker, not as a matter of shame by an accuser.

Nonetheless, where Hárbarðr makes references to his dalliances with women (sts 16, 18, 20, 23 and 30), Clover does not regard this as a losing strategy. The whole point of Clover's argument is that *Hárbarðsljóð* is 'generic heresy' and, as such, Hárbarðr's 'soft life' sexual boasts should be seen in an ironic context (1979, 132). The key issue for Clover is the poem's relation to a generic norm, for this norm 'is tantamount to an invisible but constant, and authoritative, third presence' (1979, 139). Admittedly, Bax and Padmos have, to some extent, invalidated Clover's evidence for a hard life/soft life dichotomy in *Hárbarðsljóð* as being a hypertypical distortion of other ritualised exchanges; even so, by rejecting Clover's comic parody argument, they are now obliged to see Þórr's responses as also non-ironic. One example of the consequences of this critical divide comes early in the poem, when Þórr responds to Hárbarðr's first sexual boast at stanza 16 with a single line prose question (st. 17):

‘Hverso snúnoðo yðr konor yðrar?’

How did you turn the women to you?

Here, Bax and Padmos counter Clover's judgement that 'With this lame rejoinder the form collapses' (1979, 131) and instead judge that 'this request is defying in character: Þórr shows that he, so far, is not impressed' (1983, 160).

For reasons quite separate from which of these interpretations one might consider most persuasive, however, both estimations of what the poet might be signifying at this point are problematic. For instance, one might ask how any modern reader could truly know what Þórr's somewhat opaque question actually means here, for, without textual guidance, there is no way of calculating such things as intonation or body language. If, as was almost certainly the case, *Hárbarðsljóð* was intended as a performance piece, such matters would have been fundamental to any understanding of what was intended.⁷ That said, both studies are independently consistent in their judgements, Clover in her assessment of Þórr as verbally (and, so, comically) inadequate, where Bax and Padmos follow their intention of delivering an entirely literal interpretation of the poem. If Clover is correct, then one would have to imagine an audience beset by laughter; if

⁷ For a discussion of the performance and staging difficulties of *Hárbarðsljóð*, see Gunnell 1995, 269–74 and 353. See also Jón Helgason 1942–53, 35; and, for a discussion of the real-life ritual setting of Eddic poetry, see Schjødtt 2008, 89–97.

Bax and Padmos are correct, then one would have to imagine an audience either in rapt judgemental attention, or perhaps, like sports fans, urging on their personal favourite to victory.

So concludes the first exchange sequence of this second section, which Bax and Padmos judge to have been won by Hárbarðr. The second sequence (for Clover, sts 18–21; for Bax and Padmos, sts 19–22), finds Þórr faced with another of Hárbarðr's sexual boasts, which, in stanza 20, also includes his bragging about how he used a giant's gift of a magic staff (*gambanteinn*) to overcome him. This Þórr condemns as dishonourable in another single line of prose (st. 21). According to Clover, Hárbarðr's failure to conclude his boast with the challenge formula 'on which Þórr's ability to generate a full stanza so utterly depends . . . robs Þórr of a real reply and reduces him to fragmentary threats of violence or expressions of confusion or rage' (1979, 133). Clover refers to Þórr's inept rupturing of the traditional flyting form as 'the punch lines *manqués*' (1979, 135), obviously with an audience reaction in mind.

Here again Bax and Padmos see things differently, for, according to their analysis, Þórr's brief response demonstrates his rejection of Hárbarðr's 'dominance proclaiming action' by not 'acknowledging [his] achievement' (1983, 161). Nonetheless, say Bax and Padmos, Hárbarðr seals victory in this sequence at stanza 22 by responding with a proverb, which 'justifies his behaviour by referring to *das Alltagswissen* of, presumably, his and his opponent's culture [thus] the act of validating an argument' (1983, 161). Unlike Clover, Bax and Padmos see nothing ironic in Hárbarðr's proverbial justification of what Þórr refers to as his *illr hugi* 'evil mind' (st. 21).

In the third, fourth and fifth sequences (for Clover, sts 22–25, sts 28–31 and sts 36–41; for Bax and Padmos, sts 23–28, sts 29–36 and sts 37–39), Clover identifies further illustrations of Þórr's limitations as a 'doctrinaire and monochromatic' flyter (1979, 135). One example of this is his 'ludicrously conventional' use of the formula (1979, 136), as in stanza 23 after his boasting about being the protector of mankind. This, suggests Clover, is just another way in which the poet draws attention to the god's simple-mindedness and mediocrity (1979, 135–36). Yet, for Hárbarðr, Þórr's wooden performance is grist to the mill, spurring him on to greater and greater verbal flamboyance, which, Clover implies, is signified in his resolutely deviant claims and counterclaims. As a result, says Clover, 'Þórr is, generically speaking, seduced and abandoned by his ironic adversary' (1979, 135). When regarded as parody, this is exactly the foil's role that Þórr has been given in this flyting pantomime.

Not so, according to Bax and Padmos, who not only see Þórr as a stalwart but also judge him to be the winner of both the fourth and fifth sequences, as they identify them. While Hárbarðr's tactic of 'mirroring and outmatching' Þórr in sequence three proves sufficient for him to be the winner (1983, 163), in sequence four (sts 29–36) it is Hárbarðr's turn to be on the back foot. This sequence, however, contains what may be considered the strangest exchanges in the entire poem.

In stanza 29 Þórr opens with a boast about bettering certain monstrous aggressors in the east, ending with the formula. This merely prompts Hárbarðr to mimic Þórr's opening, *Ec var austr* 'I was in the east' (st. 30), and boast of yet another sexual adventure, after which Þórr responds with yet another single line of prose (st. 31):

'Góð áttu þær mankynni þar þá.'

There were good things to be had from the girl there.

In this way, say Bax and Padmos, 'Þórr rejects the counter-claim by mockingly commenting on the event described' (1983, 162). Hárbarðr's response (st. 32) is then judged to be a jesting admission that Þórr's help would have been useful, to which Þórr replies (st. 33):

'Ec mynda þér þat veita, ef ec viðr of kæmiz.'

I'd have helped you with that, if I could have managed it.

This, argue Bax and Padmos, is where 'Þórr, trying to top his opponent, continues the joke by stating a precondition of his helpfulness (being present at the time)' (1983, 162). Hárbarðr responds (st. 34):

'Ec mynda þér þat trúá, nema þú mic í trygð véltir.'

I'd have trusted you with that, if you didn't betray my trust.

Thus, he 'reacts to Þórr's clever stroke with a *senna*-like insult' (1983, 163). Now it is Þórr's turn to deliver what appears to be more folk wisdom (st. 35):

'Emcat ec sá hælbitr sem húðscór forn á vár.'

I'm not such a heel-biter as an old leather shoe in spring.

In this way 'Þórr weakens the argument by denying the insulting proposition [and] corroborates his statement with an eloquent metaphor which has the force of a proverb' (1983, 163). Hárbarðr, 'seemingly out of wit', responds solely with the formula (st. 36) which, say Bax and Padmos, is 'completely devoid of meaning' (1983, 163). It is therefore concluded that Þórr has won in the previous stanza, so obliging Hárbarðr to yield.

Clover, perhaps a little too conveniently, brushes aside these exchanges, regarding them as little more than a conversational intermission (1979, 135), for, on the surface of things, they certainly seem to make no contribution to any comic or parodic thrust of the poem. Bax and Padmos, however, have clearly seen the exchanges in wholly conventional terms. This is somewhat baffling, for, just as was the case with stanza 17, it is very difficult to be sure what is being signified here. Had, for example, Bax and Padmos been using the terms now current in pragmatics analysis, they might well have identified a Co-operative Principle at work, rather than just another Face Threatening Act.⁸ As they themselves suggest, the two opponents appear, for a brief moment, to be sharing a joke when Þórr says he wishes he could have been there to help. Is it not also possible to regard these anomalous exchanges as a moment of father-son intimacy and verbal negotiation, one which descends into an otherwise unexplained cause for recrimination when Hárbarðr raises the issue of trust? Moreover, could not Þórr's proverb-like rejoinder be seen as a diplomatic assurance that he is not known for his untrustworthiness? Maybe, as Clover implies by ignoring them, these exchanges are not part of the flyting at all; nonetheless, they may still be something more than 'interstitial verbal byplay'. Perhaps, in these exchanges, *Hárbarðsljóð*'s caricatured masks of Þórr and Óðinn have momentarily been allowed to slip and something completely other is being hinted at. This is an issue that will be raised again in the next part of this study.

For Clover, sequence five is the final fully schematised one of the flyting proper, beginning with Hárbarðr's curiously stark use of the formula at stanza 36, followed by Þórr's customary rule-bound boasts, Hárbarðr's unruly rispostes and counterclaims, and concluding at stanza 41 with Þórr yet again flummoxed. Again, Bax and Padmos see matters quite differently. When Þórr justifies his boast about his attack on *brúðir berserkia* 'berserker brides' (st. 37) by explaining that they were, in fact, *vargynior* 'she-wolves' (st. 39) in pursuit of his manservant, Þjálfir, he is considered to have successfully employed a 'redefinition' tactic (1983, 163). Moreover, by closing with the formula, he has brought the topic to an end. All told, think Bax and Padmos, this is another win for Þórr. The competition, when taken literally, now stands at 3–2 to Hárbarðr.

Bax and Padmos's sixth and final sequence (sts 40–46) is, therefore, crucial for Þórr. A key exchange is at stanzas 41 and 42, where Hárbarðr's response to Þórr's alarm at the danger his adversary poses to mankind is followed by Þórr's horrified questioning of Hárbarðr's basic decency, thus (sts 42–43):

⁸ For a helpful explanation and application of these terms, see Shippey 1993.

Hárbarðr quað:

‘Boeta skal þér þat þá munda baugi,
sem iafnendr unno, þeir er ocr vilia sætta.’

Þórr quað:

‘Hvar namtu þessi in hnæfiligo orð,
er ec heyrða aldregi hnæfiligri?’

Hárbarðr said: ‘I’ll compensate you for that with a ring for the hand
which arbitrators use, those who are willing to make apsettlement between us.’

Þórr said: ‘Where did you learn these vile words,
Than which I never heard viler?’

Bax and Padmos regard this as Hárbarðr referring to ‘the stock of propositions that members of a culture assume to be true (like proverbs)’, and Þórr’s responding to these *hnæfiligo orð* ‘vile words’ by reproaching Hárbarðr ‘for making ill-use of customs’ (1983, 164). If, however, Margaret Clunies Ross is correct in regarding the expression *munda baugr* as signifying that Hárbarðr is making an obscene gesture with his hands, so rendering *baugr* as meaning ‘anus’, then Þórr’s response to this *ergi*-like offence is more understandable (1973, 81–85). Without this likely context, Bax and Padmos interpret Hárbarðr’s claim that ‘such vile words’ were learned from ancient wood-dwellers (st. 44) as one that ‘validates his argument with a source quotation’ (1983, 164); in other words, the citing of an independent source grants both greater authority to and less personal responsibility for Hárbarðr’s *hnæfiligo orð*. Thereafter, it is argued that Þórr’s subsequent realisation that Hárbarðr is referring to the dead (st. 45) represents his questioning of ‘the credibility of the source that he himself holds in low esteem’ (1983, 164). Hárbarðr’s final assertion in this sequence that *Svá dæmi ec um slíct far* ‘That’s how I think of such things’ (st. 46) is, therefore, successful in so far as ‘the rhetorical impact of this category of opinions is obvious: they are unattackable, since any contra-argument is nothing but just another opinion’ (1983, 164). As a result of this line of argument, Hárbarðr is judged to have won the sequence and the *mannjafnaðr* section overall. All that remain are Þórr’s frustrated threats, Hárbarðr’s triumphant jeers and the long way home for the beaten god, along with a farewell curse. This much, at least, is uncontroversial.

What these two studies offer, then, is one argument for *Hárbarðsljóð* as a deliberately irregular flying poem whose traditional form ‘the poet could have realised . . . had he so chosen’ (Clover 1979, 139), and another argument which treats the poem as wholly regular in respect of the flying traditions identified as *senna* and *mannjafnaðr* forms; indeed, in respect of the *mannjafnaðr* section, ‘one that embodies the most elaborate

version of this particular verbal ritual' (Bax and Padmos 1983, 170). It is not easy to see how such a disparity between the two arguments can in any way be reconciled; however, this is not to say that their respective merits cannot be assessed.

Clover's argument rests largely on two contentions: first, that the poem can only be understood in terms of its unprecedented departure from genre tradition; and second, that the poem is theatre. Therefore, *Hárbarðsljóð* is, at heart, an entertainment whose entertainment value rests on the dislocation of customary expectations. This includes the perceived metrical chaos of the poem which, suggests Clover, cunningly disguises its own logic. To see the poem as anything other than comic and ironic inevitably raises searching questions about, and criticism of, the poet's abundant lapses in style, such as had featured in judgements of the poem prior to Clover's study.

This is exactly where the Bax and Padmos argument is vulnerable. They offer no explanation for *Hárbarðsljóð*'s jumbled metrical forms and take no account of the poem's audience, simply noting that such a ritual verbal exchange reflects 'a real life phenomenon' (1983, 151). Instead, Bax and Padmos determinedly pursue a reading of the poem in which everything has to be understood in terms of its conformity to tradition, *ipso facto*. Where Clover finds comedy throughout in the hypertypical characterisations of Þórr and Óðinn, in as much as 'Þórr plays off the convention, while Hárbarðr plays off Þórr' (1979, 139), Bax and Padmos find almost none, seeing both gods as verbally well matched and, as a result, relatively equal competitors. This, in itself, would be curious, if not unprecedented, for, with the possible exception of the Eddic poem *Alvíssmál*, in which Þórr's verbal skills are atypical, everywhere else in the Eddas Þórr is quite the opposite of loquacious. As for his role in *Hárbarðsljóð*, if we were trying to identify any sign of intelligence in this particular characterisation of Þórr, then we would have to explain why he fails to recognise Hárbarðr for who he really is, especially since he is given so many clues (not least in stanza 24). The point, of course, is that this failure is part of the joke. Beyond this, where Clover finds a neat pattern of exchanges in the central section of the poem, Bax and Padmos are forced to identify one in sequences of exchanges of considerably differing lengths. This leads, amongst other things, to some fairly debatable, and sometimes forced, readings of what might be being signified by the two gods.

Nevertheless, the Bax and Padmos argument has certain significant merits. The chief strength of their argument lies in their identification and definition of the native categories of *senna* and *mannjafnaðr*. This allows them to be confident about what the characteristics and functions

of the three sections of the poem are intended to achieve: the rules of the game are made clear. Not only that: by making these distinctions plain, they can also see where the *Hárbarðsljóð* poet innovates or elaborates in respect of *mannjafnaðr* exchanges in other early Germanic literature. This is most apparent in the corrective they give to Clover concerning the ‘hard life’ and ‘soft life’ comparisons. It is also true that historical pragmatics ‘is often *auðigr í andsvorum*’ (1983, 150) but, one might add, this mostly depends on whether it is also *auðigr í spurningum*.

Whilst it is likely that scholars will continue to muse over which approach is more productive, the conclusion of this analysis of the two studies is that it is Clover’s rehabilitation of *Hárbarðsljóð* as fundamentally comic that points the way ahead. Nevertheless, this particular judgement is not made without certain reservations.

First, as Joseph Harris points out, whilst it is acceptable to state that the *senna* and *mannjafnaðr* forms are ‘wondrously entwined in the literature . . . should not a genre-based criticism keep them apart?’ (1985, 82): In other words, is using the term ‘flyting’ ‘to refer to any combination of *senna* and *mannjafnaðr*’ (Clover 1979, 140 n. 7) critically acceptable in this case? Secondly, as Harris also remarks, is it not the case that these ritual verbal battles are, in any case, typically comic? Thus, it matters not whether the participants in the contest treat the exchanges as deadly serious or as self-regardingly hilarious. What does matter is the extent to which the audience—either as present in the literature or as consumers of it—would find what the contestants say to be comic, whether it be wit, irony, or *Schadenfreude*, which, if rooted in partisan or vindictive feelings, would be particularly satisfying. If, then, *Hárbarðsljóð* is consistent with the genre in this respect, is it sufficiently hypertypical to be regarded as a genre parody? Is it ‘enough of a deviation to qualify?’ (Harris 1985, 82). Although one could take a reasonable guess that Clover would answer in the affirmative, particularly in respect of *Hárbarðsljóð*’s flouting of convention, this question lingers. Thirdly, is Clover’s explicit repudiation of a socio-mythic or socio-political context for the poem wholly justified, in particular, her rejection of these lines (st. 24/3–4)?

Óðinn á iarla, þá er í val falla,
enn Þórr á þræla kyn.

Óðinn has the nobles who fall in battle
and Þórr has the breed of serfs.

These and other implications about social class in *Hárbarðsljóð*, says Clover, are ‘probably best regarded as an embellishment or secondary

accretion rather than . . . the shaping *Tendenz* of the poem' (1979, 138). The extent to which this is necessarily the case will now be examined.

The socio-mythic controversy

Hárbarðsljóð's irregularities were perceived as comic as early as the late nineteenth century by Svend Grundtvig, a seemingly unique reading of it in early criticism (Clover 1979, 144, n. 44). However, the chief, often exclusive, focus of criticism before Clover and Bax and Padmos was the perceived contrast between Óðinn and Þórr. Behind this perception lies the poem's apparent preference for the intellectually sophisticated Óðinn over the basic physicality of Þórr, a difference that, as regards their respective human devotees, could be interpreted as a preference for the aristocrat over the peasant. The socio-mythic context for this was first argued by R. von Liliencron (1856) and thereafter by Felix Niedner (1887) (Bax and Padmos 1993, 268–69; von See et al. 1997, 156). While neither critic saw anything comic in the poem, both saw in the lines cited above, regarding the relative religious status of the two gods (st. 24/3–4), a distinction arising from the oppression of the peasantry by King Haraldr hárfagri of Norway in the late ninth and early tenth centuries (Clover 1979, 140 n. 6).

This, as well as linguistic evidence and likely influence from classical sources, led Magnus Olsen to suggest that *Hárbarðsljóð* originated in Norway c. 980 (Olsen 1960, 5–89; see also Santini 1990, 87–508), although Klaus von See and his associates, in their extensive commentary on the Eddic lays, suggest a *terminus ad quem* of 1225 (1997, 169). However, irrespective of dating, when considered in terms of artistic integrity, criticism prior to Clover and Bax and Padmos regarded *Hárbarðsljóð* as having little to offer. Indeed, Finnur Jónsson, who also advanced the socio-mythic argument, regarded only twenty-five stanzas of the poem as being original, the rest being the impositions of a rank amateur (1888, 173–79). What we have, then, is a broad traditional consensus that the most, and in some cases the *only*, interesting thing about *Hárbarðsljóð* is its socio-mythic significance as most strikingly expressed in stanza 24.

Clover's argument for dismissing or least casting doubt on a socio-mythic interpretation rests largely on a comparison between *Hárbarðsljóð* and *Lokasenna* 57–65. She considers that the latter may be 'a short version [of *Hárbarðsljóð*], probably the prototype of the same joke' (1979, 138). This, Clover argues, casts some doubt on the customary analysis of the poem as primarily 'a socio-political allegory promoting the values

of the warrior élite at the comic expense of the landholding classes' (1979, 138). Thus, says Clover, as Loki in *Lokasenna* is the equivalent of Hárbarðr in *Hárbarðsljóð*, and as the dramas are 'almost identical', there is 'no way that what is cited as a key sentence in *Hbl* . . . can be stretched to fit *Lokasenna*' (1979, 138). Clover's conclusion that this particular socio-mythic reference in *Hárbarðsljóð* is an 'embellishment or secondary accretion' amounts to saying that the one stanza that just about every previous critic has understood to be informative and intelligible is, in fact, the odd one out.

Setting aside the distinction that Loki presents himself before the assembled gods wholly undisguised, his role in *Lokasenna* and Óðinn's in *Hárbarðsljóð* are strikingly similar: both are verbally adept; both stand in sharp contrast to the brash and aggressive Þórr; and both, on occasions, aim similar jibes at Þórr (compare, for example, *Lokasenna* sts 60 and 62 with *Hárbarðsljóð* st. 26; and *Lokasenna* st. 54 with *Hárbarðsljóð* st. 8). Moreover, the insults delivered by Loki in the one poem and Óðinn in the other are often vulgarly comic. Even so, their dissimilarities are also striking, partly in that *Lokasenna* contains nothing in the way of *mannjafnaðr*, as defined by Bax and Padmos, but most notably in terms of the mythological cycle.⁹ The consequences for the gods in *Lokasenna*, not least for Loki, are significant, for here Ragnarök is growing closer, with the gods already made vulnerable owing to, amongst other things, Loki's proxy murder of Baldr. Loki's punishment, much assisted by Þórr's role in his capture and binding after expelling him from Ægir's feast, is critical, although not ultimately the last the gods will see of him. As Loki's clear intention in *Lokasenna* is to undermine the solidarity of the gods, the humour in the *Lokasenna* drama is very black.

The drama of *Hárbarðsljóð*, by contrast, has no mythological consequences whatsoever. Its humour stands outside the mythological cycle and rests largely on characterisation and, quite possibly, if stanza 24 is reinstated, on the social history of Óðinn worship and Þórr worship as it was perceived from the vantage point of either the late Viking Age or, more likely, at a time after the end of the Viking Age when pagan mores were still remembered and later set down in medieval Scandinavian histories and Icelandic sagas. Finally, why, anyway, do the lines in stanza 24 have to be stretched to fit *Lokasenna*? Is it not rather significant that there is a big difference between the treacherous Loki and the ever-vigilant Óðinn,

⁹ For a discussion of the *senna* insults in *Lokasenna*, see Meulengracht Sørensen 1988.

whether or not the latter's tactics in the mythology are often somewhat lacking in collegiality?¹⁰ Clover is right to note the relationship between the two Eddic poems but it does not necessarily follow that they both have the same function or carry the same message. That stanza 24 has no corollary in *Lokasenna* merely provides us with a context for *Hárbarðsljóð* that is not relevant for *Lokasenna*, for there was no such thing as a Loki cult.

The most obvious context for religious controversy in late tenth-century Norway was the coming of Christianity.¹¹ Although this was a far from uniform process, by the late tenth century, in the period known as the 'cultural negotiation' phase prior to actual conversion (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2003, 110–15), any pagan sectarianism, as hinted at in stanza 24, was already becoming something of an anachronism. This, obviously, would be all the more true as the century turned and progressed. But it is certainly the case that there were great difficulties between King Haraldr hárfagri and his recalcitrant subjects in the western fjords in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. Take, as one example, the *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Landnámabók* accounts of King Haraldr's eviction of Þórólfr Mostrarskegg from Mostur Island, South Hordaland.¹² Þórólfr had offended the king by sheltering the outlaw Björn Ketilsson. Haraldr was almost certainly an Óðinn worshipper and Þórólfr was most definitely a prominent Þórr worshipper (Turville-Petre 1964, 67; DuBois 1999, 5). Although the problem was perceived as more political than religious, the respective religious persuasions of the king and the *goði* must have served as markers of essential difference.

As place-name and personal-name evidence indicates, Þórr worship was commonplace in areas where monarchic rule was most resented, notably in the western fjords of Norway and most clearly in republican Iceland (Turville-Petre 1964, 64–70; Abram 2011, 59–65). As has been argued by mythographers, Óðinn worship appears to have been a phenomenon that only became significant in western Scandinavia relatively late in the pagan age, while Þórr worship there looks to have been a much older cult. The efforts of kings to eradicate Þórr worship after their conversion to Christianity is well documented in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, as well as by Adam of Bremen and Saxo Grammaticus, whereas little is said

¹⁰ This difference between Óðinn and Loki would still be significantly large even were we to accept that Loki is the dark side or *alter ego* of Óðinn: see, for this suggestion, Folke Ström 1956.

¹¹ For a comprehensive examination of current scholarship concerning the Christian conversion of Scandinavia, see Garipzanov and Bonté 2014.

¹² Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarsson 1935. *Eyrbyggja saga* chs 3–4; Jakob Benediktsson 1968, *Landnámabók*, ch. 85.

of the need to eradicate obstinate Óðinn worship, almost certainly because it declined to invisibility with the conversion of the aristocracy. However, there is some evidence to suggest that Óðinn worship was on the increase in the decades prior to the coming of Christianity, one notable example being Egill Skallagrímsson's apparent conversion to Odinism (Turville-Petre 1964, 69) as evidenced in his autobiographical poem *Sonatorrek* (Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1998–2001, 159–78). Christian encroachment, as medieval histories and archaeological studies show, had the effect of making Þórr worship endemic among western traditionalists. Thus, in the decades of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, Þórr worship in the west was in the ascendant and something of a challenge for ambitious monarchs (Arnold 2011, 55–76).

If there were any real-life confrontations between devotees of Þórr and Óðinn, they are not recorded. *Hárbarðsljóð* might best be seen as a deliberately contrived caricature of collective memories of the late Viking Age. This said, however, there is one other account in early medieval Scandinavian literature of Þórr and Óðinn in fierce competition. This is the account in the late thirteenth-century *Gautreks saga* of the legend of Starkaðr (Latin Starcatherus), a refashioning of a tale first set down by Saxo Grammaticus in his late twelfth-/early thirteenth-century history *Gesta Danorum* (for an assessment of the Starkaðr legends, see Turville-Petre 1964, 205–11). Saxo's tale, one which he condemns as a highly dubious oral tradition, tells of Þórr initially coming to the aid of the grotesque young Starkaðr by ripping away his superfluity of arms. Thereafter, Starkaðr seeks to serve the gods, and Óðinn becomes his patron, granting him 'three times the span of mortal life, in order that he might perpetrate a proportionate number of damnable deeds, and crime accompany his prolonged existence.'¹³

In *Gautreks saga* the seeming co-operation between Þórr and Óðinn is turned to explicit rivalry when Starkaðr is brought to judgement before them. Þórr despises Starkaðr, for one of Starkaðr's ancestors had offended him. A battle of wills ensues between Þórr and Óðinn as to how Starkaðr should be fated, with Þórr determining a cursed life for him and Óðinn, while clearly unable to contradict Þórr, either ameliorating Þórr's predictions or granting Starkaðr periods of heroic triumph and fame. In this way, Starkaðr's tragic destiny is determined as one full of glory, sin

¹³ Saxo Grammaticus 1996, Book 6, 171; and *Gautreks saga* 1954 ch. 7. Further accounts of Starkaðr's life are given in *Hervarar saga*, *Ynglinga saga* and *Sögubrot af nokkrum fornkonungum*.

and restlessness. If *Gautreks saga*'s account of Starkaðr's judgement can also be regarded as being based on oral traditions, most probably of Swedish origin, then perhaps cradled in stanza 24 are traces of religious ideas from a much earlier period, 'an era in which Óðinn and Þórr appear to vie directly for adherents' (DuBois 1999, 58). Lending further support to the notion that the Starkaðr legends are of considerable antiquity is Georges Dumézil's conclusion that, at one time, Þórr and Starkaðr were one and the same being, for Starkaðr's mixed fortunes reflect much of what is said about Þórr's equivalents in Indo-European mythologies, most particularly the Vedic god Indra, who is also destined for both glory and shame (Dumézil 1969, 65–104, esp. 82–95).

As for ideas about the gods in the Eddas, a brainy Óðinn and a brawny Þórr is quite clearly the consensus. It is also apparent that this difference in character is very old, for if we turn to their alleged prototypes in Lower Germany, the Wuotan and Donar figures identified by Jacob Grimm, the former was 'elegant [and] stately' while the latter was 'plebeian, boorish and uncouth', albeit, says Grimm, that Donar was perhaps the oldest of the Germanic gods (Stallybrass 1882–88, III xix).¹⁴ Yet, whilst it is true that Óðinn selects heroes for Valhalla, there is no other Eddic reference to Þórr selecting or getting any of the dead, serfs or otherwise. On the contrary, the Eddas suggest that Óðinn and Þórr are collaborators in the Æsir's mission to combat the giants: Þórr keeps them at bay whilst Óðinn prepares an army for Ragnarøk.

There is, then, despite *Hárbarðsljóð* and the Starkaðr legends, a general view in Eddic mythology that Óðinn and Þórr are complementary figures, both doing in their own way what best serves the gods', and mankind's, interests. It is the relationship between the professional politician and the professional soldier: the one could not progress without the other. This has significance for those exchanges at stanzas 29 to 36, where the two gods seem momentarily to go off *mannjafnaðr* message and instead seem to be discussing the breakdown of their relationship, which may well be making reference to circumstances outside the realms of the strictly mythological.

These exchanges, it will be remembered, concern one of Hárbarðr's sexual boasts, Þórr's assertion that he would have helped had he been there, Hárbarðr's reference to broken trust and Þórr's proverbial reassurance that he is not so untrustworthy. As noted above, while Clover dismisses

¹⁴ Grimm also states here that the 'the heroes all go to Wuotan's heaven, the common folk turn in at Donar's'. Although Grimm does not cite *Hárbarðsljóð*, it is likely that this is his source, for he is also aware that Hárbarðr is a byname for Óðinn (Stallybrass 1882–88, I 147).

these exchanges as no more than ‘interstitial verbal byplay’ and Bax and Padmos read them as typifying *mannjafnaðr* challenges, the suggestion here is that the underlying meaning speaks of a familial mythological collaboration that has been undermined by Þórr’s increased popularity in the final decades of pagan religious practices. As another fracture of the conventions of ritual verbal exchanges, this, too, can be regarded as comic, not unlike two actors temporarily abandoning the script in order to resume a backstage disagreement. This being the case, Hárbarðr’s stark use of the formula at stanza 36, without a boast preceding it, marks a desperate return to the script. In effect, these exchanges could be regarded as a theatrical form of metafiction, whereby the audience members know throughout that they are observing a fiction but are suddenly made aware of the artifice of the main action (see Waugh 1988). Assuming that we are dealing with a poet as skilled as Clover suggests, this is not an impossibility.

As for stanza 24, this only has anything to do with Eddic mythology, at least as we know it, in as much as it is a cartooning of the two gods’ characters and behaviour. Its actual significance is largely to do with what, once upon a time, was a real-life religious distinction. Even so, this does not mean that stanza 24 is comprehensible in purely superficial terms, for, here again, as with just about all else in *Hárbarðsljóð*, there would appear to be irony at work. The religious sectarianism that stanza 24 implies is rather more complicated than that reflected in the ritual stand-off between the two gods, the chief reason being that in the late Viking Age both camps were either under threat by Christianity or, assuming a later date, had already been obscured by it. So, taking the view that *Hárbarðsljóð* was composed sometime after the demise of Norse paganism, the valuations of stanza 24 are contextually ironic, if not exactly in respect of class differences, then most certainly in terms of the relative popularity of the two gods.

In short, any reading of stanza 24 as one noting ‘the important difference between Thor and Odin’ in the mythology (Haugen 1983, 13) must also take into account recollections of the religio-historical circumstances that arose in the late Viking Age. In this respect, what we have in this stanza is an exaggeration. It may well be that the *Starkaðr* legend, as told in *Gautreks saga*, is a mythico-legendary model for Óðinn and Þórr’s perceived rivalry in religious terms, as it is depicted in burlesque fashion in *Hárbarðsljóð*; nevertheless, when put into the historical contexts which broadly encompass the wide range of dates suggested for the composition of *Hárbarðsljóð*, the pagan religious divide indicated in stanza 24 either was becoming, or already was, no more than a joke about old traditions.

Indeed, taking into account metafiction, parody and ironic distance, the likelihood is that *Hárbarðsljóð* was composed quite some time after the conversion period.

To sum up, just as Clover sees almost every other line in *Hárbarðsljóð*, bar lines 3/4 of stanza 24, as comic, it is possible to see these, too, in comic terms. An old fact about a dying or, quite possibly, dead religion is seemingly invoked in an attempt to demean Þórr. Yet the truth of the matter is that, in the late Viking Age, Þórr worship eclipsed Óðinn worship, and was thereafter one of the main problems for Norwegian Christian monarchs, most of whom were either ex-Odinists or descendants of Odinists. In socio-mythic terms, a joke at Þórr's expense at the height of the Viking Age might have had some contemporary force but put in the mouth of Óðinn during or, as is suggested, after the conversion period, it rather backfires at his expense, for Odinism was the first casualty of the Christian conversion. Might not post-conversion consumers of Eddic verse have recognised this, just as they would have recognised deviations from traditional verse forms and flying rules? 'Óðinn has the nobles who fall in battle / and Þórr has the breed of serfs' is the one ironic comment in *Hárbarðsljóð* at Óðinn's expense and is, arguably, the most ironic comment in the entire poem.¹⁵

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¹⁵ For the alternative view that the composer of *Hárbarðsljóð* was an Odinist and that 'the position of the poet is made clear in such sentences [as stanza 24/3–4]', see Weber 1967, cited in Simek 1984, 130.

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THE CULT OF ST BLAISE IN ICELAND

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A FOURTEENTH-CENTURY SCRIBE ended a list of miracles with the following account:

Þá er liðit var frá hingatburð várs herra Jesu Christi þúshundrað þrjú hundrað tuttugu ok fimm ár, gjörðisk þessi jartein á bæ þeim er heitir á Bútsstöðum, at einn dag sem smalamaðr Snæbjarnar bónda kom heim frá fé ok hann hafði talat eitt orð, svá at menn heyrðu, fekk hann stórt öngvit, ok er hann vitkaðisk hafði hann misst mál sitt, ok svá var sjö dægr, þar til er Snæbjörn bóndi hét á inn heilaga Blasium byskup, at smalamaðr hans þessi sami er Hallr hét skyldi ganga í Breiðholt ok gefa þagat litit af lýsi. Ok er honum þótti hér eigi við skipask eptir þörf þá kallar hann enn á Guð at upphafi ok hinn heilaga Þorlák byskup, heitandi at sveinninn skyldi ganga í Skálaholt at Þorláksmessu eða sjálfr hann ok vatnfasta fyrir messudaginn ok gefa eyri vax at Guð gefi honum heilsu sína.

Ok litlu síðarr sofnaði hann Hallr, ok í svefninum sýndisk honum koma inn maðr í svartri kápu ok litlu síðarr annarr með sama búningi, ok því sveif honum í hug at sá væri Blasius byskup er fyrri kom, en sá Þorlákr er síðarr kom.

Síðan tók sá til orða er fyrri kom: ‘Þú ert lítt haldinn, sveinn.’

Hallr þóttisk svara at svá væri.

Þá mælti sá er síðarr kom: ‘Viljum vit gefa honum heilsu sína, þá hefir hann á okkr kallat.’

‘Gjörum vit svá, bróðir minn,’ sagði sá er honum sýndisk Blasius vera, ‘í Guðs nafni ok heilagrar Marie.’

Síðan gekk sá at honum er hann hugði Þorlák vera ok signaði hann. Eptir þetta vaknaði hann alheill, lofandi Guð ok ina blezuðu byskupa, Þorlák og Blasium.¹

When a thousand three hundred and twenty-five years had passed after the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, this miracle took place on the farm called **Bústaðir**² that one day when the farmer Snæbjörn’s shepherd came

¹ *Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 284–85. A diplomatic edition of the passage can be found in *Byskupa sögur* 2 1978, 372–73.

² In this article personal names are given in Old Icelandic (corresponding to the text) and place-names in modern forms that can be found on maps. When a text gives a geographical location not in use today, the older form is added in parentheses. Place-names are in bold type. The farms **Breiðholt** and **Bústaðir** lend their respective names to a district and a street (**Bústaðavegur**) in Reykjavík, close to their former locations.

in from the sheep and had spoken only a word that people heard, he fell unconscious, and when he came to he had lost his voice, and remained dumb for seven days, until the farmer Snæbjörn made a vow to St Blaise the bishop that this same shepherd of his, who was called Hallr, should walk to **Breiðholt** and give some fish-oil³ there. And when it seemed to him that there was no response to their need, once again he called on God in the first place and the holy bishop Þorlákr, vowing that the boy, or he himself, should walk to **Skálholt** on the feast of St Þorlákr, and fast on bread and water before the feast, and give an ounce of wax, so that God would give him his health.

A little later Hallr fell asleep, and in his sleep it seemed to him that a man in a black cope⁴ came in, and a little later another in similar attire, and it occurred to him that it was Bishop Blaise who came first and Bishop Þorlákr who came later.

Then the one who came first spoke, saying, 'You are in a bad way, boy.'

Hallr thought he answered that it was so.

Then the one who came later said, 'Let us give him his health, since he has called on us.'

'Let us do so, my brother,' said the one who he thought was Blaise, 'in the name of God and holy Mary.'

Then the one who he thought was Þorlákr went to him and made the sign of the cross over him. After that he awoke completely cured praising God and the blessed bishops, Þorlákr and Blaise.

This narrative concludes a collection of miracles from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries found in the C-version of *Þorláks saga byskups*. St Þorlákr had been locally canonised in 1198 and had an extended *cultus* in Iceland by the time this story was recorded. Thus, the appearance of St Blaise in a saga about St Þorlákr need not be explained as indicating St Þorlákr's need of 'confirmation' by a better-established saint.⁵ If anything, in this narrative St Þorlákr seems to be the more powerful (or perhaps the more attentive) of the two saints, as the vow to Blaise alone had no effect. The reference to God in the second vow, but not the first, is not significant: the account merely summarises the first (unsuccessful) vow, while the second is given in more detail. Perhaps

³ That is, for burning in lamps to light the church.

⁴ The word *kápa* could be translated as either 'cape' or 'cope', and it is in this vestment that the Icelandic saints (all of whom were bishops) usually appear in visions, as do Blaise here and St Martin of Tours in a miracle in *Jóns saga ins helga* (2003, 301).

⁵ As for example in *Jóns saga ins helga* (2003, 304), where St Þorlákr appears to a woman in a dream and explains that it was Jón Ögmundarson who saved her from a bad accident because he was closer (*var þá nærri*).

the vow to St Blaise was not considered serious enough; the second one involved a greater commitment of energy (**Skálholt** was much farther away from **Bústaðir** than **Breiðholt**) and a more valuable offering, since wax would have been more expensive than fish-oil.

It is possible that contemporary interest in Þorlákr might be due to competition with the cult of Guðmundr Arason, which was being promoted in northern Iceland at this time (a collection of miracles attributed to Guðmundr can be dated to the time of Bishop Auðunn of Hólar (1313–22, in residence 1314–20), but why begin by calling on St Blaise? We are not told the date of the event, so it is impossible to determine whether or not the ecclesiastical year might have influenced the choice of St Blaise for the first vow; it was common to call on a saint whose feast was approaching. The feast of St Blaise is found in most extant Icelandic calendars, and although its observance was not obligatory, it does appear in a list of *leyfis dagar*, days which it was acceptable, though not mandatory, to observe as holy days (*Grágás* 1883, 36; *Laws of Early Iceland* 1980, 202; Cormack 1994, 16–17). Two churches which did celebrate the feast on a regular basis are listed below. However, the date of the feast, 3rd February, immediately follows a much more important one, the Purification of the Virgin, also known in Iceland as *kyndilmessa* (Candlemas). If calendrical proximity were the issue, it might have seemed more appropriate to call on the Virgin, who was by far the more important saint.

Saints were thought to be especially accessible at locations associated with them: evidence of church dedications and statues (listed below) shows that before 1400, St Blaise was more popular in the southwest of Iceland than elsewhere in the country. The miracle story itself suggests that there was at least a chapel at **Breiðholt** in the early fourteenth century, probably served from the church at **Reykjavík** (Vík), where a statue of St Blaise is attested in the Middle Ages.⁶ The chapel may

⁶ A summary of evidence for the cult of St Blaise before 1400 can be found in Cormack 1994 (85). A discussion of the saints chosen to call on for aid may be found on pp. 60–68; two-thirds of the saints receiving vows or gifts were among the patron saints of the church with which the vow or gift was associated (such as **Reykjavík** and **Skálholt** in the present example). For the statue in the church at **Reykjavík**, see *DI*, III 340. Sveinn Níelsson (1950, 109) mentions a church at **Breiðholt**, which had long since ceased to exist, but gives no source for his information. If a chapel did exist, as the miracle suggests, it would most likely have been served by the priest at **Reykjavík**, at least until the farm was acquired by the monastery at **Viðey**, before 1395 (*DI*, III 598). It has been suggested by

have been dedicated to St Blaise or have owned a statue of him, or the connection with the church at **Reykjavík** may have influenced the choice of saint.⁷ It is worth noting that images of saints can be more important indications of popular veneration than dedications (Christian 1972, 68; Cormack 1994, 28–29). At any rate, the fact that a local church owned an image of him means that St Blaise would be relatively well known in this area.

St Blaise appears to have had a reputation for miracle-working in medieval Iceland. He is the subject of five stanzas in the fourteenth-century poem *Heilagra manna drápa* ('*Drápa* about Holy Men', 'men' in this case meaning 'males'), and while stanzas about other saints in this poem usually concern their martyrdom, those devoted to Blaise include the information that he works miracles in 'our country':

Jartegnir, sem jafnan birtaz,
andi guðs á váru landi
unnið hefur fyr ástvin þenna
ótal manns til heilsubótar.⁸

God's spirit has worked miracles in our country, which keep occurring, for the sake of this dear friend for the healing of a countless number of people.

This passage is striking, as Icelandic references to local miracles by non-Icelandic saints are rare.⁹ It is also possible that the narrative quoted

Þórir Stephensen (1996, 13–14) that Mass was supplied in all the local churches by the canons at **Viðey** (founded in 1225). However, *máldagar* indicate that having a resident priest at **Reykjavík** was at the discretion of the farmer in 1379 (*DI*, III 339–40) and had become mandatory by the end of the century (*DI*, IV 109). In the eighteenth century, the farm **Breiðholt** supported the priest who served the churches on Seltjarnarnes (one of which was at Reykjavík): *Jörðin er ljensjörð prestinum til uppheldiss lögd, sem þjónar kirkjunum á Seltjarnarnesi* (*JÁM*, III 278). It had been earmarked for the support of needy priests in a royal decree of 1580, and for the priest of Seltjarnarnes specifically by Bishop Gísli Jónsson of Skálholt the same year (*AÍ*, I 419–22).

⁷ Dedications of medieval Icelandic chapels have rarely survived, but it would be unsurprising for a chapel to be associated with a saint venerated at the church from which services were provided.

⁸ Edited by Kirsten Wolf (2007, 885). Here and elsewhere I have slightly emended her translations.

⁹ In addition to the Icelandic bishops Þorlákr, Jón and Guðmundr, vows and/or miracles are recorded for the Virgin Mary, St Cecilia, the Holy Cross, Lawrence the Deacon, Thomas Becket, St Olaf, St Vitus and an otherwise unknown Þórðr Jónsson. For these pre-1400 references, see Cormack 1994, 65–68, and for St Vitus, *Biskupa sögur* II (2002, 88, 197). The A-version of

above is itself the evidence for St Blaise's activity in Iceland. On the other hand, it has survived in a collection devoted to St Þorlákr, the island's patron saint, whose shrine, to which pilgrimage is promised, was at **Skálholt**, where records pertaining to Þorlákr would have been kept. It could well be that other aid to Icelanders provided by St Blaise was never recorded.

What, then, did medieval Icelanders know about St Blaise, bishop of Sebastea (now Sivas in modern Turkey), believed to have died in the early fourth century? He is one of those saints whose legend is thought to contain little of historical value aside from his name and the date of his martyrdom. Today, Blaise is best known as patron saint of throat ailments, owing to a story in his legend in which he cures a boy with a fishbone stuck in his throat, and of animals, which were often blessed on his feast. Although either of these might account for Snæbjörn's vow, we should not extrapolate from modern practice—or the contents of modern encyclopaedias of saintly specialisations—back to medieval Iceland. The encyclopaedias in question collect material from large geographical areas and long periods of time, and the specialisations they mention should not be assumed to be relevant until they have been verified locally.

To discover what St Blaise may have meant to medieval Icelanders, the best place to look is the literature about him. Blaise's *vita* was translated into the vernacular as *Blasius saga* (*HMS*, I 256–71) from the *passio* found in BHL 1377 (Foote 1962, 23). A Norwegian fragment of the saga from the second half of the twelfth century (AM 655 IX 4to) is among the oldest manuscripts in the Old Norse vernacular. The translation was known in Iceland, where the oldest fragment (AM 623 4to) appears to date from *c.* 1325 (*DONP* Indices, 457). According to Turville-Petre (1953, 132), the Norwegian text is closer to the common Latin original than the Icelandic one, but scholars are agreed that both are based on the same original translation. Vernacular sagas appear to have been read on the feast-days of saints, especially in churches dedicated to them (cf.

Þorláks saga neglects to mention St Vitus in the vow (cf. *The Saga of Bishop Þorlak* 2013, 25), though he appears along with Þorlákr in both versions of the text. It is worth noting that his relics, like the dedication to St Blaise, are recorded at Lund Cathedral in 1131 (*Necrologium Lundense* 1923, 51; fol. 125v of the manuscript, Lund Medeltidshandskrift 6). Collections of Icelandic miracles exist only for the three Icelandic bishops, Þorlákr Þórhallsson, Jón Ögmundarson and Guðmundr Arason, having been preserved along with their sagas (vernacular *vitae*), though two local miracles have been added to the saga of St Cecilia in Stock Perg. 2 fol. (*HMS*, I 294–97).

HMS, I 676, describing the reason for the composition of a saga about St Michael the archangel).

The saga tells us that Blaise was a physician and bishop who was served by animals when he took up life as a hermit. He healed domestic animals as well as humans, and the story of the boy with the fishbone in its place (*HMS*, I 258–59). Conceivably this would in itself have been enough to suggest him to farmer Snæbjörn as the proper recipient of the vow; the Icelandic miracle also resembles the fishbone episode in that it is not the victim himself who calls on the saint, but someone responsible for him. Tantalisingly, a reference to the muteness of the boy does appear in one other narrative about Blaise: the *menologion* of Symeon Metaphrastes.¹⁰ I have found no evidence for knowledge of this Greek work in Western Europe, however, and conclude that the information it has in common with the Icelandic version is the result of parallel lines of thought.

St Blaise is said to make a request just before his death that those who remember him (or choke on bones) will be remembered by God. One manuscript of his saga (Stock. Perg. 2 fol. in the National Library of Sweden, also known as Holm. 2 fol.) draws attention to this fact with the rubric *Bæn Blasij byskups ok liflat hans* ‘The prayer and death of Bishop Blaise’ (*HMS*, I 268 n. 1). This rubric is no longer legible in the manuscript, though it appears to have stood about half-way down the first column, corresponding to a badly deteriorated capital thorn on the other side of the column.¹¹

Vestú nær ǫllum ok fyll réttar fýstir¹² allra þeirra es nokkurn góðgerning gera til dýrðar nafns þíns í mína minning, þræls þíns. Ef nokkurum stendr bein í hálsi eða hefir hann nokkur óhægindi í kverkum ok biðr hann þíns fulltings með mínu árnaðarorði, þá bjarg þú honum ok leys hann frá háska til sannanar þíns kraptis es þú gørðir forðum fyr þræl þinn. En ef nokkurr minnisk mín í háska eða í nekkverri sótt ok kallar á þik til fulltings með mínu árnaðarorði,

¹⁰ Edition and translation into Latin in Migne’s *Patrologia Graeca* CXVI (cols 817–29). Symeon’s text has been ‘loosely’ translated by Arthur Redford as follows: ‘It happened that while the only son of a certain woman was eating some fish he suddenly swallowed a bone and became mute’ (Roth 1914, 13). For Redford’s full translation of the passage, see Roth (1914, 12–19).

¹¹ I thank Anna Wolodarski of the National Library of Sweden for examining the manuscript on my behalf.

¹² The text has *fystir*, here emended in accordance with the suggestion of *DONP* [accessed July 29, 2013], which notes that the corresponding Latin text is *iusta singulorum vota perfice*. The younger version of the text (*HMS*, I 268) has *bænir* ‘prayers’ at this point.

þá græð þú hann af sótt ok leys hann ór háska. Ok lát þér sóma at vesa nær í öllum sínum nauðsynjum þeim es trúlega kalla á þik fyr mína minning. En þá es Guðs vatn hafði þen lokit þá kom ský ljóst yfir hann ok rodd með skýi mælandi svá: Ek em Guð. Ek man fylla alla hluti þá es tú batt eptir trú ok eptir nytsemi þurfanda; þeir er í sóttum eru eða í háska eða í meinum biðja mik hjálpar í þinni minningu, þá man ek leysa ór meinum í þessum heimi ef þeim gegnir hjálp eða leysask, eða ek man gefa þeim annars heims líf eilíft. Svá man ek auk blessa þá konu veslu es þú baðzt fyrir ok öllum þeim es þína minning gøra, ok man ek fylla þá góðra hluta hér í heimi og gæða þá eilífu lífi, verkkaupi annars heims.¹³

‘Be near to everyone and fulfill the rightful wishes of those who for the glory of Your name do any good deed in memory of me, Your servant. If someone has a bone stuck in his throat, or has a pain in his neck and prays for Your aid for my intercession, save him and release him from danger as evidence of Your power, as You once did for your servant. If someone remembers me in danger or any sickness, and calls on You for aid for my intercession, cure him of sickness and release him from danger. And for Your own honour be close to those who in all their distress faithfully call on You in remembrance of me.’ And when God’s witness had completed his prayer, a bright cloud came over him, and a voice spoke from the cloud, saying: ‘I am God. I will fulfill all the things you asked for, according to the faith and benefit of those in need, who in sickness or danger or ailments pray to Me for help in remembrance of you. I will release them from their ailments in this world if help or release will benefit them, or I will give them eternal life in the next world. I will also bless the poor woman for whom you prayed, and all those who commemorate you, and give them good things in this world and grant them the reward of eternal life in the next world.’

The sagas of St Barbara, St Dorothy, St Catherine of Alexandria and St Margaret of Antioch record similar prayers followed by divine responses (*HMS*, I 157, 326–27, 420–21, 480).¹⁴ It is unclear what influence these episodes may have had in the spread of the cults of these saints; none has miracles attested in Iceland, although St Cecilia—who receives no such heavenly promise—does (see n. 9). St Dorothy would have been less well-known than the other saints; her saga was translated around 1500, and her feast was added to an Icelandic manuscript of the *Ordo Nidrosiensis* (AM 680 a 4to) by an annotator writing in or

¹³ *HMS*, I 270–71 from AM 655 4to IX B. Normalisation by Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir.

¹⁴ Sherry Reames (1985, 50, 233–34 n. 15) has pointed out that it is the promise of ‘automatic’ rewards for those who prayed to them that caused Nicholas of Cusa to select for criticism the cults of Blaise, Barbara, Catherine, Dorothy and Margaret in 1455.

after 1480 (Gjerløw 1968, 77; 317 n. a). Other evidence for her cult in Iceland is also from the end of the medieval period.¹⁵ However, both St Catherine and St Margaret had well-established cults by 1400, as measured by the number of dedications to them and statues of them.¹⁶ By this count, St Catherine appears to have been the more popular. There is nevertheless clear evidence that Icelanders paid attention to the final prayer of St Margaret, which names among other beneficiaries those who read or possess her saga, both before and after the Reformation. More copies of her saga exist than for any saint other than the Virgin Mary; tiny copies of the saga, including a printed one from the early twentieth century, were presumably used as aids to childbirth (Jón Steffensen 1965, 273–82, esp. 274).¹⁷ Possibly the final prayer of St Blaise accounts for the miracles in Iceland; however, his appearance along with St Þorlákr in the narrative quoted above is the only one of which a record has survived.

The five stanzas in the *drápa* are independent witness to the Icelandic textual tradition (Foote 1962, 23), but give no information not already found in his saga, for example:

Illir fundu í einum helli;
 úti lágu dýr fyr skúta;
 brúðar leysti hann bur frá dauða;
 bein var honum að kverkameini. (Wolf 2007, 883)

Wicked men found him in a cave; animals lay outside the grotto; he released the son of a woman from death; a bone caused him [i.e. the woman's son] pain in his throat.

Blásíus, þá er vier bjargarlausir
 biðjum þig, en dauðans viðjar

¹⁵ Her saga, a poem about her and some Latin prayers to her are found in AM 429 12mo (Unger mistakenly lists this ms. as 8vo in *HMS*, I 322), which contains similar material about other female saints (Kirsten Wolf 2011). St Dorothy is invoked along with numerous other saints in the testaments of Teitr Þorleifsson and his wife Inga Jónsdóttir from 1531 (*DI*, IX 586, 591). She is included with other female saints who flank the crucifixion on the altarpiece at the cathedral of Hólar, probably made in the Netherlands in c.1520 (Kristín Huld Sigurðardóttir 2005, 190–93), and is depicted in the lower right hand of the embroidered altarpiece from Draflastaðir from the second quarter of the sixteenth century (Guðjónsson 1997, 86 fig. 2).

¹⁶ See entries for these saints in Cormack (1994).

¹⁷ Use of such miniature volumes as aids to childbirth is also known in France (Amy Ogden, personal communication).

vindaz fast að várrí öndu
veit oss það, sem guð hefir heitið. (Wolf 2007, 885)

Blaise, when helpless we ask you, and the ropes of death twist tightly around our soul, grant us that which God has promised.

Blaise would have been an appropriate saint for fishermen. Not only does the beginning of the saga explicitly mention the choice of fishermen as apostles, but Blaise himself is able to walk on water, an ability that would have recommended him to those making a living from the sea, or living near bodies of water; the fact that a fishbone was involved in a miracle would also be relevant.¹⁸ Such an association could well be reflected in the locations of the churches and place-names associated with St Blaise in Iceland. All are close to the sea, a lake or a river. However, the fact that his feast-day, 3rd February, was the beginning of the winter fishing season in southwest Iceland appears to be a coincidence, reflecting the adoption of the New Style Gregorian calendar in 1700. Formerly the fishing season had begun on the feast of St Paul (*Conversio Pauli*, 25th January). When the Gregorian calendar was adopted, a query was put to the National Assembly as to when the season should now begin; it was declared that the date should be the first working day after Candlemas on 2nd February (Lúðvík Kristjánsson 1982, 368–69). The text comments that 3rd February ‘is called *Blasiusmessa*’ (*nefndur er Blasiusmessa*), suggesting that the name of the day was not general knowledge at the time (*ÁÍ*, IX 132).¹⁹

¹⁸ The only Icelandic vow explicitly dealing with a swallowed fishbone was made to St Þorlákur when his *cultus* was first promoted (*Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 242). The beneficiary of the miracle is the daughter of a priest, which suggests either that Blaise’s connection with fishbones was unknown in Iceland around 1200, or that enthusiasm for the new native saint overruled all other considerations.

¹⁹ Although this is not the occasion for a survey of post-Reformation Icelandic calendars, it is worth noting that the feast of St Blaise is not included in the oldest Icelandic printed calendars, (a) Guðbrandur Þorláksson’s *Bænabok með morgum godvm og nytsamligum bænum* from 1576 (though the accompanying *cisiojanus*, a mnemonic device for keeping track of the date, does retain the syllable that commemorated him, *bla*); (b) *Calendarivm. Islenskt Ríjm. So Menn mættu vita huad Tijmum Aarsins lijdur / með þui hier eru ecke aarleg Almanach* from 1597 and its revised second edition from 1611, which Halldór Hermannsson (1940, 47) notes had been ‘slightly shortened and changed’ (my thanks to Erik Petersen of the Royal Library in Copenhagen for checking the page for February); and (c) Johann Gottfried Olearius’s *Eitt lyted Bæna Kuer* from 1687, though the feast has been added by hand on page 132 of the copy of this almanac in the National Library of

Interestingly, the first printed version of the new calendar, published by Bishop Jón Árnason of Hólar in 1707, has the feast on 3rd February, but the notice of the beginning of the fishing season, ‘vertijd hefst’, is on the 4th. It became customary for crews to meet at Candlemas preparatory to setting out on St Blaise’s Day, which was itself a working day, not a holiday (Lúðvík Kristjánsson 1982, 368–70).²⁰ Knowledge of the fact that this day was called *Blasiusmessa* could, in recent centuries, have been obtained from published almanacs, which appeared annually after the first published by Finnur Magnússon for the year 1837, in which the feast of St Blaise is entered, and it is noted that the winter fishing season begins on 4th February, consistent with the almanac of 1707. In the next year, however, the date of the fishing season has been moved to the 3rd, *Blasiusmessa*; in the almanac for 1845 it is specified that this date applies in the south, *a Sudurlandi*. Publication of an almanac for Iceland was taken over by Hið íslenska Þjóðvinafélag in 1874. The almanac of the Þjóðvinafélag for 1875 contains five columns, the

Iceland. It does not appear in the calendar scroll owned by the National Museum of Iceland (catalog number A-10936/B-1930-347) from c. 1600. It is, however, found on a similar scroll from about the same date, AM 470 12mo, as well as in printed almanacs of 1671 (Þórður Þorláksson’s *Calendarium Edur Islendskt Ríjm* and his *Enchiridion* of the same year). The name is spelled ‘Basilius’ in the almanac of 1692 (Þórður Þorláksson’s *Calendarium Perpetuum. Ævarande Tíjmatal*). The feast has been added by hand in the copy of the 1687 almanac in the National Library of Iceland (*Eitt lyted Bæna Kuer*, p. 132). The absence of the feast of St Blaise and its re-emergence probably reflects the reactions of the reformers in the sixteenth century, when veneration of saints was a possibility that they felt it necessary to suppress. A more relaxed attitude emerges in the seventeenth century when such veneration was unlikely and the convenience of having additional named days that could be used to calculate the date was recognised. The ordinance (Ordinanza) imposing Lutheranism in the lands obedient to the king of Denmark (including Norway, Iceland, parts of southern Sweden and Schleswig) includes a condemnation by Johannes Bugenhagenius of Pomerania (Johannis Bugenhagii Pomerani) of such blasphemies as relying on Blaise or George rather than Jesus for absolution of sins and eternal life, praying on their feasts, *Deus qui nos hodierna die solemnitate Beati Georgii, Blasii, etc. lætificas, concede propitius, ut ejus meritis et intercessione a peccatis omnibus absolvamur, et vitiam consequamur æternam* (DI, X 307). This criticism is not directed to Iceland specifically, and Blaise is not alone in being omitted from early post-Reformation calendars.

²⁰ It should be noted that *Blasiusmessa* marked the beginning of the season only in the southwest of Iceland, possibly only at the extreme end of the Reykjanes peninsula. Lúðvík Kristjánsson lists other dates for other parts of the country.

second containing a list of saints' feast days, most of which would have been meaningless to the average Icelander at this time, with translations and/or explanations in the fourth column. In the edition for 1875, both *Kyndilmessa* and *Blasiusmessa* are entered in the bold type and italics used for information of importance; Veronica, Agatha and Dorothy are the next three entries, without any typographical emphasis. The accompanying explanations inform the reader that *Kyndilmessa* is the feast of the Purification of Mary. *Blasiusmessa* is accompanied by the note '*Vetrarvertíð* (á Suðurlandi)' with *vetrarvertíð* in bold and italics. The 2012 edition still has *Kyndilmessa* and *Blasíusmessa* (with an accent over the í), followed by '*Vetrarvertíð hefst*' (Þorsteinn Sæmundsson and Gunnlaugur Björnsson 2011, 8). Knowledge of the feast of St Blaise as the date of the beginning of the fishing season cannot represent an unbroken memory of the saint and his associations; it is just over three centuries old, and has been accessible in print for half that period.

Icelandic interest in St Blaise may initially have been sparked by the fact that he was a dedicatee of an altar in the crypt of Lund cathedral in 1131 (*Necrologium Lundense* 1923, 51; ms. fol. 125v). Lund was the seat of the Archdiocese to which Iceland belonged from the foundation of the Archdiocese in 1104 until the foundation of the Archdiocese of Nidaros in 1152. Devotion to Blaise could have been strengthened by pilgrims who passed through the monastery of Reichenau, of which he was a patron; a group of Icelandic names is entered in the monastery's *Liber Memorialis* (*Das Verbrüderungsbuch der Abtei Reichenau* 1979, facsimile 159 A; see facsimile 151 for additional Scandinavian names, not necessarily Icelandic).

Evidence for the veneration of saints in Iceland (other than the three native bishops) comes primarily from church inventories (*máldagar*) recorded in episcopal collections. These are not always complete; scribes recording information about the churches might omit material irrelevant to their goals. Place-names may also reflect veneration of a saint, or connection to a church, although the original nature of the connection can be difficult to determine (Cormack 2008, 2010). The inventories indicate that interest in St Blaise was initially strongest in the southwest of the island; their evidence from before 1400 comes from an area south of 65 degrees latitude and west of 20 degrees longitude. The place-names and all but the earliest personal name are also found within this area. Later records reveal that the church at Eyri in Seyðisfjörður in northwestern Iceland obtained a statue of the saint in

the first half of the fifteenth century. By 1500, two more churches are recorded as dedicated to him, both outside the southwest: Laugaból in Ísafjörður in the northwest, and Breiðabólstaður in Suðursveit in the southeast. All these churches are in the diocese of Skálholt, and all are close to the sea.

Locations at which St Blaise was venerated

In the following, latitude and longitude measurements are taken from *Kortasjá Íslands* (<http://atlas.lmi.is/kortasja/>). Place-names under discussion are indicated in bold type.

Primary Patron

Breiðabólstaður, Suðursveit (DI Fellshverfi) 64°7 N, 16°0 W

A list of notes on churches in the diocese of Skálholt, dated to the early sixteenth century, mentions a church of St Blaise at **Breiðabólstaður** that owns seven *kúgildi*, a horse and some vestments (*DI*, IX 188). A document from c.1400 does not give the dedication, but informs us that it was a half-church, i.e., half the normal number of Masses were celebrated. At that time the church owned two *kúgildi* and miscellaneous items (*DI*, IV 200, cf. *DI*, II 771–72). It is located beside a glacial lagoon that empties into the sea.

Laugaból, Ísafjörður²¹ 65°49 N, 22°2 W

A brief note from around 1500 notes the presence of a church of ‘St Blaise bishop and martyr’ which owns three cows and 12 ewes (*DI*, VII 83) in Ísafjörður, close to the shore of the fjord.

Laugarvatn 64°1 N, 20°4 W

A small church of St Blaise, located by the lake from which the farm takes its name, owned ten *hundreds* in the home farm. In 1400 it owned images of the Virgin Mary and St Blaise (*DI*, IV, 91; see also *DI*, III 343).

²¹ *JÁM* (VII 227) mentions a shed (*skemma*) on the location of the former *bænhús*, which preserves the name (i.e., *bænhús*). It should be noted that use of the term *bænhús* (usually translated ‘chapel’) in post-Reformation sources does not necessarily reflect the status of the building in Catholic times.

Co-patron

The church at **Búrfell in Grímsnes** (64°4 N, 20°5 W) was dedicated, with God, to ‘Queen Mary, Bishop Blaise and Bishop Þorlákr’ according to a thirteenth-century inventory (*DI*, II 63). An inventory from the end of the fourteenth century omits the dedication but lists a statue of ‘Basilius’, probably an error for Blaise (*DI*, IV 90, which does not include the dedication). A Lutheran almanac printed in 1692 has the same misspelling, see n. 19. The church owned half the home farm and had a resident priest. The church provided services to the one at **Ásgarður in Grímsnes**, which was by the river Sog (see below).

The church at **Staður in Grindavík** (63°4 N, 22°3 W), located on the southern edge of the Reykjanes peninsula, was dedicated, with God, to ‘Blessed Mary and the apostle John, Stephen, King Olaf, Bishop Blaise, Bishop Þorlákr and the holy virgin Catherine four nights after All Saints [i.e., 5th November]’ (*DI*, IV 101). The year of the dedication is unknown, but inclusion of Þorlákr means it must post-date 1200; St Catherine’s popularity in Iceland also appears to begin in the thirteenth century. In 1400, the church owned half the home farm and had a resident priest (*DI*, IV 101–02). It eventually acquired the other half of the farm, as recorded in a document dated to the latter part of the fifteenth century (*DI*, VII 48–49).

The church at **Stóri-Ás** (*DI* Ás), Hálsasveit (64°4 N, 21°2 W) was dedicated, with God, to ‘Queen Mary, the apostle Andrew, Bishop Blaise and all God’s saints’ (*DI*, IV 124–25, cf. *DI*, VII 2–3). The church owned a third of the home farm, which was located near the river Hvítá. The church at **Gilsbakkí** (64°4 N 20°59 W) was to provide it with services, though there could be a resident priest at **Stóri-Ás** if the farmer wanted one, or if the priest was willing to live on the church’s third of the land.²² This is one of the few inventories that can be dated; it was made by the Norwegian Bishop Sigvarðr (1239–68) two nights after the feast of St Bartholomew (26th August). By the end of the fourteenth century the church owned a statue of St Blaise, apparently acquired before a statue of St Andrew. There was no image of the Virgin.

²² *Heimilisprestur skal þar vera ef bondi vill sa er þar byr. edur eigi hann þridiung i bui kirkiu hluta* (*DI*, IV 125).

Statues

In addition to the ones indicated above, statues of St Blaise were to be found at the following churches:

The church of St Michael at **Borg, Mýrar** (64°3 N, 21°5 W) apparently acquired a statue in the fourteenth century (recorded in *DI*, IV 187, but not in *DI*, III 88). The church was required to support a priest and a deacon. It owned two *hundreds* in the home farm, which gave its name to the peninsula on which it was located.

In 1460 the church of St Peter at **Eyri**, on the shore of **Seyðisfjörður**, Súðavíkurbreppur (66°0 N, 22°5 W, not to be confused with the Seyðisfjörður in East Iceland) owned a statue of St Blaise, along with statues of Mary, Peter (its main patron), and Andrew. The church owned a third of the home farm (*DI*, V 223).

In 1379 the church of the apostle John at **Reykjavík (Vík) on Seltjarnarnes** (Reykjavík, 64°8 N, 21°5 W), which became the cathedral of Iceland at the end of the eighteenth century, owned a statue of St Blaise, in addition to two images of the Virgin Mary, though apparently none of St John the Evangelist, the saint to whom it was dedicated (*DI*, III 340).²³ At this time a resident priest was optional, though by the end of the century one was mandatory (*DI*, IV 109). It is worth noting that the church was consecrated, and received an indulgence appropriate to its status, on the feast of St Blaise in 1505; the same document establishes the church day on the feast of St John *ante portam latinam*, May 6 (*DI*, VII 754).²⁴

Special Liturgical Celebration

As mentioned above, the feast of St Blaise was normally entered in Icelandic ecclesiastical calendars, and it was one of a group of feasts of only

²³ Interestingly, a statue of John the Baptist is mentioned, along with one of the Virgin Mary, after the Reformation. It is clearly stated to be an image of 'Johannis Baptistæ' in the visitation by Bishop Þórður Þorláksson of Skálholt in 1678 (Bps A II 12 in the National Archives of Iceland, fol. 126v). I can think of no way that a statue of John the Baptist could be confused with one of Bishop Blaise or John the Evangelist, though of course a careless copyist might cause confusion between the two Johns.

²⁴ The consecrating bishop, Stefán Jónsson of Skálholt (1491–1518), granted indulgences to a number of churches, cf. Cormack (2009, 55–56).

slightly less importance than obligatory ones. As might be expected, it is occasionally used to date documents; I have not included such dating in the evidence collected below.

In addition to the Masses normally required, Mass was to be celebrated on the feast of St Blaise, *ad Vincula Petri*, and St Sebastian's day at the church of St Þorlákr at **Flagbjarnarholt** (either Flagbjarnarholt efra or Flagbjarnarholt neðra, both 63°5 N, 20°1 W), from the church of St Olaf at **Stóru-Vellir**, presumably **Gömlu-stóruvellir** (63°5 N 20°9 W, *DI*, II 696 **Vellir**). This information is found in documents about the church at **Stóru-Vellir** (loc. cit.), but not in the contemporary *máldagi* of **Flagbjarnarholt** itself, dated to the end of the fourteenth century (*DI*, IV 66). The farm Flagbjarnarholt is bordered by the Þjórsá River.

Mass on the feast of St Blaise, *Ad Vincula Petri*, and the December feast of St Magnús was required at the church of St Mary, St Michael and St Peter at **Heynes on Akranes peninsula** (64°18, N 21°59 W) from the church at **Garðar on Akranes** (64°19 N, 22°2 W, *DI*, VII 57, dated c.1500); this requirement may date from the fifteenth century as it is not mentioned in earlier *máldagar* such as *DI*, IV 196–97.

Miscellaneous

In addition to routine use of the feast of St Blaise in the dating of documents, *Þorgils saga skarða* (*Sturlunga saga* II 1946, 147) informs us that Bishop Heinrekr Kársson of Hólar and Abbot Brandr Jónsson of Bykkvibær sang High Mass, and the abbot preached a sermon, at **Reykholt** (Reykjaholt, 64°39 N, 21°17 W) in Borgarfjörður on the feast of St Blaise in 1253. This unusually impressive liturgical celebration provided an opportunity for the abbot to mention an excommunication that had been pronounced by Bishop Heinrekr. It is worth noting that Reykholt is also near a river, on a rough line between Borg and Stóri-Ás.

Place-names

Several place-names are probably to be associated with St Blaise; all are within the core area described above. Although such names could commemorate human beings other than saints, Blasius is so rare as a given name that this is unlikely.

Blasíusbás or **Blasiusarbás** (Blaise's *bás*, 63°4 N, 22°4 W), on the coast of Reykjanes peninsula not far from Grindavík, is attested in

1704.²⁵ A *bás* is a small cave or cove surrounded by cliffs, the aquatic equivalent of a stall for a single animal, the original meaning of the word. The name of the saint had been forgotten by some, and the name in recent times was given as **Blásiðubás** ‘Blue-coast cove’ (cf. Guðsteinn Einarsson 1960, 11; Gunnlaugur Haraldsson 2011, 542–43) or **Blásýrubás** ‘Cyanide cove’ (cf. Guðjohnsen 1996, 36). Scholarly research is probably responsible for its reintroduction, for example in *Íslandsatlas* and the online map of Landmælingar Íslands, though it is worth noting that the original name appears to have survived in connection with a dangerous **Blásíusboði** ‘Blaise’s breaker’ offshore from the *bás* (Guðlaugur R. Guðmundsson and Svavar Sigmundsson 2007, 40).²⁶ The *bás* was not far from the church at Staður in Grindavík, one of whose patrons was St Blaise.

Drift-rights at **Blásíusbás** were claimed by the church at **Innri-Hólmur on Akranes** (68°18 N, 21°55 W, *JÁM*, IV 56), although Árni Magnússon himself was unable to find documentary justification for the claim that Innri-Hólmur owned the *bás* (and thus the drift-rights) in the church’s *máldagar* (*JÁM*, XIII 113).²⁷ I have had no better luck. For further discussion of the drift-rights and a photograph of the *bás* see Gunnlaugur Haraldsson 2011, I 542–43. Although the first written references to *Blásíusbás* are from the beginning of the eighteenth century, the place-name is undoubtedly much older.

At **Ásgarður in Grímsnes** (64°28 N, 20°58 W) a section of the home field (*völlur í túni*) was called **Blásíusvöllur** (Hallgrímur J. Ámundason, 2010). A chapel at Ásgarður was served from the church at **Búrfell** (*DI*, II 63; see above), so we may assume that the field was named for the saint, and that the hay it produced was earmarked either for the church or for the upkeep of the chapel. It would be normal for a saint to be venerated at both a church and a chapel served by its priest. Although the chapel no

²⁵ From a letter by Þorkell Jónsson of Innri-Njarðvík to Árni Magnússon, dated 1704 (AM 453 fol.), printed in Hannes Þorsteinsson 1921–23, 48–50. **Blasíusarbás** is said to be an older name for **Blásiðubás** by Gísli Brynjólfsson (1975, 31–32), who notes that the church at Skálholt had owned the drift-rights there. No reference is given for this statement, which presumably applies to the situation after the time of Árni Magnússon, see below.

²⁶ The nineteenth-century informant notes that, dangerous as it was, few lives were lost there.

²⁷ *Blásíusbás á Reykjanesi hefur kirkjuni á Innrahólmi eignaður verið, þó hann sé ei í máldagann innferður.*

longer existed in the eighteenth century, its memory survived, and *JÁM* notes not only **Blasíusvöllur** but also **Kirkjuhóll** ‘church mound’ (*JÁM*, II 354). The farm borders the river Sog.

At **Hrafnkelsstaðir, Hrunamannahreppur** (64°7 N, 20°2 W) a small mound (*hóll*) in the home field west of the farm building was called **Blasíus**, but no explanation is known (Hallgrímur J. Ámundason, 2010). **Hrafnkelsstaðir** is within 35 km. of **Búrfell** and **Laugarvatn**, and the farm is bordered in part by **Litla Laxá** ‘Small Salmon-river’. In Árni Magnússon’s day, it had fishing rights in the river and belonged to the cathedral of **Skálholt** (*JÁM*, II 244).

A non-existent place-name

The entry for **Blasíusdalur** ‘Blaise’s Valley’ in the *máldagi* for Innri-Hólmur in the collection of Bishop Gísli Jónsson (this entry dated 1575) appears to be the result of scribal error. Aside from the varied spellings of different manuscripts of the *máldagi* (*DI*, XV 630), the entry itself is erroneous: as attested by *JÁM* (IV 56) and one sixteenth-century document (Lbs 108 4to, p. 393, dated to 1573; cf. JS 143 4to, p. 292), the grazing rights were actually in **Bláskeggsdalur**. Gunnlaugur Haraldsson suggests that an entry referring to the drift-rights in **Blasíusbás** (above) may have influenced the scribe at this point (2011, I 542–43). If so, the exemplar is lost; neither existing *máldagar* nor those available to Árni Magnússon make any mention of the drift-rights.

Personal names

The personal name Blasíus appears in Iceland at the end of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, when the slaying of otherwise unknown sons of a man by that name, on **Langanes** in northeast Iceland, is mentioned in *Bórðar saga kakala* (*Sturlunga saga* II 1946, 50). According to the Icelandic annals, this event took place in 1243.²⁸ There is no way of determining whether their father was named for the saint or for an individual, presumably a foreigner, as the name does not appear again until the sixteenth century.

²⁸ See the index of Gustav Storm’s *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578* under ‘Blasius-synir’ (1888, 515). Where other annals list the slaying of the sons of Blasíus, one manuscript of *Gottskalks annaler* (AM 412 4to) has ‘Blasilius Snorra sonar og Þordar Biarnar sonar’ (Storm 1888, 328).

Blasíus Ormsson was witness to land exchanges on 6th and 7th October 1526, by the abbot of **Viðey** monastery involving the farms **Neðra-Skarð in Svínadalur** in Leirá parish, **Steinsholt** in Leirá parish, **Háls in Neðra-Kjós** in Reynivellir parish and **Hvítanes** in Reynivellir parish (*DI*, IX 380, 381). He was later cited as witness to a wedding in a document written at **Klausturhólar** in Grímsnes on 8th June 1545 (*DI*, XI 415). Another document, dated to 1502, names him as one called on to ride the bounds between the estate **Núpur in Eystrihreppur** and **Skálholt**. This document was considered by Árni Magnússon and the editors of *DI* to be a possible forgery, perhaps based on older sources (*DI*, VII 620–22).

Runólfr Blasíusson is one of a group of priests active in the bishopric of Skálholt at the time of the Reformation; his name appears on important documents issued in 1538 and 1539 (*DI*, X 375, 453). There is no way of knowing whether he is the son of Blasíus Ormsson, though the name is so rare that this is likely.

Conclusion

Icelandic churches that include St Blaise in their dedications are not large; both in terms of wealth of churches and frequency of dedication, Blaise is far surpassed by saints like Peter, Nicholas, John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, who can be assumed to be the chosen patrons of the first generations of church founders in the eleventh century (cf. Cormack 1994, 28–29). At two churches at which Blaise is co-patron rather than primary patron (**Búrfell** and **Staður**) he is accompanied by St Þorlákr, so these dedications must date to the thirteenth century or later. (The fact that the two saints appear together does not mean that they were a pair, like Peter and Paul; rather, it appears to reflect the local importance of St Blaise combined with interest in the new native saint, Þorlákr.) The third church where he is co-patron, at **Stóri-Ás**, is one of the few whose *máldagi* can be dated, in this case to the episcopate of the officiating bishop (Sigvarður, in office 1239–68). Although churches could have been built, and used, long before they received their formal dedication, the cumulative evidence suggests that the *cultus* of St Blaise began to flourish in southwest Iceland no earlier than the twelfth century, perhaps under the influence of the dedication of the altar at Lund and the saint's veneration at Reichenau. That he maintained his popularity can be seen by the purchase of statues (always a better guide to local preferences than dedications, which are controlled by the bishop) and by the apparently late dedications at **Breiðabólstaður** and **Laugaból**, and the statue

at **Eyri**. And if the local saint is a good first choice to make a vow to, whatever one's problem, the churches at which St Blaise became a local saint were all in close proximity to bodies of water.

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THE CONSTRUCTION OF DIPLOMACY IN THE VARIOUS ACCOUNTS OF SIGVATR ÞÓRÐARSON'S *BERSQGLISVÍSUR*

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THE ELEVENTH-CENTURY SKALD Sigvatr Þórðarson is often held to be a great diplomat, and this reputation persists for good reason. Indeed, there are numerous poems in his *oeuvre* which support such a view. We may, for example, cite Sigvatr's *Austrfararvísur*, the composition of which is occasioned by two diplomatic missions eastwards (Fulk 2012, 578–79), or his *Vestrfararvísur*, in which Sigvatr is shown deftly negotiating his conflicting duties to two opposed kings, Óláfr Haraldsson and Knútr inn ríki (Jesch 2012, 615–16). It is this apparent diplomatic facet of his personality that has, for the most part, most interested critics. Although Eric Christiansen, rather puzzlingly, calls Sigvatr 'uneasy, volatile' (2002, 28), this is certainly not the consensus. Jónas Kristjánsson speaks of Sigvatr's 'tactful courtesy and sagacity' (1988, 106), Judith Jesch notes that he functions as both 'advisor and confidant' (2010, 103), and for Margaret Clunies Ross he is one of those few skalds who are able to act as 'semi-official ambassadors for their lords' (2005, 47).

There is something of a problematical tendency, however, for critics to treat the representations of Sigvatr, which are found in numerous and diverse sources, as pure and objective history. There is an implicit and uncritical assumption that the various accounts of him can be conflated, and that subsequently this apparently unitary literary representation can be considered an accurate reflection of the historical Sigvatr Þórðarson. Rather than being seen as semi-fictionalised historiography, the various accounts are treated as history. Nowhere is this more keenly apparent than in the case of Sigvatr's *Bersqglisvísur*. Jónas Kristjánsson, for example, suggests that 'we can see from *it* that the poet brought the protest home to the king with skill and sincerity' (1988, 107, my emphasis), and that we can know that as a result 'the king turned over a new leaf' (108). Likewise, Peter Foote and David M. Wilson suggest that with *Bersqglisvísur* 'Sigvat . . . put the blame squarely on the king's shoulders. The king took heed of his words' (1970, 361). Lee Hollander makes similarly uncritical remarks, stating that '*Bersqglisvísur* seems to have come down to us virtually intact, and as a whole doubtless is Sigvat's

best work' (1945, 168). All of these comments presuppose a single text, *Bersöglisvísur*, which can legitimately be reconstructed from the various witnesses, as well as implying that there is a version of events which *really happened*—that is, that are objective historical fact. Both of these assumptions are disquieting. Not only is the reconstruction of any Old Norse poem fraught with difficulties (O'Donoghue 2005, 64), but the reconstruction of Sigvatr's stanzas, as noted by Diana Whaley, is 'highly problematic' (2005, 485); in the case of *Bersöglisvísur*, the extant stanzas which are now thought to be part of the poem are not always noted as such in the prose portion of a given text, the stanzas appear in varying orders, different numbers of stanzas appear in each witness, and 'it is unclear whether all the stanzas now included in [*Bersöglisvísur*] originally belonged to that poem' (Gade 2009, 12).¹ Equally pressing is the fact that in no two texts is Sigvatr's performance of the poem presented in the same manner. As noted by T. M. Andersson, 'unlike the family sagas, which almost never tell the same story twice, the kings' sagas tell the same story . . . many times' (1985, 197). In this context, this of course has significant ramifications for the representation of Sigvatr as diplomat. Accordingly, this essay will examine the portrayal of Sigvatr as diplomat in four texts—*Heimskringla*, *Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna* and *Ágrip*—in order to demonstrate the importance of viewing each version of an event as a representation worthy of study in its own right, while suggesting that conflation of the different portrayals of Sigvatr falsely homogenises his various literary representations. In particular, the events immediately preceding and following the delivery of the 'unique political poem' *Bersöglisvísur* (Gade 2009, 11), as well as the delivery itself, will be studied in detail. It functions as the zenith of Sigvatr's diplomatic career, is one of the most famous skaldic poems (Poole 1991, 8), and also is the only episode to appear, to a lesser or greater degree, in each of the four texts to be considered.² Before continuing with this analysis it should be noted that Heather O'Donoghue has—in something of an exception to the general rule of homogenisation—examined the different accounts of this scene in order to assess their literary qualities (2005, 39–45). This article differs in its purpose, however, and instead seeks to investigate the effect that each source has on our perception of Sigvatr

¹ Also see Gade (2009, 12) for a comparison of the number and order of stanzas used in each of the witnesses of *Bersöglisvísur*. Also discussed by Poole (1991, 8).

² Since scholarship on the portrayal of Sigvatr as diplomat tends to be based upon a falsely homogenised model of his character drawn from several texts, the following analyses will inevitably be sparse in terms of critical comment.

as diplomat; this will be achieved through a comparison of the embedding of *Bersöglisvísur* in its various prose contexts. Furthermore, in this study I have purposely avoided presenting my analyses of the four texts in the likely order of their composition. The reason behind this decision is twofold. First, it is hoped that presenting the witnesses to the poem in an order that is non-chronological will disrupt any (recensionist) impulse to read the earliest version of the text as the most 'authentic'. Secondly, I hope it will prevent reading the most recent incarnation of the poem as representing a teleological end-point to *Bersöglisvísur*'s development. This will allow the various incarnations of the poem to be seen as being rhizomatically related. Instead of an arborescent and linear progression from the earliest instance of *Bersöglisvísur* to the latest, I here advocate a comparative approach which prioritises interrogation of the individual, albeit interlinked, effects produced by the various prosimetrical versions of *Bersöglisvísur*, rather than one which focuses on the poem's chronological development. Similarly, I have elected to resist the temptation to question the authorial purposes behind the different uses to which *Bersöglisvísur*, or parts thereof, have been put; indeed, to do so would be to risk drowning in the troubled waters of intentionality.

Of the four texts to be examined here, *Morkinskinna* contains the greatest number of stanzas ostensibly from *Bersöglisvísur*, with only what are thought to be the first and last stanzas being absent.³ It is worth considering this poem in detail for the insight it gives us into the diplomatic techniques which are ascribed to Sigvatr.

In this version, Sigvatr begins by establishing his relationship with Magnús's father Óláfr, and also his loyalty to him.

Vask með gram, þeims gumnum
goll bauð dróttinhollum,

...

... þess konungs ævi. (*Msk* 32)

I was with the lord,
who gave gold to his loyal men

...

throughout that king's life.

The theme is then repeated in the next stanza, and at several further points throughout the poem; for example, Sigvatr states.

³ This is in comparison with the most recent authoritative version. Gade (2009, 11–34). This is not to say that this reconstructed model of *Bersöglisvísur* is necessarily to be regarded as a complete version of the poem.

Fylgðak þeim es fylgju
 fémildum gram vildi
 —nú eru þegnar frið fegnir—
 fǫður þínum vel mína. (*Msk* 32)

I followed your father well,
 that generous ruler
 —now men are pleased with the peace—
 who wanted my company.

Also interesting here is the parenthetical clause which states that *nú eru þegnar frið fegnir*. As Lee Hollander has noted, one of the functions of the parenthetical sentence is the forced mental synchronism of linguistic clauses through their intercalation.⁴ That is to say, by having this phrase occur in tandem with the rest of the stanza's message, the two are aligned, and further, amalgamated. Having Sigvatr as a loyal retainer is thus, it is implied, related to experiencing a time of peace. Sigvatr's loyalty and service is a theme which is also returned to at the end of the poem. The final three stanzas suggest goodwill towards Magnús on Sigvatr's part; they contain an affirmation of Sigvatr's position in Óláfr's court, and his loyalty toward the late king; and finally, include a plea that the king will treat the skald well. The poem then ends much as it began, with platitudes, and affirmations of status and loyalty. Thus Sigvatr can be seen to be emphasising his position at Óláfr's court, and linking it to his current position at Magnús's, implying that his status should remain the same. By highlighting the value his father placed on having Sigvatr as an advisor, it implies that Magnús should take heed of the advice he is about to receive, or in the case of the final stanzas, has just received.

Sigvatr also draws attention to the importance of fathers. An implied comparison is made between the two courts of Óláfr and Magnús, and thus a link made between the two rulers. In referring to Magnús, he calls him *syni Óláfs* 'Óláfr's son' (*Msk* 40), and, as seen, when speaking of his father, he will call him *faðir þinn* 'your father' (*Msk* 33), or *fǫður Magnúss* 'Magnús's father' (*Msk* 35).⁵ At one point when praising Óláfr, he also notes that the king *varði hart . . . jofra erfðir* 'fiercely defended the inheritance of princes' (*Msk* 33). Sigvatr thus stresses the importance of patrilineal continuation and ancestry, and plays on Magnús's own

⁴ For a discussion of the effects of parenthetical sentences see Hollander (1965, especially 640).

⁵ Although such designations—particularly patronymics—are of course conventional, the use of any word in skaldic stanza is to be regarded as of significance and a purposeful aspect of the poem, due to the highly complex nature of the metre.

concerns. the composition of this poem is apparently occasioned by the young king's treatment of the farmers—now his subjects—because of their instrumental role in his father's downfall. This focus becomes central to Sigvatr's diplomatic purpose. Indeed, later in the poem, when putting forward the case of the farmers, Sigvatr notes that.

Eitt es mál þats mæla.
 'Minn dróttinn lét sína
 egg á óðal þegna.'
 Öfgask búendr gøfgir.
 Rán mun seggr ef sína
 selr út í því telja
 fárs at fellidómi
 fōðurleifð, konungr, greifum. (*Msk* 39)

Singular is the speech that is spoken.
 'My lord used the sword
 on his subjects' ancestral properties.'
 Proud farmers prove hostile.
 That man will regard it robbery, King,
 if he hands over his patrimony
 to the counts according to
 rash judgements of wrath.⁶

Having earlier focused on the importance of Magnús's own relationship with his father, Sigvatr now aligns the concerns of the king with those of the farmers, encouraging sympathy and leniency on Magnús's part.

Also drawing on this theme of the importance of fathers and father figures, Sigvatr invokes models of good rulership as examples for Magnús. Hákon góði is one such model, with Sigvatr noting that as a result of his just rule, men were happy to maintain and adhere to the laws he set down.

Þjóð held fast á fōstra
 fjölbliðs lögum síðan,
 enn eru af því minni,
 Aðalsteins, búendr seinir. (*Msk* 34)

Later men held firmly to the laws
 of the friendly foster-son of Æthelstan;
 the farmers are slow to relinquish
 what they remember.

Likewise, he praises Óláfr Tryggvason's and Óláfr helgi's adherence to laws. By listing models of good rulership—and stating that these rulers

⁶ Although the interpretation of this stanza is somewhat problematic, I have generally followed Ármann Jakobsson's reading, as given in *Msk* 39.

adhered to their own laws and those of their country—Sigvatr implies, by comparison with the circumstances of composition which involve Magnús going back on his word, a gentle but clear criticism of Magnús's own kingship and actions. Also, having explicitly made the connection between Óláfr helgi and Magnús at the beginning of the poem, Sigvatr takes advantage of the king's concern about his father to suggest implicitly that Magnús's own rule does not live up to the example which his father has set.

Another facet of his diplomatic technique in *Morkinskinna* is to avoid, for the most part, direct criticism of the king, and similarly, partially to side-step personal responsibility for the advice he delivers. Sigvatr plainly states that what he relates to the king is a true report.

Mál bark hvert af heilum
hug, þvít eigi brugðumk,
ek vissa þá, ossum,
óttá, lánardróttni. (*Msk* 36)

I carried each message
with a candid heart,
because I did not betray our liege-lord;
at that time, I knew there was danger.

Here Sigvatr puts himself in the position of a loyal retainer, but concurrently emphasises that what he reports is a 'message'—thus perhaps distancing himself from its content—which he delivers out of loyalty to Magnús. The statement that he 'knew there was danger' in doing so, simultaneously functions in at least three ways. It refers to the danger he would experience from being disloyal, the danger which the king is in if he does not relent in his persecution of his subjects, and the danger in which Sigvatr is placing himself by speaking to the king in such a manner. By foregrounding not only the danger that the king is in, but also the dangerous position he is putting himself in, Sigvatr is, to an extent, shielding himself from the repercussions of his speech; it is made clear that it is loyalty and obligation which fuel his versifying. He further suggests. *skulut ráðgjafar reiðask . . . yðrir, . . . doǵlingr, við bersögli* 'Lord, your counsellors must not get enraged with my plain-speaking' (*Msk* 36). While ostensibly suggesting the appropriate behaviour of his counsellors, in reality this is of course directed at the king. Here, Sigvatr tells the king how he should react, but does so subtly, avoiding explicitly telling him what to do or think. His verbal manipulation is nuanced and avoids the dangers of direct suggestion. Similarly, he warns that *skal hǫnd í hófi . . . of stytta* 'the hand must be held back by moderation' (*Msk* 37). Here, again,

the rhetoric employed by Sigvatr is subtle yet crucial. it is 'the hand' not 'your hand' or 'the king's hand' which Sigvatr directs.

This is not to say the poem is without direct admonishment. for example, Sigvatr asks *Hverr eggjar þik höggva hjaldrgegna búþegna?* 'Who urges you to slay your battle-able farmers?' (*Msk* 37) and similarly, *Hverr eggjar þik, harri heiptar strangr, at ganga . . . þínum . . . á bak mólum?* 'Who urges you, vengeful lord, to go back on your promises?' (*Msk* 38). While Sigvatr does here directly criticise the king's actions, he does not explicitly blame the king for them. Rather, by asking who has incited him to these actions, he displaces blame onto a non-existent advisor, saving the king from the responsibility of his deeds. Furthermore, the structure of the poem also serves Sigvatr's diplomatic purpose. As already noted, the poem begins and ends with affirmations of loyalty and platitudes. These admonitory stanzas and warnings are therefore couched at the heart of the poem. Their centrality, while reflecting the fact that they contain Sigvatr's central message, also means that any negative impact is softened at both beginning and end.

By presenting the poem in what is, considering the extant tradition, ostensibly nearly its entirety, *Morkinskinna* ensures that the reader is able to appreciate as fully as possible Sigvatr's diplomatic strategies. This version of the poem shows Sigvatr to be a skilled diplomat, who achieves his desired outcomes by frequently drawing parallels between the past and present,⁷ thereby implying that there should be a continuity with the future, both in terms of land-claims and the rule of kings; divorcing himself from the repercussions of his advice, by separating himself as speaker from his stanzas' content; and couching his most plain-speaking advice at the heart of a poem which otherwise focuses on the speaker's loyalty and value, and the king's great lineage.

To consider only the poetry of this episode in *Morkinskinna*, however, is to ignore the crucial role that the prose plays in the portrayal of Sigvatr as diplomat. In the *Bersqglisvísur* episode, each stanza is separated from the next with a small section of prose which mediates the reader's reception of the poem, and more importantly, their interpretation of Sigvatr as diplomat. These prose comments often reinforce or repeat what has or will be said in the stanzas. This has the effect of emphasising important material, as when it is noted that Sigvatr focuses on good rulership. *Nú víkr hann heðan í frá sinni frásögn til höfðingja þeira er ágætastir höfðu verið í Nóregi, ok at þeir heldi lög sín við bændr* 'Now from this point he turns his narrative to those chieftains who had been the most honourable in Norway, and [notes that] they had held to the laws with the farmers' (*Msk* 33). Or, for a readership less

⁷ See also Jesch (2010, 110) for the 'linking of past and present' in Sigvatr's poetry.

skilled in skaldic interpretation, this statement has the function of ensuring that they will be able to appreciate Sigvatr's diplomatic function. However, while the stanza as presented here is singular in its portrayal of Sigvatr as diplomat, the prose is not unambiguously supportive of this view. Sigvatr is not chosen by the friends of the king to represent them on account of perceived diplomatic skill, but rather he is chosen by the drawing of lots. After the delivery of the poem and the adjournment of the assembly, it is stated that *Ok þóttusk menn þá finna í orðum konungs at Guð hafði þá mýkt skap hans, ok var þá freku snúit til miskunnar* 'And then people seemed to perceive in the king's words that God had softened his temperament, and his severity was then turned to mercy' (*Msk* 42). This detracts from Sigvatr's role in the transformation of the king's attitude. Thus, while the poem abstracted from the prosimetrical framework shows Sigvatr as artful diplomat, the prose alternately supports and tempers this portrayal.

Magnúss saga ins góða in *Heimskringla* contains significantly fewer stanzas from *Bersöglisvísur* than *Morkinskinna*, having only nine rather than sixteen, although its initial stanza is omitted in *Morkinskinna*. While the analysis for the remaining stanzas is largely the same, the omissions, and one addition, influence our perception of Sigvatr as diplomat. The initial stanza of the *Heimskringla* version of events has Sigvatr note that he will do battle on behalf of his lord *ef þó skulum berjask* 'if we nonetheless must fight' (*Hkr* 26). While painting Sigvatr as someone who would rather avoid battle, it still strikes a harsher note on which to start the poem than the affirmations of loyalty and status in *Morkinskinna*. While preserving the central line of argument that Sigvatr follows in the longer version of the poem, the *Heimskringla* version is comparatively rushed and much less nuanced. Although mention is made of the proper rule of previous kings, the focus on past model rulers is less emphasised, as is the significance of father figures, which is underdeveloped here, and as such, does not produce the same rhetorical force. The majority of the poem is given over to the admonitions addressed to Magnús, and with fewer stanzas cushioning the blow at either end of the poem, they appear stark and harshly critical rather than cleverly couched within an elaborate diplomatic framework. Indeed, the *Bersöglisvísur* of *Heimskringla* does end on a stanza which unequivocally places the blame 'squarely on the king's shoulders' (Foote and Wilson 1970, 361).⁸ Furthermore, the stanzas

⁸ The stanza is a slightly more coherent version of that quoted on page 53 above (*Eitt es mál . . .*), and can be found in *Hkr* 30. Despite minor differences between the versions, the general meaning of the stanza remains the same.

of the poem are presented in a sequence without prose sections in between to mediate or guide the reader's response and understanding; combined with the few, mainly admonitory, stanzas present in *Heimskringla*, this makes for a poem that is much more harshly critical of the king's actions. In this way, Sigvatr is presented here as less of a subtle diplomat than a plain-speaking and loyal retainer.

The prose before and after Sigvatr's performance likewise fails to characterise Sigvatr unequivocally as a diplomat. We are told once again that Sigvatr is elected by lot to speak to the king, but this time it is noted that *En svá var til stillt, at Sigvatr skáld hlaut* 'And so it was arranged that it was allotted to the poet Sigvatr' (*Hkr* 26). From this it can be inferred that Sigvatr is thought by the other retainers to be the most appropriate choice to broach the concerns with the king. What it means here to be the most appropriate choice is an open question, however. It could be inferred that Sigvatr is regarded by the king's retainers as the most diplomatic choice. But other interpretations are certainly available. This piece of information could be read as suggesting that Sigvatr is viewed by the other retainers as dispensable. Ideally Sigvatr will be successful in attempting to modify the king's behaviour, but if he is not, and the king elects to punish Sigvatr for his insolence, then the Norwegian retainers will remain safe from the ruler's wrath. Perhaps the most likely interpretation, however, is that this phrase in Snorri Sturluson's overtly Icelandic *Heimskringla* indicates that Sigvatr, as an Icelander himself, is held in high esteem by the other retainers. In this reading, it can be inferred that Sigvatr is thought by his peers to be the most effective choice, but the text does not suggest that this is as a result of his diplomatic skill. Also, unlike *Morkinskinna*, *Heimskringla* attributes Magnús's change of heart to Sigvatr's warning, rather than to an act of God, which likewise suggests Sigvatr's efficacy in this situation.⁹ Thus, in *Heimskringla* neither prose nor stanza is particularly supportive of the notion of Sigvatr as diplomat. The prose suggests that Sigvatr is effective, but not explicitly diplomatic, in the given circumstances, while the stanza suggests a man who is perhaps slightly too abrupt to be considered a truly great diplomat.

Fagrskinna preserves three full stanzas belonging to *Bersögglisvísur*, which are preceded by two individual *helmingar*. These are drawn from the

⁹ It could also be argued that this omission on Snorri's part, rather than being made as suggested here to present Sigvatr as the most effective choice, is rather part of Snorri's avoidance of the supernatural. For example, in *Heimskringla* Snorri avoids the tale of Sigvatr's youth in which he is said to have become 'a fine poet through catching and eating a magnificent fish' (Clunies Ross 1999, 57–58).

central section of the poem, and as such contain much less material which can be regarded as diplomatic. The stanzas thus function much as they do in *Heimskringla*, although their delivery, as a result of the brevity of this version of the poem, appears rather more abrupt. Once again, the prose comments mediate to an extent the impression that the reader forms of Sigvatr. The choice of Sigvatr as spokesperson by the king's men is again made by chance. The men cast lots and *var sá hlutr upp tekinn, er átti Sigvatr skáld* 'that lot which belonged to Sigvatr the poet was picked up' (*Fsk* 212). Unlike the *Heimskringla* version of events, no overt suggestion is made that the outcome is manipulated. There is no implication, therefore, that he is chosen for his skill, diplomatic or otherwise. After the stanzas of the poem have been recounted, we are told *þvílíka kenning mátti heyra í því kvæði við konung, at hann skyldi halda lög þau, er faðir hans hafði sett* 'in this poem could be heard such teachings to the king, that he must keep those laws which his father had established' (*Fsk* 215). The prose frame thus emphasises the presence of the admonitions themselves, rather than the means by which they are delivered. The prose further notes that Magnús turns to peace *því at konungr var vitr maðr* 'because the king was a wise man' (*Fsk* 215). This further detracts from Sigvatr's role in his change of heart. *Fagrskinna*, then, while presenting a Sigvatr who carries out a diplomatic role in that he warns the king without repercussions, does not present a portrait of a diplomat who is naturally skilled in the art, as does *Morkinskinna*.

Ágrip preserves only a single stanza from *Bersöglisvísur*, and the rest of the scene in which Sigvatr delivers it is similarly compressed. The stanza presented serves rather as a 'punchline' to the words of Atli than as a pointed effort to warn the king (O'Donoghue 2005, 40). This is reinforced by the fact that immediately after Sigvatr's stanza the assembly adjourns. Despite Russell Poole's contention that the '*lausavísa* in *Ágrip* . . . brings about [Magnus's] transformation from a tyrant to a good king' (Poole 1991, 10), Magnús's change of heart is seen not as a result of Sigvatr's words but rather as the result of divine intervention. *Ok fannsk þá í hans orðum, at guð hafði skipt skapi hans, ok var þá freka snúin til miskunnar* 'And then it was perceived in his words that God had changed his disposition, and his severity was turned then to mercy' (*Ágr* 33). While it is undoubtedly true, as Heather O'Donoghue notes, that '*Ágrip*'s version . . . highlights the role of the poet and his individual response' (2005, 41) the difference in focus from the extended circumstances surrounding the delivery of *Bersöglisvísur* elsewhere and its remodelling in *Ágrip* as a 'pithy anecdote' (O'Donoghue 2005, 40) means that here Sigvatr is portrayed less as having a knack for diplomacy than as providing entertainment.

Analyses of various versions of the *Bersöglisvísur* episode indicate, therefore, that the portrayal of Sigvatr Þórðarson is by no means unitary across the various texts which make mention of him. Rather, literary representations of Sigvatr vary widely between texts. Indeed, *Morkinskinna* portrays Sigvatr to be an accomplished diplomat, and the critical consensus of his character as such is therefore supported by this text. This is not the case for the other three texts, however, none of which suggests that Sigvatr is to be regarded as a great diplomat. Both *Heimskringla* and *Fagrskinna* show him to be a plain-speaking retainer rather than a diplomat, while in *Ágrip* he serves little purpose beyond providing a brief moment of entertainment. Not only does the presentation of Sigvatr vary between texts, but his portrayal within these texts is far from straightforward. Prose and stanza do not always correspond in the view they give of Sigvatr's ability as a diplomat, and one may intensify or temper the view given by the other. What can be learned from this examination of the portrayal of one episode in the life of Sigvatr in *Morkinskinna*, *Heimskringla*, *Fagrskinna* and *Ágrip* is that it is entirely fallacious to make generalisations about his 'character'; inferences can be made from his actions in one particular text but to speak of the character of Sigvatr divorced from the texts which produce it is impossible. To do so would falsely represent the broad range of portrayals of Sigvatr which exists. Indeed, as Carl Phelpstead—drawing on Bakhtin—has noted, there is a 'tendency to impose monologic unity on literary works [which] is a manifestation of the desire . . . to be in control of an understandable reality' (Phelpstead 2007, 68). This is a tendency which is evident not only in the texts themselves, but also in the criticism on the texts, and particularly that on Sigvatr Þórðarson. It is, of course, a tendency which must be avoided. Beyond this, the case of Sigvatr's *Bersöglisvísur* also stands as an important reminder that what scholars of Old Norse literature take as their objects of study are not texts which can be read as pure and objective historical accounts, but rather works whose literariness must always be kept in mind.

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SNORRI VERSUS THE COPYISTS. AN INVESTIGATION OF A
STYLISTIC TRAIT IN THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITIONS OF
EGILS SAGA, *HEIMSKRINGLA* AND THE *PROSE EDDA*

BY HAUKUR ÞORGEIRSSON

Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum

Introduction

IN THE 1960S THE SWEDISH SCHOLAR Peter Hallberg published a series of investigations into the vocabulary and style of medieval Icelandic prose texts (the major works are Hallberg 1962, 1963 and 1968). Hallberg's principal goals were to identify features typical of particular time periods and particular authors. Some of the most important results that Hallberg felt his works established were Snorri Sturluson's authorship of *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, Óláfr Þórðarson's authorship of *Laxdæla saga* and *Knýtlinga saga* and Bergr Sökkason's authorship of a number of fourteenth-century works.

The type of research Hallberg was engaged with is considerably facilitated by digital technology and Hallberg himself expected the computer to herald a golden age of stylistic research (Hallberg 1968, 170). But as things have turned out, scholars have by and large not rushed to embrace this methodology. Recent scholarship which makes use of Hallberg's work (e.g. Helgi Guðmundsson 1997) or identifies new stylistic criteria (e.g. Katrín Axelsdóttir 2005) is a rarity. In fact, even works specifically concerned with the authorship of individual texts tend not to focus on the details of style and vocabulary. As an example, Sigurjón Páll Ísaksson's (2012) argument that *Heimskringla*, *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna* are works of the same author makes no mention of Hallberg's analysis of Snorri Sturluson's prose style, even though Hallberg was at pains to establish the differences in style between *Heimskringla* and the other Kings' Sagas (see in particular Hallberg 1968, 20–21). In a similar vein, the spirited attempts by Matthías Johannessen (1997) and Einar Kárason (2010, 2012) to establish the authorship of *Njáls saga* make little or no use of stylistic criteria. As a final example, Margaret Cormack's discussion of the authorship of *Egils saga* and *Heimskringla* (2001) focuses on discrepancies in historical details and makes no direct reference to Hallberg.

It is not without reason that scholars have been sceptical about Hallberg's methods and results. Medieval Icelandic literary works are not preserved in

the original manuscripts of the authors but rather in copies at some remove. In recent years, researchers have emphasised the creative reworking of texts which medieval copyists engaged in and many have turned their attention to the study of surviving individual manuscripts as cultural artifacts while seeing speculation about the original works as fruitless or meaningless.

Thus Guðrún Nordal argues that *Egils saga* is not the work of any one author since the surviving manuscripts differ in various important respects (Nordal, 2002). In particular, Guðrún points out that the text of Mōðruvallahók, which is normally used for editions, is not as detailed or precise as that of the significantly older Θ (*theta*) fragment. Even if we believed Snorri was the author of the original *Egils saga*, Guðrún argues that he is definitely not the author of its Mōðruvallahók text.

This point is well taken, but the questions that ‘old philology’ was concerned with remain of interest and cannot be defined out of existence. There was almost certainly a particular individual who first committed the story of Egill Skallagrímsson to writing, and trying to establish his identity is a meaningful academic endeavour. Even though we can never reconstruct the original version of *Egils saga*, it is not *a priori* impossible that the surviving witnesses have preserved its stylistic features well enough for a meaningful analysis.

Nevertheless, the creativity of the manuscript tradition is a serious hurdle for any research into the stylistic preferences of medieval Icelandic authors and, indeed, a problem for Hallberg’s research. Hallberg worked from edited texts and only occasionally took note of manuscript variants. In his research into *Egils saga*, he used the *Íslenzk fornrit* edition (Sigurður Nordal 1933, based on Finnur Jónsson 1886–88) and consulted the published text of the Θ fragment (as printed in Finnur Jónsson 1886–88, 335–44) but made no systematic investigation of other manuscripts.

In recent years, significant advances have been made in the study of the *Egils saga* tradition. The texts of all the medieval manuscripts are now available in diplomatic or facsimile editions and lost text from Mōðruvallahók has been reconstructed with the aid of early copies and, in one case, recovered with the aid of infrared photography. Building on this foundation, the time is opportune to re-examine Hallberg’s stylistic criteria and their fate in the manuscript tradition. For this article I have made a detailed examination of one issue which gave Hallberg some trouble.

The ‘en er’ versus ‘ok er’ stylistic criterion

Following up a suggestion by Baldur Jónsson, Hallberg launched an inquiry into the ratio of sentence-initial *en er* to *ok er* as a possible characteristic of Snorri Sturluson’s style (Hallberg 1963, 10). The two possibilities are

essentially synonymous and interchangeable. Sentence introductions like *En er váraði* and *Ok er váraði* can both be translated as ‘When spring came’.

Hallberg examined the ratio of *en er* to *ok er* in 69 Old Icelandic texts of various types (Hallberg 1968, 200–02). I reproduce his results below, omitting texts shorter than 10,000 words in the hope that the numbers for longer texts are more reliable.

Text	<i>ok er</i>	<i>en er</i>	<i>en er</i> ratio
<i>Heimskringla</i>	63	914	94%
<i>Þórðar saga kakala</i>	26	98	79%
<i>Þorgíls saga skarða</i>	32	118	79%
<i>Prestssaga Guðmundar góða</i>	13	41	76%
<i>Íslendinga saga</i>	79	186	70%
<i>Knýtlinga saga</i>	48	110	70%
<i>Fagrskinna</i>	8	18	69%
<i>Njáls saga</i>	23	48	68%
<i>Harðar saga ok Hólmverja</i>	22	40	65%
<i>Óláfs saga ins helga</i> (‘Legendary saga’)	22	33	60%
<i>Egils saga</i>	140	192	58%
<i>Guðmundar saga dýra</i>	24	29	55%
<i>Svarfdæla saga</i>	16	17	52%
<i>Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss</i>	22	23	51%
<i>Sturlu saga</i>	32	33	51%
<i>Orkneyinga saga</i>	133	122	48%
<i>Eyrbyggja saga</i>	118	108	48%
<i>Grettis saga</i>	99	90	48%
<i>Víga-Glúms saga</i>	28	24	46%
<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i> (Y)	31	26	46%
<i>Sverris saga</i>	154	122	44%
<i>Örvar-Odds saga</i>	22	16	42%
<i>Hrólfs saga kraka</i>	7	5	42%
<i>Ljósvetninga saga</i> (C)	33	17	34%

<i>Laxdæla saga</i>	80	39	33%
<i>Flóamanna saga</i>	22	9	29%
<i>Jómsvíkinga saga</i> (AM 510)	60	23	28%
<i>Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar</i>	245	91	27%
<i>Reykðæla saga</i>	17	5	23%
<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i> (E)	39	6	13%
<i>Vatnsdæla saga</i>	51	7	12%
<i>Ragnars saga loðbrókar</i>	51	7	12%
<i>Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar</i> (Oddr S)	99	12	11%
<i>Þórðar saga hreðu</i>	36	4	10%
<i>Völsunga saga</i>	51	5	9%
<i>Bjarnar saga Hítðelakappa</i>	35	3	8%
<i>Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar</i> (Oddr A)	179	14	7%
<i>Hávarðar saga Ísfríðings</i>	68	5	7%
<i>Morkínskinna</i>	159	6	4%
<i>Jómsvíkinga saga</i> (AM 291)	59	2	3%
<i>Finnboga saga ramma</i>	36	1	3%
<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i> (M)	44	1	2%

Table 1. Frequency of *en er* and *ok er* in Old Icelandic texts

To summarise the table, thirteen texts fall in the range of 0–20% *en er*, while 28 texts fall in the range 20–80% *en er*. Only one text, *Heimskringla*, falls in the range 80–100% *en er*. This looks quite promising for the idea that a dominant use of *en er* is a distinctive characteristic of Snorri Sturluson's style.

But there is trouble afoot. Hallberg believed that Snorri was the author of *Egils saga*, but in the table above this work is revealed to have only a mild preference for *en er* over *ok er*. In attempting to explain this, Hallberg pointed out that the text of *Egils saga* (in the *Íslenzk fornrit* edition he was using) is rather sharply divided in this respect. In the first 30,000 words there are 152 instances of *en er* and 5 instances of *ok er* or a 97% preference for *en er*, a tendency even more pronounced than that in *Heimskringla*. In the c. 32,000-word remainder of *Egils saga* there are 40 instances of *en er* and 135 instances of *ok er* for an *en er* ratio of 23%.

Hallberg suggested that the ratio in the first half of *Egils saga* accurately preserves the original situation while the second half has been distorted by a scribe with a systematic preference for *ok er*. Hallberg found important support for this idea in the Θ fragment, which is generally agreed to be the manuscript most closely preserving the original saga. The four leaves of the Θ fragment (c. 3000 words) are all from the second half of the saga, and yet it exclusively has examples of *en er* where the Möðruvallabók text has *ok er*. This seems to support Hallberg's idea that the second half of the Möðruvallabók text is not representative of the original.

But there is another way to look at this. Möðruvallabók and Θ are the two best manuscripts of *Egils saga* and both represent the A redaction of the saga. Yet they differ in 100% of cases in their use of *en er* versus *ok er*. With so great a difference between closely related manuscripts, can we have any reasonable expectation of recovering the original practices of the author? Perhaps all we are really looking at are the preferences of individual copyists with those of the original author sealed off to us?

We can formalise these musings as two hypotheses:

Hypothesis A: By and large copyists do not do large-scale replacement of *en er* by *ok er* or *ok er* by *en er*. The situation in the Möðruvallabók text of *Egils saga* is a relatively uncommon aberration.

Hypothesis B: Copyists frequently change *en er* and *ok er* around. There is no realistic prospect of identifying the preferences of the author based on the surviving manuscripts, either for *Egils saga* or for any other thirteenth-century work.

Minor variants, like *ok er* / *en er*, are often omitted from critical apparatuses and given short shrift in stemmatic research. Certainly, the high possibility of independent innovation makes matters difficult. But in a recent study of minor variants in the manuscript tradition of *Konráðs saga keisarasonar*, the result was that even in the case of interchangeable words, 'a scribe is still considerably more likely to copy his exemplar than to switch word' (Hall and Parsons 2013, § 38).

Perhaps, then, this problem can be solved. At any rate, we can get a much clearer picture by examining more manuscripts. In the following I consider the *en er* to *ok er* ratio of all thirteen surviving medieval manuscripts and fragments of *Egils saga* (M, W, S, α, β, γ, δ, ε, ζ, η, Θ, ι, κ), starting with Möðruvallabók.

Egils saga in Möðruvallabók

In the *Íslenzk fornrit* edition of *Egils saga*, which Hallberg used, the text of Möðruvallabók is followed with three major exceptions. On page 69v,

the first 9 lines of the first column could not be read and text from W was used instead. A leaf is missing between leaves 77 and 78 and text from δ was used instead. Another leaf is missing between leaves 83 and 84 and text from Θ and W was used instead.

In effect, the text used by Hallberg is a composite text of four manuscripts. We can get a somewhat clearer picture by considering Möðruvallabók alone. In a fortunate development, the text on page 69v has been partially recovered with the use of infrared photography (Þorgeir Sigurðsson et al. 2013). The relevant text turns out to contain one *en er* sentence. The text on the lost leaves has been reconstructed from manuscripts derived from Möðruvallabók in a more complete state (Bjarni Einarsson 1993; *EgEA* I).

Considering first the manuscript in its present state, it is most naturally divided into chapters 1–54 and chapters 55–87 (here and throughout I use the chapter numbers in *EgEA* I). The first part contains 160 *en er* sentences and 2 *ok er* sentences (99% *en er*). The second part contains 24 *en er* sentences and 133 *ok er* sentences (15% *en er*). The totals for the manuscript as a whole are 184 *en er* sentences and 135 *ok er* sentences (58% *en er*). If we add the reconstructions of the lost leaves, 15 *en er* sentences are added to the first part and 5 *ok er* sentences are added to the second part. The contrast between the first and the second part is even starker than in Hallberg's investigation.

We now turn to the other manuscripts. I limit myself to the medieval fragments, which is not to deny that some paper manuscripts have textual value. No complete stemma exists, but scholars have classified the manuscripts into three redactions, A (considered the closest to the original), B and C (for recent work see Chesnutt 2005b). No medieval manuscript is demonstrably derived from another medieval manuscript.

Iota (ι) fragment

To show a sample of the material and illustrate my methodology I have chosen the ι fragment, which consists of one leaf from the second half of the saga. The following list shows all *ok er* and *en er* sentences in ι and in the corresponding part of Möðruvallabók (M).

1. M:Skilduz þeir at þessu. **ok er** Egill var a brottu. þa kallaði J(arl) til sin bræðr (*EgEA* I, 141)
 ι : skilduz þ[eir þa] at svo bvno. <E>N er Egill var j b[ro]tt farin. Þa kalladi jarl til sin breðr (Chesnutt 2010, 186)

2. M: bioz þa til ferðar **ok er** þeir satu ifer daguerði. þa kom þar Alfr (*EgEA I, 142*)
 t: [b]ioz þa til ferþar. **En er** þeir satv yfer dagverdi. þa kemr þar Alfvr. (Chesnutt 2010, 187)

3. M Egill for sina leið· **ok er** þeir komu a veginn þann er a skoginn la. (*EgEA I, 142*)
 t: þeir Egill forv nv leid sina· **En er** þeir komv á vegin þann er la á skogin. (Chesnutt 2010, 187)

4. M: fioldi spora. **ok er** þeir koma þar er leiðir skildi þa (*EgEA I, 142*)
 t: fiolda spora. **En er** þeir koma þar er leiþer skildi þa (Chesnutt 2010, 188)

5. M: Egill for firer **ok er** þeir foro at halsinum. þa (*EgEA I, 143*)
 t: Egill for fyrer. **En er** þeir Egill komv at halsinvm þa (Chesnutt 2010, 188)

6. M: a klifinu. **en er** þeir voro komner vpp i klifit. (*EgEA I, 143*)
 t: a kleifina· **E[N] er** þeir Egill vorv komner i klifit· (Chesnutt 2010, 188)

7. M: þeir gerðu sua. **Ok er** Egill kom vpp ór klifinu. þa voro þar firer .víj. menn ok gengu aller senn at honum ok sottu hann. En ecki er at segia fra hogua viðskiptum. (*EgEA I, 143*)
 t: þeir gera sva sem han mællti. En þar ekki sagt fra hogva vid skiptvm þeirra. (Chesnutt 2010, 188)

8. M: verit hofðu firer framan hamarinn. **ok er** Egill sa þat sneriz hann (*EgEA I, 143*)
 t: verit hofdv vnder skoginvm. **En er** Egill sa þat þa sneri han (Chesnutt 2010, 189)

9. M: huarertueggiu sarer. **ok er** Egill kom til þa flyðu þegar (*EgEA I, 144*)
 t: hvarertveggiv sarer· flydv þeir þegar (Chesnutt 2010, 189)

10. M: sott til Vermalandz. **ok er** þeir komu a konungs fund. þa (*EgEA I, 145*)
 t: sott til Vermalandz. **en er** þeir komv til kongs. þa (Chesnutt 2010, 190)

11. M: heimleiðiss. **Ok er** þeir koma aptr til Þorst(eins) þa segia (*EgEA* I, 145)
 ι: heimleidiz. **En er** þeir koma aptr þa sogdu (Chesnutt 2010, 190)
12. M: **ok er** Egill var buinn ferðar sinnar. ok byr gaf þa (*EgEA* I, 145)
 ι: **En er** Egill [var bv]inn ferdar sínar ok byri gaf þa (Chesnutt 2010, 191)
13. M: til moz við hann. **ok er** þrælarnar sa apter for þa (*EgEA* I, 146)
 ι: til lids vid han. **En er** þrælarnar sa epter forina þa (Chesnutt 2010, 192)
14. M: þeir voro .vi. saman a attæru skipi **ok er** þeir skylldu út fara þa (*EgEA* I, 147)
 ι: vorv þeir .vi. samt. **En er** þeir skylldv [v]t fara þa (Chesnutt 2010, 193)
15. M: þa var flæðrin sið dags **ok er** þeir vrðu hennar at biða. þa foro þeir vm kuelldit sið. (*EgEA* I, 147)
 ι: þa var flædr sid dags ok vrdv þeir hentar at bida. forv þeir vt or ánni vm qvelldit. (Chesnutt 2010, 193)
16. M: þann dag spurði Egill þessi tíðendi. ok þegar reid hann at leita (*EgEA* I, 147)
 ι: **Ok er** Egill spvrði tíþendi. for han þegar at leita (Chesnutt 2010, 193)
17. M: Epter þat reið Egill heim til Borgar **ok er** hann kom heim þa geck hann þegar til lokreckiu (*EgEA* I, 148)
 ι. Reid han heim epter þat. **En er** han kom in farandi þa for han þegar til lokreckiv (Chesnutt 2010, 193)

M and ι have 13 *ok er* / *en er* sentences in common. In addition, M has 3 *ok er* sentences without equivalents in ι and ι has 1 *ok er* sentence without equivalent in M. In my statistics on the individual fragments I only use sentences which the fragments have in common with M since sentences without an equivalent in M are less likely to have been present in the archetype. Thus, ι gets listed as containing 13 sentences of interest, all of

which have *en er*. In practice, the fragments rarely contain *ok er* / *en er* sentences not in M so this methodological detail is of minor importance.

Egils saga results

With the methodology illustrated in the preceding section I have examined all the medieval manuscripts and fragments of *Egils saga*. The W manuscript, which has only been published in a facsimile edition, contains 29 leaves of *Egils saga* text. It proved too time-consuming to work through all the leaves so I made do with a sample of six: 29, 34, 35, 48, 51 and 54 (selected at random but with preference for more legible pages). In all other cases I examined the complete text. The results are summarised in the following table:

Ms	<i>ok er</i>	<i>en er</i>	% <i>en er</i>	Redaction	Leaves analysed	Source
M	135	184	58%	A	38	<i>EgEA</i> I
W	2	40	95%	B	6 (of 29)	Jón Helgason 1956
S	0	8	100%	B	2	Chesnutt 2005a
α	2	12	86%	C	3	<i>EgEA</i> III
β	1	7	88%	B	1	Chesnutt 2010
γ	1	10	91%	B	2	Kjeldsen 2005a
δ	10	50	83%	B	8	Kjeldsen 2005b
ε	2	17	89%	C	3	<i>EgEA</i> III
ζ	6	16	73%	B	4	Kjeldsen 2005c
η	0	14	100%	A	2	<i>EgEA</i> I
Θ	0	11	100%	A	4	Kjeldsen 2005d
ι	0	13	100%	B	1	Chesnutt 2010
κ	0	6	100%	A	2	<i>EgEA</i> I

Table 2. Frequency of *ok er* and *en er* in *Egils saga* mss.

If copyists frequently changed *en er* and *ok er* around as a matter of personal taste, I would not expect to see such a clear preference in the table as a whole. The manuscripts have an average *en er* frequency of 89%, higher than all the texts in table 1 except *Heimskringla*. Not a single manuscript has a preference for *ok er*. These results indicate a relatively high stability in the transmission of *en er* and *ok er*. It is worth looking at the second part of the saga specifically:

Manuscript	<i>ok er</i>	<i>en er</i>	% <i>en er</i>	Type
M	133	24	15%	A
W	0	22	100%	B
α	0	6	100%	C
ε	0	1	100%	C
η	0	12	100%	A
Θ	0	11	100%	A
ι	0	13	100%	B

Table 3. Frequency of *ok er* and *en er* in chapters 55–87

These results strongly support Hallberg's idea that the *Egils saga* archetype had a dominant use of *en er*, in its second half as well as its first half. We have evidence from all three redactions of the saga indicating *en er* usage. Especially valuable, as already pointed out by Hallberg, is the testimony of the Θ fragment.

The second part of the M text is revealed as the odd man out. Since the *Egils saga* text of M is written in the same hand throughout, it is unlikely that the replacement of *en er* by *ok er* took place there. Possible explanations would include that M switched exemplars in chapter 55 or that M's exemplar switched scribes in chapter 55. At any rate, the text will at some point have been transmitted by a scribe with an active preference for *ok er* over *en er*.

Heimskringla manuscripts

A sceptic might now object as follows: The preceding investigation may suffice to establish a preference for *en er* in *Egils saga*. But this is by no means sufficient to demonstrate an affinity between *Egils saga* and *Heimskringla*. Hallberg's investigation of *Heimskringla* was limited to the *Íslenzk fornrit* edition which is principally based on copies of the lost Kringla manuscript. The preference for *en er* in Kringla might well be specific to that manuscript rather than a feature of the original work.

Heimskringla is a vast work preserved in a number of manuscripts and a complete study of sentences of interest in it would be a large undertaking. But I think it will suffice to use one of its constituents as a sample. I have chosen, essentially at random, *Magnúss saga góða*. To begin with I compared the Kringla text of *Magnúss saga* with that of Codex Frisianus (Unger 1873). The result is that Kringla and Codex

Frisianus share 35 sentences of interest in *Magnúss saga*. In 34 of those cases the text of Codex Frisianus agrees with that of Kringla (32 *en er* sentences to 2 *ok er* sentences). In one case Kringla has an *en er* sentence which shows up as an *ok er* sentence in Codex Frisianus. This 97% agreement between the two manuscripts inspires confidence in Hallberg's Kringla-based results.

It might still be objected that Kringla and Codex Frisianus are both from the x-branch of *Heimskringla's* stemma. We might imagine that the dominance of *en er* was only established in the common ancestor of the x-branch but was not a part of the original work. To investigate this possibility it is necessary to make a comparison with a manuscript of the y-branch, and I have chosen Eirspennill (Finnur Jónsson 1916), commonly considered the best y text (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1951, xciv). In *Magnúss saga góða*, Kringla and Eirspennill share 37 sentences of interest. In every case the texts of the two manuscripts agree (35 *en er* sentences to 2 *ok er* sentences). This 100% agreement between manuscripts from the different branches can best be explained by both of them faithfully preserving the archetype in this matter.

The Prose Edda

Hallberg did not include the *Prose Edda* in any of his studies since his concern was principally with saga texts. A stylistic comparison between different types of texts can only be undertaken with caution and the *Edda* certainly differs from the sagas in a number of ways. Nevertheless, there seems to be no obvious reason why the choice between *en er* and *ok er* should be different in the retelling of myths from that in the relating of putatively historical events. Thus it seems worthwhile to include the *Prose Edda* in our examination. It would certainly be embarrassing for the theory of *en er* as characteristic of Snorri if the *Edda* had a preference for *ok er*.

In Faulkes's edition of the *Edda* (Faulkes 1998, 2005, 2007), there are 90 cases of *en er* to 18 cases of *ok er* (83% *en er*). This is a healthy preference for *en er*, though not quite as dominant as that in *Heimskringla*. It is once again worthwhile to look at the manuscript transmission. For convenience, I limit that investigation to *Gylfaginning*, the textual transmission of *Skáldskaparmál* being a more complicated story.

Gylfaginning is preserved in four textually valuable manuscripts, Codex Regius (R; printed in Finnur Jónsson 1931), Codex Wormianus (W; printed in Finnur Jónsson 1924), Codex Trajectinus (T; printed in van Eeden 1913) and Codex Upsaliensis (U; printed in Grape 1977, Heimir Pálsson 2012). The texts of R, W and T are close to each other and constitute the same

redaction or ‘text witness type’ (Wendt 2008) while the U text differs from them in various ways. The text of Faulkes’s edition is based on R, as are most other editions. Since the texts of R, W and T are so close they are convenient to compare. For this I have used Eysteinn Björnsson’s handy comparative edition (Eysteinn Björnsson 2005).

In the text of *Gylfaginning*, there are 51 cases where R, W and T all preserve the same *ok er* / *en er* sentence. In 46 (90%) of those cases all three manuscripts agree on either *en er* or *ok er*. In 36 cases, the manuscripts agree on *en er*. In 10 cases, the manuscripts agree on *ok er*. In four out of five mixed cases, two out of three manuscripts have *en er*. Though the agreement is not as impressive as in the case of the *Heimskringla* manuscripts, it seems good enough for my purposes. We can conclude with reasonable confidence that the original *Edda* had a high percentage of *en er* sentences.

There are strong indications that the text of Codex Upsaliensis has undergone extensive and somewhat eccentric editing compared to the other manuscripts and is a much less reliable witness to the original work (Sävborg 2012, though see also Heimir Pálsson 2010, 2012). The U text of *Gylfaginning* has 22 *ok er* sentences and 13 *en er* sentences (37% *en er*). I regard this as one indication that the text of U is farther removed from Snorri’s original than that of RWT.

Conclusions

We can now compare the *en er* percentage of the three putative works by Snorri. To distill the results on *Egils saga* into one number I simply take an average of the *en er* percentage of the individual manuscripts (see table 2). For the *Prose Edda* I go with the state of affairs in Faulkes’s edition. For *Heimskringla* I use Hallberg’s number.

Text	% <i>en er</i>
Heimskringla	94%
Egils saga (average of mss)	89%
Edda	83%
41 other texts, >10.000 words each	2%–79%

Table 4. Percentage of *en er* in examined texts

Heimskringla, *Egils saga* and the *Prose Edda* all have an *en er* percentage higher than the comparative texts in table 1. This lends some support to the idea that they were composed by the same author. In no way would I

claim that a single stylistic feature is sufficient to prove common authorship, but this closer examination of one of Hallberg's criteria has certainly increased my general confidence in his results.

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TWO MAJOR GROUPS IN THE OLDER MANUSCRIPT TRADITION OF *NÍTÍÐA SAGA*

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N*ÍTÍÐA SAGA* IS A LATE MEDIEVAL Icelandic romance almost certainly composed in Iceland sometime in the fourteenth century. Its anonymous but probably clerical author drew on the bridal-quest romance *Clári saga* for inspiration, and in its turn *Nítíða saga* seems to have inspired writers of other late medieval Icelandic romances such as *Nikulás saga leikara* (McDonald Werronen 2013, 83–118). While *Nítíða saga*'s early readership is difficult to ascertain, its rich manuscript tradition suggests that it was a well-known, frequently copied and arguably very popular romance among the laity of early modern (and later) Iceland. Kalinke and Mitchell's *Bibliography of Old Norse–Icelandic Romances* lists sixty-five manuscripts and fragments in which the saga survives (1985, 85–86), ranging in date from the late fifteenth century to the early twentieth century.¹ Despite this significant manuscript tradition, *Nítíða saga* has only ever been published

¹ In my study I have considered there to be sixty-one manuscripts preserving *Nítíða saga*, as I have found Kalinke and Mitchell's list to be not quite accurate. The two-leaf fragment in AM 582 4to was not accounted for, and some manuscripts that are listed contain, rather than full texts, only summaries (AM 576c 4to, AM 226a 8vo, Lbs 3128 4to, and Nks 1144 fol.); further, one manuscript actually contains a set of verse *rímur* (Add. 24,973 8vo), instead of a prose version of the saga. It is unfortunate that I have not yet been able to study *Nítíða rímur*: there are at least twenty-four additional manuscript witnesses of verse *Nítíða rímur* cycles. Of these, there are no fewer than eight independent versions (Driscoll 1997, 11; Finnur Sigmundsson 1966, I 356–60). These sets of *rímur* are just as important to *Nítíða saga*'s transmission history as its prose versions, and it is probable that at least one of the saga versions I have identified (Group E) derives from a *rímur* cycle (McDonald Werronen 2013, 49–53, 75–81; cf. also Jorgensen 1990), though more research into this is still needed. Studies of *rímur* in general, especially in English, remain relatively few (e.g. Driscoll 1997; Finnur Sigmundsson 1966; Hughes 2002; Hughes 2005; Jorgensen 1993), and there has not yet been any work done on *Nítíða rímur* specifically. Combining the known saga and *rímur* manuscripts, then, there are today at least ninety separate witnesses of the *Nítíða* story in verse and prose, spanning over five hundred years. Clearly this is an important area for future research.

once (Loth 1965), and it is this version that scholars of Icelandic romance will be aware of. The text of Loth's edition is taken primarily from the sixteenth-century vellum manuscript AM 529 4to, but it ends with the late seventeenth-century paper manuscript AM 537 4to (Loth 1965, 1–37). A recent English translation was also based on this edition (McDonald 2009). However, this article demonstrates the existence of at least two early (pre-1600) versions of the text and points briefly to the existence of up to four other younger versions.² Before discussing these groups in general and the oldest two in more detail, I provide a synopsis of the romance according to the version published in Loth, because it is still a little known saga and the following discussion at times refers to variations in plot.

Synopsis

The romance begins by describing the maiden-king Nítíða, ruler of France. She travels from Paris to Apulia to visit her foster mother Egidia, and then to the strange island of Visio, from which she obtains magical stones. On her return to France, Nítíða brings her foster-brother Hléskjöldur with her, to help defend the kingdom. Nítíða now refuses a string of suitors. First is Ingi of Constantinople, who returns twice after being refused: to abduct first Nítíða (she escapes through magic) and then, mistakenly, a disguised maidservant. The next suitors are sons of Soldán of Serkland. Foreseeing their arrival, Nítíða fortifies her castle and has her foster-brother Hléskjöldur defeat them and their armies before they ever see her. Livorius of India tries next. Aware of Nítíða's reputation for outwitting previous suitors, he wastes no time in bringing her straight to India. She escapes by magic and takes Livorius's sister Sýjalín with her back to France in retaliation. Now Soldán of Serkland is set on avenging his sons' deaths. Foreseeing his plan, Nítíða sends Hléskjöldur to fight them at sea. Livorius arrives at the battle unexpectedly. He defeats Soldán, then heals the wounded Hléskjöldur in India before sending him back to France. Livorius then meets his aunt Alduria, who suggests he return to France in disguise and stay the winter in Nítíða's household, to become better acquainted. Taking this advice, he gains Nítíða's confidence, disguised as a prince named Eskilvarður. One day, Nítíða asks him to look into her magical stones, where they see

² While I have classified most of the extant manuscripts, and listed them all in Table 1 for reference, this article has as its focus the two oldest groups (A and B) because more research is needed to determine the precise nature of the relationships among the younger versions. Further preliminary discussion of the entire manuscript tradition is in McDonald Werronen 2013, 24–54.

throughout the world, which is depicted in three parts. Nítíða then reveals that she had seen through Livorius's disguise as soon as he arrived. He proposes to Nítíða, she accepts, and their wedding is set for autumn. Ingi hears the news, and, still angry and humiliated, gathers an army against France. Livorius and Ingi fight, Livorius spares Ingi's life, and has his sister Sýjalín heal Ingi. Sýjalín and Ingi fall in love, and Nítíða's foster brother Hléskjöldur is matched with Ingi's sister Listalín. The saga ends with a triple wedding, and Nítíða and Livorius's son succeeds them as ruler of France.

Manuscript Groups

Although this is the version of *Nítíða saga* commonly known today, during and after the Middle Ages other versions differing slightly in plot, tone and emphasis were known across Iceland. In terms of recognising such variation in this and other Icelandic romances, two studies from the 1980s consider parts of the manuscript traditions of certain romances: Astrid van Nahl (1981, 197–200) and Jürg Glauser (1983, 78–100) discuss manuscript evidence and variety, and while both occasionally mention the case of *Nítíða saga*, only Glauser discusses its variation in manuscript specifically, albeit briefly (82–84). Additionally, there has been some work on post-medieval saga popularity and reception in Iceland and abroad (Driscoll 1997, Glauser 1994, Jón Karl Helgason 2005, Malm 2004, O'Donoghue 2004, Springborg 1977, Wawn 2005, Hast 1960), but neither the reception of *Nítíða saga* nor its variations has been studied in detail. Until now, a stemma has not been attempted, nor even a rough grouping of the manuscripts or an account of the different recensions of the saga. Because 'medieval writing does not produce variants; it *is* variance' (Cerquiglini 1993, 77–78), it is certainly worthwhile to consider *Nítíða saga* within its complex manuscript context even if it cannot be fully understood at present, and so to interrogate the very notion of texts and their (in)stability.

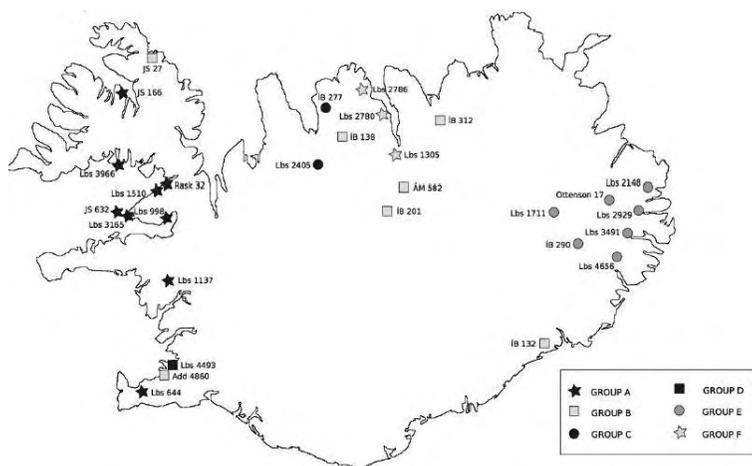
The manuscripts in which *Nítíða saga* survives can be categorised in different ways, each highlighting different aspects of plot, characterisation, structure, scribes, location of origin or physical attributes. So far, I have been able to analyse fifty-three manuscripts and fragments containing *Nítíða saga* (87% of the surviving prose copies). I did so by transcribing selected passages (the beginning, the end and a section showcasing geography) and noting the variants. I relied on samples instead of the entire text mainly in order to attain results most efficiently from an unwieldy amount of data. Alaric Hall has recently constructed a stemma of the romance *Konráðs saga keisarasonar* by comparing small text samples instead of recording all variants; he has, furthermore, found that this stemma is not necessarily

substantially different from previously published stemmata constructed through traditional methods of textual criticism, in terms of the resulting manuscript filiations (Hall and Parsons 2013). My methods were similar, though of course it was not possible to test my results against an existing stemma, except in only minor degrees where *Nítíða saga*'s manuscript tradition overlaps with those of other sagas (these are noted below). The work discussed here should accordingly be understood as an essential starting point for understanding the saga's manuscript filiation, rather than a complete account. In addition to examining selected passages, I also recorded all variants of personal and place-names because of their great diagnostic potential. A variation on a name, for example, seems to provide evidence of the relatedness (or unrelatedness) of the manuscripts that do or do not include that variation. Whereas with common nouns scribes can rely on both their exemplars and context clues to establish their readings, for proper nouns, and especially for unfamiliar non-Icelandic names, scribes would need to rely most heavily on their exemplars, therefore increasing their chances of misunderstanding these names. I found that this combination of names and small text samples produced a manageable data set that was still diverse enough to yield meaningful results.

My analyses led me to identify six different manuscript groups, which I called simply A, B, C, D, E and F (McDonald Werronen 2013, 24–54; McDonald 2012a). As a secondary (and even broader) means of comparison, I was also able to divide all manuscripts into two groups according to the way the saga is structured: those that introduce all of the most important characters successively and then jump back and forth among them to present their adventures (what I call Structure 1), and those that introduce the main characters as the story progresses, so that, for example, King Livorius, although he is a crucial character, is not mentioned at all until the major adventures concerning King Ingi and the sons of King Soldán have already taken place (what I call Structure 2). Based on the dates of the manuscripts, Structure 1 is the older of the two, with Structure 2 appearing first in the eighteenth century. Additionally, the frequency of structures favours Structure 1, which appears in the manuscripts I studied 62% of the time, while Structure 2 appears only 38% of the time; it is not just older manuscripts that favour Structure 1, the youngest dating from the latter half of the nineteenth century. Groups A, C, F and part of Group B use Structure 1, while Groups D, E and the other part of Group B use Structure 2. Considering also the physical size of the manuscripts, only four are folio, while thirty-three are quarto, and eighteen octavo (the sizes of six, which I have yet to study, are unknown). The folio manuscripts

are all from the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, while the quartos span the sixteenth century to the twentieth, and the octavos range from the fifteenth century to the twentieth, but, not surprisingly, more of the octavos are later. The folios are relatively early, from a time when Icelandic sagas were being rediscovered and appreciated in Scandinavia, and copied accordingly as high-status texts, which, while not very portable, are very legible since their size allowed a large, clear script to be used (Springborg 1977, 53–89; Hall and Parsons 2013, fig. 15).

Scribes and locations of origin can be difficult to pin down with certainty, as many scribes did not leave colophons; even when they did it is not always possible to match names, dates and locations with precision, especially place names from earlier times. Of the manuscripts I have studied, scribal and/or geographical information has been obtainable for thirty-three manuscripts (about 53% of my sample). More manuscripts might be localised through further study, particularly of codicology, palaeography, and marginalia. While such an exhaustive analysis was outside the scope of the research resulting in this article, it will be a productive area for future, more detailed research in light of the present work's significant findings. That said, some patterns have emerged from plotting known locations on a map, and these correspond to the textual groupings my other methods have established. The most striking patterns show Group A manuscripts being produced in the west, and Group E manuscripts in eastern Iceland (see Map 1). Group B's distribution is concentrated, though not exclusively, in north-central Iceland.



Map 1. Groups A–F localisable manuscripts

In Table 1, I list all known manuscripts of the prose *Nítíða saga*, including, as a preliminary reference tool, the groups into which I have classified them. The oldest is a single-leaf vellum fragment from the end of the fifteenth century (Perg. 8vo 10 VII). There are two more vellums, both from the sixteenth century: AM 529 4to, which ends defective but is the primary manuscript used by Loth in her diplomatic edition of *Nítíða saga*; and AM 567 4to XVIII, which only consists of two leaves and Loth uses to note variants in her edition. Loth also uses Papp. 4to 31 and AM 568 4to to note variants, and AM 537 4to as the edition's secondary manuscript to continue the text where AM 529 4to ends. In the 'Notes' column of Table 1, I have indicated which manuscripts Loth has previously examined as stated in her preface to the fifth volume of *Late Medieval Icelandic Romances* (vii). It is generally among the later (post-1700) manuscripts that Groups C, D, E and F emerge, with more later manuscripts falling into these groups than the earlier Groups A and B. By far the greatest number of prose *Nítíða saga* manuscripts has survived from the nineteenth century. Twenty-four of the total sixty-one were written sometime in the 1800s, which is not surprising considering, for example, the proximity of that century to our own (fewer manuscripts may have been lost), along with rising rates of literacy, falling costs of materials (in some cases), and population growth, to name only a handful of factors. Additionally, the composing and reciting of sagas had not yet begun to decline as rapidly as happened in the twentieth century, from which only six manuscripts survive, all dating from the first decade or so of the 1900s. From the eighteenth century, fifteen manuscripts survive, which, again, is not to say that *Nítíða saga* was less popular then than in the nineteenth century, but that more eighteenth-century manuscripts may have been lost.

Table 1. *Nítíða saga* Manuscripts by Date

Manuscript	<i>Nítíða saga</i> date	Group	Notes	Current location	<i>Nítíða saga</i> scribe	Location of origin
Perg. 8vo 10 VII	1475×1499	B	vellum; 1 leaf	Stockholm		
AM 529 4to	1500s	B	vellum; defective; Loth	Reykjavík		
AM 567 4to XVIII	1500s	A	vellum; 2 leaves; Loth	Reykjavík		
Papp. fol. 1	1600×1625	C?		Stockholm	Guðmundur Guðmundsson	
AM 537 4to	1600×1650	B	Loth	Reykjavík		
AM 568 I-II 6-7 4to	1600×1650	A	Loth	Reykjavík	Páll Jónsson	Snæúlfstaður

Manuscript	<i>Nítíða</i> saga date	Group	Notes	Current location	<i>Nítíða saga</i> scribe	Location of origin
Papp. 4to 31	1650×89	B	Loth; brought to Sweden by scribe	Stockholm	Jón Eggertsson (1643–89)	
ÍB 201 8vo	c. 1661	B	1 leaf	Reykjavík	Halldór Hallsson	Núpufell, Eyja- fjarðarsýsla
JS 27 fol.	1670	B		Reykjavík	Hannes Gunn- laugsson (1640–86)	Reykjarfjörður í Vatnsfjarðarsveit, Ísafjarðarsýsla
Lbs 715 4to	1670–80	A	defective	Reykjavík	Þórður Jónsson	Strandseljar, Ísafjarðarsýsla
Papp. 8vo 6 II	1674	[not yet seen]		Stockholm	Teitur Arngrímsson	
JS 166 fol.	1679	A		Reykjavík	Þórður Jónsson	Strandseljar, Ísafjarðarsýsla
Nks 1804 4to	1681	C	1 leaf	Copenhagen		
AM 582 4to	1692	B	2 leaves	Reykjavík	Grímur Árnason (1674–1704)	Möðruvellir, Eyjafjarðarsýsla
Lbs 1172 4to	1700s	B		Reykjavík		
JS 625 4to	1700s	C		Reykjavík		
ÍB 312 4to	1726	B		Reykjavík	Benedikt lögmaður Þorsteinsson (1688–1733)	Skríða (Rauðaskríða), Þingeyjarsýsla
Lbs 644 4to	1730–31	A		Reykjavík		Suðurnes
ÍB 132 8vo	1746	B		Reykjavík	Sigurður Magnússon (1720–1805?)	Holt í Hornafirði
Add. 4860 fol.	1750×81 (pre- 1781)	B		London		
ÍB 138 4to	1750×1799	B		Reykjavík		Hólar í Hjaltadali
Rask 32 [4to]	1756–67	A		Copenhagen	Ólafur Gíslason (1727–1801)	Saurbæjarþing
JS 56 4to	1760	D		Reykjavík		
ÍB 116 4to	1786–94	A		Reykjavík		
JS 628 4to	1787	C		Reykjavík		
Lbs 2406 8vo	1791	C		Reykjavík		
Lbs 2405 8vo	1791–99	C		Reykjavík	Gottskálf Egilsson (1780–1834)	Vellir, Skagafjörður

Manuscript	<i>Nítíða</i> saga date	Group	Notes	Current location	<i>Nítíða saga</i> scribe	Location of origin
ÍBR 59 4to ³	1798–99	D		Reykjavík		
JS 632 4to	1799– 1800	A		Reykjavík	Ólafur Jóns- son (1722–1800)	Arney, Dalasýsla
ÍBR 47 4to	1800s	B		Reykjavík		
Lbs 1137 8vo	1819/20	A		Reykjavík	Jón Sigurðsson	Háihóll, Mýrasýsla
Lbs 1305 8vo	1820	F		Reykjavík	Þorsteinn Gíslason	Stokkahláðir, Eyjafjarðarsýsla
Fiske Ic F75 A125	1824	[not yet seen]	defective	Ithaca, NY		
ÍB 277 4to	1833–34	C		Reykjavík	Gunnaugur Jónsson	Skuggabjörg, Skagafjarðarsýsla
Lbs 1711 8vo	1848	E		Reykjavík	Pétur Pétursson	Hákonarstað í Jökudali
Lbs 2152 4to	1850×1899	E		Reykjavík		
ÍB 290 8vo	1851	E		Reykjavík	Sigfús Sigfússon	Langhús í Fljóttdali
SÁM 13 [4to]	1851	F		Reykjavík		
Lbs 1319 8vo	1852	F		Reykjavík		
Ottenson MS 17	1853	(E?)		Baltimore, MD	Sigmundur Sigfússon	Ekkjufell, Norður- Múlasýsla
ÍB 233 8vo	1855–56	C		Reykjavík		
Lbs 4656 4to	1855–60	E		Reykjavík	Stígur Þorvaldsson	Ásunnarstaður í Breiðdali
Lbs 998 4to	c. 1860	A		Reykjavík		Knarrarhöfn, Dalasýsla
Lbs 3510 8vo	1861–99	E	defective	Reykjavík		
Lbs 2148 4to	1863	E		Reykjavík	Sigmundur Mattíasson long (1841– 1924)	Úlfsstaðir í Löðmundar- firði
Birgir Bjarnason	1865	[not yet seen]	privately owned	Bolungar- vík?		
Lbs 2786 8vo	1869	D		Reykjavík	Finnur Gíslason	Bustarbrekka, Eyjafjarðarsýsla
Lbs 2780 8vo	c. 1870	F		Reykjavík	Halldór Stefánsson	Hlaðir, Eyjafjarðarsýsla

³ Wick (1996, 275) names Álöf Magnúsdóttir of Skarð, Austrahreppur as this manuscript's scribe. However, this does not seem certain, as Álöf's name appears in the manuscript, but not as a colophon.

Manuscript	<i>Nítíða saga</i> date	Group	Notes	Current location	<i>Nítíða saga</i> scribe	Location of origin
Lbs 3966 4to	1870–71	A		Reykjavík	Ólafur Þorgeirsson	Skáleyjar, Dalasýsla
Lbs 3165 4to	1870–71	A	for Jón Jónsson	Reykjavík	Ólafur Þorgeirsson	Purkey, Dalasýsla
Lbs 3675 8vo	1880	F	defective	Reykjavík	Guðmundur Davíðsson	Hof
Lbs 2929 4to	1888	E		Reykjavík	Gísli trésmiður Árnason (b. 1821)	Fjarðaralda í Seyðisfirði
Lbs 4492 4to	1892	D		Reykjavík		
Lbs 1510 4to	1900	n/a ²		Reykjavík	Magnús Jónsson (1835–1922)	Tjaldanes, Dalasýsla
Lbs 3941 8vo	1900×1950	E		Reykjavík		Reyðarfjörður
Ásbúðarsafn: 'Fornar . . . sögur'	1902	[not yet seen]		Reykjavík	Þórsteinn M. Jónsson (1885–1976)	Akureyri?
Lbs 4493 4to	1902	D		Reykjavík	Tobías Tobíasson	Reykjavík
Hsk 63 8vo	1911	[not yet seen]		Sauðárkrókur		
Böðvar Kvaran, MS II 3.b.	1912	[not yet seen]	privately owned	Reykjavík	Magnús Jónsson (1835–1922)	Tjaldanes, Dalasýsla
Lbs 2918 4to	1900s	D		Reykjavík		
Skafthi Pétursson, MS II	date unknown	[not yet seen]	privately owned	Höfn?		

Group A⁵

The first of the two groups I will now discuss in detail is Group A, which comprises twelve manuscripts: AM 567 4to xviii (1500s), *AM 568 I-II

⁴ The version of the saga in this manuscript is unclassifiable, as large parts of it bear no resemblance to any of the other manuscripts. For example, *Nítíða* is said to be the daughter of Vilhjálmr of France and Elidá of Hungary, and the saga includes a lengthy back-story to the more familiar plot. The manuscript's scribe, Magnús Jónsson í Tjaldanesi, is known to have rewritten sagas from memory, often changing them deliberately in the process. This seems to be the case for *Nítíða saga* in Lbs 1510 4to (Driscoll 2012; Driscoll 1997, 55–64).

⁵ Localisable manuscripts here and later in the article are preceded by an asterisk at first mention.

6–7 4to (1600×1650), Lbs 715 4to (1670–80), *JS 166 fol. (1679), *Lbs 644 4to (1730–31), *Rask 32 (1756–67), ÍB 116 4to (1786–94), *JS 632 4to (1799–1800), *Lbs 1137 8vo (1819/20), *Lbs 998 4to (c. 1860), *Lbs 3966 4to (1870–71), *Lbs 3165 4to (1870–71). In each of these manuscripts the saga is written according to Structure 1 mentioned above, and, most significantly, all of them make explicit reference to the late medieval Icelandic romance *Nikulás saga leikara* (edited and translated in Wick 1996) as the saga is drawn to a close. In Lbs 715 the ending has not survived, but based on other similarities to this group (e.g. opening passages and names) it is very likely that had the ending survived, there would be a reference to *Nikulás saga leikara* there as well. The ending as it is in JS 166 can be seen as representative of the ending in almost all of the Group A manuscripts:

Livorius kongur & meykongur stýrdu Franns vel & lengi. þau áttu sier ägiæt born 4. sonu & 2. dætur. Rýgardur hét þeirra ellste son, eptter mödur fōdur sýnum, er sýdann stýrde Fracklande med allann heidur og sæmd, enn hanz son hét Fhaustus, er vann Ungaria med her skyllde & seigät fornar bækur ad hann hafe vered fadir Niculäsar leýkara, er vmm sýdir eignadest döttir kongsinnz af Grycklande Walldemarz, huor ed hiet Dormä huoruim kvennkoste hann näde medur med brōgdumm, þö hun være em viliug, sem seigr j søgu hanz. Enn umm nöfn annarra barna Livorius kongz & Niteda frægu er ei giefed. Og liükumm vier hier med þessa søgu, af Nitedä frægu & hennar breýtelegumm brōgdumm. (JS 166, f. 190r)

King Livorius and the maiden-king ruled France long and well. They had excellent children: four sons and two daughters. Their eldest son was called Rígarður, after his mother's father, and he ruled France with all honour. And his son was called Faustus, who won Hungary by harrying, and old books say that he had been the father of Nikulás leikari ('trickster'), who at last married the daughter of Valdemar king of Greece, who is called Dorma, whom he got as a match through tricks—although she had been willing—as it says in his story. And about the names of the other children of King Livorius and Nítíða the Famous nothing is related. And here we end this saga of Nítíða the Famous and her various tricks.

Making Nítíða and Livorius the great-grandparents of Nikulás leikari sets a firm connection between the two texts. From this evidence one can suggest that these two sagas were considered related in certain aspects of theme, style or characterisation, or a combination of these, by those who heard or read them, or at least by those who copied them (cf. McDonald 2012b; McDonald Werronen 2013, 64–65, 102–16). This very detailed reference must be an established part of this group of manuscripts: in JS 166 it was not included in order to provide a smooth transition to the following text. *Nikulás saga leikara* does not appear in this particular manuscript at all, though it does occur in manuscript with *Nítíða saga* in other Group A manuscripts (AM 568, JS 632, Lbs 3966, Lbs 998 and Rask 32). Further, within Group A

manuscripts, when both sagas do occur together, *Nikulás saga leikara* is often adjacent to *Nítíða saga*, suggesting the two were transmitted together.

The ending of *Nítíða saga*, however, does not contain as many details in AM 568 and ÍB 116, which seem to form their own branch apart from the others. Textual differences that separate these two manuscripts include the fact that while at the end Faustus is named as a son of Nítíða and Livorius and the father of Nikulás leikari, no further mention of *Nikulás saga leikara* is made, leaving out reference to other characters seen in the example above (Dorma and Valdemar):

Livorius kongur & meýkongur styrdu Fracklandi átta þaug ser ágiæt 4a syne & 2 dætur Rýgardur hiet hans elsti son eftir modur fódur sýnum er sydan stýrði Fracklandi med heidre & soma, einn sonur hans hiet Faustus hann vann Ungaria med herskilldi, seigia bækar hann vered hafa fódur Niculasar leikra, og endum wier so þessa søgu. (ÍB 116, f. 103r)

King Livorius and the maiden-king ruled France. They had excellent children, four sons and two daughters. Their eldest son was called Rígarður after his mother's father, and later ruled France with honour. His one son was called Faustus; he took Hungary through battle, and books say he had been father of Nikulás leikari. And thus we finish this saga.

AM 568 and ÍB 116 are also united by naming Nítíða's smith and introducing him near the beginning (which other manuscripts do not do), by calling the island that Nítíða travels to *Visia* instead of *Visio*, and by making Livorius's disguised identity Eskilvardur of *Numidia* (in ÍB 116; AM 568 is badly tattered here) rather than *Mundia*.

All of the other Group A manuscripts can be placed together in another branch, showing a similar beginning and ending naming not only Nikulás leikari as a grandson of Nítíða and Livorius, but also detailing his bridal-quest exploits. Other demonstrable relationships in this main subgroup include Lbs 715 and JS 166, which, both being copied by Þórður Jónsson (fl. 1667–93) and almost identical copies at that, are clearly closely related. The text in Rask 32 is also related to that in JS 166 owing to a number of shared variants, the latter possibly being copied from the former, or perhaps with an intermediary manuscript between them. JS 632, Lbs 1137 and Lbs 998 form a further subgroup, and Lbs 3966 and Lbs 3165 make another rather late pair, both having the same scribe and containing virtually identical texts. It is not clear at present whether one is copied from the other, or whether, instead, they both share an exemplar.

Considering the beginning, the texts in Group A all open with the phrase

Hier mega unger menn heyra hystoriu og fagra fräsøgu af einnre fegurstre kóng dóttur er hiet Nitedä hin fræga, & var hin allra kurteýslegasta, hün stýrde

rýke sýnu fracklande, með heýdre & söma eptter fódur sinn, Rýkard keysara andadann (JS 166, f. 181v).

Here young people can hear a history and beautiful tale of the most beautiful princess, who is called Nítíða the Famous, and was the most courteous of all. She ruled her kingdom, France, with honour after her father Emperor Rígarður died.

Minor variations occur in some manuscripts, such as the addition of an adjective or switching of the word order, as in *agiæta fräsøgu & fagra historiu* ‘excellent tale and beautiful history’ (ÍB 116, f. 93r), but the most distinctive aspects of this opening are the words *hér* ‘here’ and *historia* ‘history’, which only ever appear in *Nítíða saga*’s opening in Group A texts.

Figure 1 provides a possible rough stemma for the whole group. Where Lbs 644 and Rask 32 fit in relation to JS 632 and the later manuscripts is also uncertain, and it would require further detailed collation of larger text samples to unravel the intricacies of these relationships. Overall, the groupings I have arrived at through comparison of small samples are generally consistent with previous considerations of certain manuscript relationships, which focused on different romances such as *Dínus saga Drambláta* (Jónas Kristjánsson 1960, vii–xlvi), *Sigurðar saga turnara* (Spaulding 1982, 93–110), and *Konráðs saga keisarasonar* (Hall and Parsons 2013; Zitzelsberger 1981).

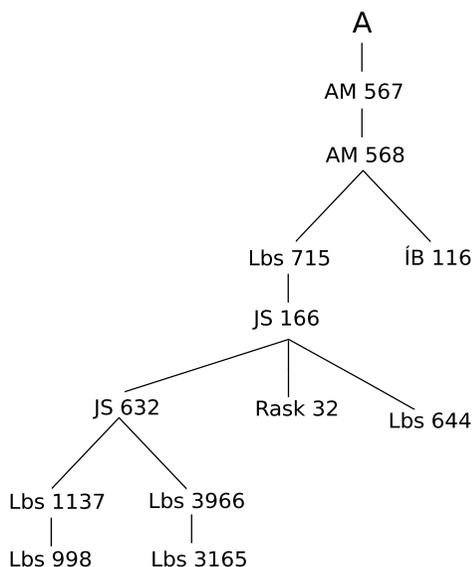


Figure 1. Group A Manuscripts

The location of origin is known for nine of the Group A manuscripts (see Map 1); nearly all of these come from the north-western region of Iceland, and in particular the Westfjords and Dales areas. There is a strong cluster of manuscripts along the coast of Dalasýsla and Austur-Dalasýsla. Considering that this group is one of the oldest *Nítíða saga* manuscript groups, it is not surprising that Stefán Einarsson hypothesised that *Nítíða saga*, along with three other romances and more legendary sagas, originated in Reykhólar in Breiðafjörður in the Westfjords (1966, 272).

Group B

Group B includes thirteen manuscripts: Perg. 8vo 10 VII (1450×1499), AM 529 4to (1500s), AM 537 4to (1600×1650), Papp. 4to 31 (1650×1689), *ÍB 201 8vo (c. 1661), *JS 27 fol. (1670), *AM 582 4to (1692), *Add. 4860 fol. (1750×1781), Lbs 1172 4to (1700s), *ÍB 312 4to (1726), *ÍB 132 8vo (1746), *ÍB 138 4to (1750×1799), ÍBR 47 4to (1800s). None makes any connection to *Nikulás saga leikara*, but the opening phrases are somewhat similar to those of Group A:

<H>EYRET vnger menn eitt æfintyr & fagra frasaugn fra hinum frægasta meykongi er verit hefur j nordur haalfu veralldarinar er hiet Nitida hin fræga er styrdi sinu riki medur heidur og soma epter sinn fedur Rikon keisara andadan (AM 529, f. 30v).

Hear, young people, an adventure and beautiful tale, about the most beautiful maiden-king who has been in the northern part of the world, who is called Nítíða the Famous, and who ruled her kingdom with honour after her father Emperor Rikon died.

The word marking out this group's beginning is *æfintyr* 'adventure', which only appears in Group B. The group can, however, be divided into two main subgroups (see Figure 2).

The oldest manuscripts (except Papp. 4to 31) comprise one subgroup. While Perg. 8vo 10 VII, the very oldest, is unfortunately only fragmentary, comparison with other Group B manuscripts indicates that it could be the parent of this subgroup, which can be further divided. AM 537 and AM 582 end briefly, mentioning Nítíða and Livorius's son only:

Liv(orius) og m(ey)k(ongur) styrdu Fracklande, attú þau agiæt börn, son er Rikon hiet epter sinum mödúr fódúr er sidan stírde Fracklande med heidur og soma epter þeirra dag. og lykur so þessú æfentyre af hinne frægú Nitida og Livorio konge (AM 537, f. 8v).

Livorius and the maiden-king ruled France. They had excellent children, [including] a son who was called Rikon after his mother's father, [and] who

afterward ruled France with honour after their day. And thus ends this adventure of the famous Nítíða and king Livorius.

AM 529 and ÍB 201, while lacking endings, show enough other similarities to AM 537 and AM 582 to warrant them a place in this subgroup as well. The texts employ Structure 1 and include names that distinguish them from others such as Hippolitus, Egidia, Hugon of Miklagarður, and Nítíða's servant-woman Íversa (who is not named in *any* of the other manuscripts). Alternatively, JS 27 and Add. 4860 comprise another pair (cf. Jónas Kristjánsson 1960, xxxii), with a slightly different ending that places more emphasis on Livorius than on Nítíða:

Livorjús kongur ok Nít<eda> hin fræga únntúst leinge ok vel, þótti Livorjús kongr hinn mesti hofdinge, ok var vinsæll huar sem hann kom fram, ok lúkúmm vier þar sío saúghúnne af Nitedu frægú (JS 27, f. 314r).

King Livorius and Nítíða the famous loved each other long and well. King Livorius was thought the best chieftain, and was victorious wherever he went. And so there we end the saga of Nítíða the Famous.

Further, this pair lists the various countries seen in Nítíða's magic stones, and the places listed are a bit different from those in Group A, including, for example, Egypt.

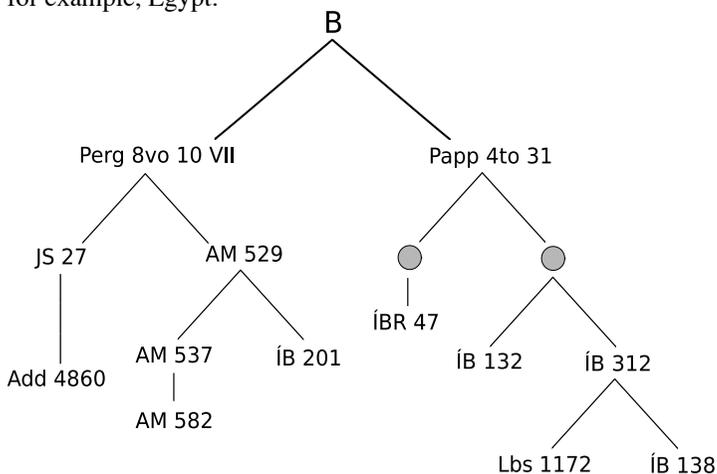


Figure 2. Group B Manuscripts

In another subgroup of Group B, possibly deriving from the late seventeenth-century Papp. 4to 31, the texts are composed with Structure 2, and, significantly, none of them names any countries when looking in Nítíða's magic stones. Instead of the more common *three stones–three looks* pattern exhibited in Group A (and some other younger groups),

there are four separate looks into four separate stones, covering all four cardinal directions:

M(ey)K(ongur) tekkur þá upp eim steinn, & lýta þau i ham, & siá þaug þá alla nördur álfa heimsenns . . . hun tok þá upp annan steinn & sau þaug um älla vestur alfu heimsenns . . . hun tok þá upp 3^a steinen, & sau þaug nu um sudur alfuna alla . . . hun tekur þa fiörda steinen & sau þaug þá um älla austur älfu heimsenns (ÍB 312, pp. 23–24)

The maiden-king then took up one stone, and they looked in it, and they then saw all the northern region of the world . . . she then took up a second stone and they saw throughout all the western region of the world . . . she then took up a third stone, and they saw now throughout all the southern region . . . she then took a fourth stone and they then saw throughout all the eastern region of the world.

Where Group A and the other Group B subgroup actually list the countries seen in each region of the world,⁶ here we see only the regions in general. Additionally, the majority of manuscripts in this subgroup include other significant differences in names, such as the absence of a named smith, no father named for Livorius or Ingi (who is here from Miklagarður í *Grikklandi*), Idia (instead of Egidia), Aldryfa (instead of Alduria), and Eskilvardur of *Mundialand*. This subgroup also has a much more abrupt ending, which eliminates any mention of children:

enn ad veitslunne endadre [voru] aller burt leister med godum giófum og feingú gott heimfarar leife, og ender so þessa sögu af Nitida hinne frægu (Lbs 1172, f. 144v).

and when the feast ended everyone was sent away with good gifts and parted well for home; and so ends this saga of Nítíða the Famous.⁷

It still begins in the same way as the rest of Group B, however. As seen in Figure 2, I have posited a lost *B from which both subgroups descend (as I have also for Group A in Figure 1), instead of considering the fragmentary Perg. 8vo 10 vⁱⁱ as the group's original text because it seems impossible

⁶ For example, in Group A, JS 166 lists the following countries: *Frackland, Gasconia, Hispania, Galicia, Flandren, Noreg, Danmørk, Eingland, Indiäland, Falstina* ['Palestine', cf. AM 568, Lbs 1137, and Group A MSS], *Asia, Serkland* (f. 188r). In Group B, AM 537 lists *Frackland, Provintiam, Ravenam, Spaniam, Hallitiam* ['Galicia', see McDonald 2012b, 313–14], *Friisland, Flandren, Nordmandiam, Skottland, Grickland, Noreg, Ysland, Færeÿar, Sudureÿar, Orkneÿar, Svijþiod, Danmork, Eingland, Ýrland, Jndialand, Palestinam, Asiam, Serkland* (f. 6v).

⁷ The verb *voru* is here supplied from ÍB 138, f. 115v.

to demonstrate it to be the original without a much closer examination of the Group B manuscripts.

While ÍBR 47 seems to be related to the other manuscripts in this subgroup, considering its structure and the form of certain passages of text like the magic stones scene, there are also a number of significant differences, which both separate it from Group B as a whole and also connect it to at least one of the later groups, Group D. ÍBR 47 shares with the oldest Group D manuscript, JS 56 (see Table 1), a variation on the name Livorius—it becomes Liprius/Lifrius. The two texts also share an unusual variation on the saga's ending, where Nítíða's son is sent to rule India and so manage his parents' two separate kingdoms in that way, instead of from France as in other versions: *son er Rigardur het, hann sendi hann til Indialands og vard þar kongur yfir síðann* 'a son who was called Rigardur; he sent him to India and there became king afterwards' (ÍBR 47, p. 223). The *four regions* structure of the magic stones scene is also shared, though this is of course common to the wider Group B as well. These similarities suggest that at least part of Group B is related to Group D. Unfortunately it is outside the scope of this article to discuss these connections further.

Seven Group B manuscripts are localisable, but no especially significant patterns or clusters are evident from the geographical distribution (see Map 1). The seven locations cover four separate areas (including both the Westfjords and the north of Iceland relatively near to the episcopal seat of Hólar), and this appears to be more or less typical of early modern Icelandic manuscript distribution (cf. Springborg 1977, 57–81; Hall and Parsons 2013, fig. 14.2). Further research is needed, however, to make more conclusive arguments about the geographical distribution and origins of Group B.⁸

Conclusions

As a means of summarising visually what I have described in this article, Figure 3 shows a full, though tentative, stemma of the two groups I have discussed in this article. The stemma, I should emphasise, is only meant to be a rough approximation of various relationships among the manuscripts. In addition to mapping out possible relationships between and among manuscripts, the stemma also shows that both Groups A and B can be understood to descend from a lost medieval 'original' *Nítíða

⁸ For a brief case study that touches on aspects of the Group B manuscript Add. 4860's history and provenance see McDonald Werronen 2013, 69–76.

saga represented in the diagram by X, and that were someone to attempt to reconstruct this (which is *not* something I aim to do), both branches of the stemma would be valuable in representing that medieval ‘original’ **Nítíða saga*.

Overall, this article has demonstrated the existence of two early versions of the romance *Nítíða saga*. One version, whose manuscripts I label Group A, probably originated in north-western Iceland. I have shown how the *saga*’s transmission and reception was far more complicated than simply repeated copying of a single text. The fuller manuscript tradition of *Nítíða saga* remains complex, with up to six different groups of manuscripts, which are laid out in Table 1. The story of *Nítíða* not only survived, but thrived throughout Iceland in a variety of milieux and a variety of versions, for hundreds of years after its late medieval composition, its popularity and success reflected in its diverse manuscript context, the whole of which can only be fully understood after further research. Considering some of the variation evident in just part of *Nítíða saga*’s manuscript tradition has, it is hoped, facilitated a better understanding of the romance’s reception and transmission history; I also hope that this case provokes further curiosity and questions about the reception and transmission of the various other late medieval Icelandic romances that also survive in large numbers of manuscripts. We ought not take for granted that romances are preserved in single textual versions—and especially those surviving in excess of fifty, sixty or even seventy manuscripts. While some work in this area is under way (including my own more detailed investigation of the wider manuscript tradition of *Nítíða saga*, touched upon only briefly here), the textual criticism of other romance sagas and a more general consideration of late medieval and early modern scribal networks remain significant and fruitful areas for future research.

Note: This research was possible thanks to a grant from the Viking Society’s Support Fund awarded in 2011, allowing me to travel to Iceland to study the majority of the manuscripts discussed in this article. I must also thank Alaric Hall, Matthew Driscoll, Alexandra Petrulevich, David Baker and Nicola Lugosch-Baker for their help in various capacities during the course of this research.

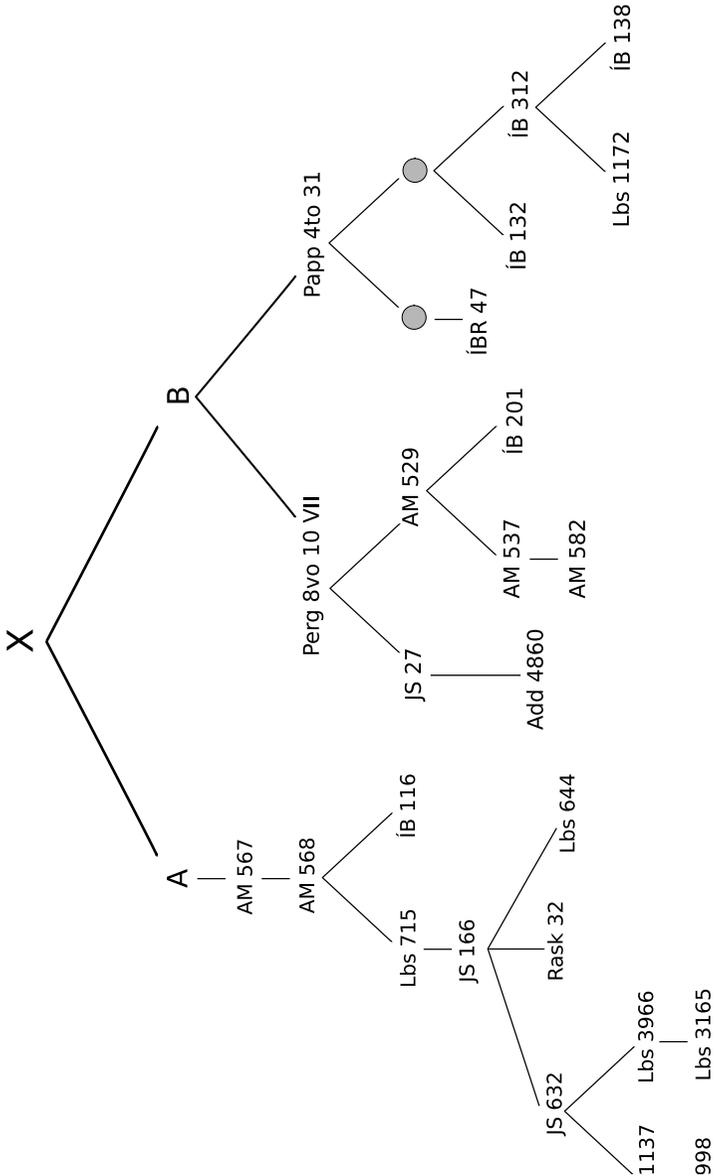


Figure 3. The Two Earliest Groups of *Nítíða saga* Manuscripts

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NORDIC MEDIEVAL TEXTS: BEYOND ‘LITERATURE’
AND ‘SOURCES’. REFLECTIONS ON EXPANDING
INTERDISCIPLINARY BORDER-ZONES

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NORDIC MEDIEVAL TEXTS are addressed by various disciplines, mainly philologies (vernacular and Latin), literary history and history.¹ Although most scholars can subscribe to a vague interdisciplinary ideal of hermeneutics—after all, we do engage in cross-field discussions which must have a target of shared understanding—the hard fact is that interests in specific texts, their evaluations, their selection for research, teaching and anthologising, and the approaches and methods for dealing with them are strongly framed by those main disciplines. In this brief exploration of some border-zones between them I will begin with an intriguing early eighteenth-century example of interdisciplinarity pre-dating the disciplines, and, one could add, of an ‘intuitive’ new philology existing before the old one was established.

In 1711 Thormod Torfæus (Þormóður Torfason) published his four folio volumes entitled *Historia rerum Norwegicarum* covering the history of the Norwegian kingdom from its origins (or even before) up to the time of Queen Margrethe (1387). It was an official and long-awaited—and novel—enterprise, especially volumes two and three, which dealt with the period from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries: at his farm on Karmøy on the southwest Norwegian coast Torfæus was, with the permission of the Danish-Norwegian king, sitting on a number of important saga manuscripts which had not been seriously or extensively used for writing Norwegian history before.² Torfæus stands at the end of the seventeenth-century antiquarian discovery of Old Norse literature, which can be compared

¹ Including the history of religion, law and other disciplines.

² For Torfæus’s work and its commissioning by King Frederik III, see Skovgaard-Petersen 2003 and 2004. The following draws on Mortensen 2008, where fuller references can be found.

to the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century discovery of Anglo-Saxon literature in Britain.

Torfæus possessed, or at least had on a very long-term library loan, important manuscripts of both Kings' Sagas and Icelandic Family Sagas³—but he was, of course, unaware of the distinction between these two categories within literary history, which was to be drawn only much later. He tried as best he could to fit these texts into his overall chronological scheme; this is what he did, for instance, with perhaps the most renowned family saga, that of Egill Skallagrímsson (c.1230). The story of Egill and his ancestors touched upon three Norwegian and one Anglo-Saxon king (Harald Finehair, Eric Bloodaxe, Hakon the Good, and Athelstan); this meant that Torfæus placed the saga at the beginning of the second folio volume, which dealt with the period from Harald Finehair's unification of Norway (supposedly some time in the ninth century) up to the introduction of Christianity around the turn of the millennium.

It was not easy to adapt the narrative about Egill into Torfæus's chronologically arranged work because many of the deeds of Egill and his family could not be ascribed to a specific reign. Furthermore, Torfæus found himself under the spell of the saga narrative itself. He had, for instance, to retell the death of Egill even though it was not relevant at that place in the History (as Torfæus himself admitted), or indeed at all: 'So far Egill's deeds have kept me away from my aim; but they were required, I think, because I should relate his death' (*Hucusque me a scopo Eigilis gesta abripuerunt; exitum namque ejus ut exponerem, requirere videbantur, Historia* 1711, vol. II, liber V, 6 (p. 214)).

In his endeavour to treat the medieval past of Norway, Torfæus failed miserably by all the standards of the scholarship which began to be established around a century after its publication. From the point of view of history his treatment of his fresh wealth of Old Norse sources was unsystematic and almost naive, although he did attempt some chronological coordination with foreign annalistic works (but apparently remained unaware of Edmund Gibson's publication of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (*Chronicum Saxonum*) in Latin in Oxford 1692, which would have been of great interest to him).

From the perspective of literary history, a field which was also not to emerge until the nineteenth century, he could be commended for his

³ Among which were such central manuscripts as Flateyjarbók, Morkinskinna, Fagrskinna and the now lost Kringla; cf. Hagland 2002.

fascination with saga narratives, but the absence in his work of genre distinctions and reflections on the who, where and when of the composition of the sagas rendered it uninteresting to future literary historians.

And finally, from the viewpoint of Old Norse philology, not only did his Latin paraphrase make the work useless as an edition of previously unedited texts, but his cavalier manner of abbreviating and cutting up the texts was also as wrong as it could be—let alone his reliance on the one manuscript he happened to possess for each text.

I think, however, that Torfæus was doing something sensible—and even trendy—for the antiquarian age in which he lived. The title of his work implies it: *Historia rerum Norvegicarum*. This was a collection of written monuments on Norwegian matters in the style of some of the great collections of English, French and Norman medieval chronicles that were first printed in the seventeenth century, works like Duchesne's *Historiæ Normannorum scriptores antiqui* (Paris 1619), his five-volume *Historiæ Francorum scriptores* (Paris 1636–49, partly published after his death), and Twysden and Selden's *Historiæ Anglicanæ scriptores X* (London 1652). Those enormous editorial projects represented the state of the art in monumentalising medieval texts; they were the final word, much like the unwieldy folio volumes of the early twentieth century or the CD-ROMS of important manuscripts of 15–20 years ago, and the digital online editions of today. Torfæus presented the ultimate *scriptores* collection, and even presented it in translation into Latin. As he states in the preface: 'And, indeed, the most important part of the task given to me is to share (as far as possible) the full and complete work of Norwegian history with the learned world.' (*Et quidem primo ante omnia officii nobis demandati ratio exigebat, ut plenum ac perfectum Historiæ Norvegicæ opus (quantum quidem in nobis erat) orbi erudito communicarem* (Vol. I, Prolegomena Gr)).

What makes Torfæus a useful point of departure for the present discussion of interdisciplinary approaches is the fact that for him, and for his contemporaries, 'sources' or 'literature' were not operative categories.

The metaphor 'source' was not unknown before the mid-eighteenth century, but it became the guiding heuristic category in later nineteenth-century historical theory and practice.⁴ The cutting-edge German historians still labelled the most famous source collection *Monumenta Germaniæ historica* when it was launched in the 1820s, but everything revolves around 'Quellen' in Gustav Droysen's *Grundriss der Historik*

⁴ 'Source' as a methodological term is discussed further by Kuchenbuch 2000 and Mortensen 2008.

(Leipzig 1868) and in the very influential *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode* by Ernst Bernheim (Leipzig 1889). In her thoughtful discussion of ‘sources’ in an English-language context Ann Rigney begins by quoting George Collingwood on the introduction of the term (Rigney 2001, 122):

‘The document hitherto called an authority now acquired a new status, properly described by calling it a “source”, a word indicating simply that it contains the statement, without any implications of its value. That it is *sub judice*; and it is the historian who judges.’ [Collingwood] The implication behind this courtroom metaphor is that once the historian has come to some sort of judgment as to the reliability of witnesses or the interest of their testimony, they can be dismissed from the courtroom and relegated to the supporting footnotes.

To those coming from a tradition of German and Scandinavian historical scholarship it is striking that ‘source’ does not seem, in English, to evoke a spring or fountainhead of water as directly as do German *Quelle* and Scandinavian *kilde*, *källa*. Even in these post-linguistic turn times the *Quelle* metaphor seems not to call for conceptual debate, being so common that it has lost its metaphorical force.

But this does not mean it is a neutral or natural concept. Rather it still does the specific work it was designed to do in the nineteenth century: it empowers the professional historian in his trade. Ludolf Kuchenbuch (2000) traces its implication of purity and the ‘directedness’ of the past to the historian’s work. It also ‘flattens’, or depersonalises, the voices of the past when they are all handled with the same tools. By categorising all ‘sources’ under one heading, the pioneers of the nineteenth century both elevated them and dismissed them at the will of the historian (as in the courtroom simile) who takes over the authority to speak on their behalf. Or following the ‘fountainhead’ metaphor we might say that all springs lose their distinctiveness when flowing together into the great modern narrative they irrigate.

What we call sources were *monumenta* and *scriptores (antiquitatis)* for Torfæus and his contemporaries. The now-famous Old Norse manuscripts that Torfæus kept in his home library were to him books and monuments, rising in the past landscape, each in its distinctive manner.

Nor was Torfæus equipped to speak of ‘literature’ in our sense, although he may certainly have been reading of *litteratura* in medieval texts. One finds, for instance, individuals characterised as excelling in *divina et humana litteratura*, meaning in the exegesis of the sacred scriptures as well as in the study of humanly produced texts in books (to use a precise but clumsy phrase). However, the crucial divide between a pre-modern and

a modern concept again falls about a century after Torfæus was writing. With the emergence of modern literary histories, the popularity of the novel and the birth of the historical novel (or more properly the rebirth, as it existed in the ancient world as well) in the decades around 1800, 'literature' became firmly tied to a notion of fiction. The contemporary strong national medievalism made sure, on the other hand, that all medieval vernacular writing was admitted into literary history on account of its historical, linguistic and stylistic properties irrespective of its often very weak claim to be regarded as fiction.

In this way Torfæus's project, in all its long-gone seventeenth-century spirit, still points to the binary divide between, on the one hand, elevating medieval texts to the status of sources in order subsequently to dissolve them in a modern narrative (the historian), and on the other monumentalising them in editions (the philologist) or making them into solid objects around which a narrative must be made (the literary historian). We can hardly escape this fundamental dichotomy (or trichotomy), but it is perhaps time to deal with it in terms other than 'sources' and 'literature' in, basically, the late nineteenth-century senses of those categories.

I am not suggesting that life would necessarily be easier without these terms, but only inviting reflections on the fact that some scholarly practices seem to be flourishing at present without their specific restraints. Both traditional approaches invariably search for a certain quality, and praise either source quality or literary quality, handing out points to a text for being either a good mirror of events or an aesthetically pleasing monument of the medieval creative mind. Or put in a negative way, both terms—'literature' and 'sources'—point to something deficient or potentially deficient in our medieval texts, 'sources' in their reliability, 'literature' in their fictionality and poetics.

One effect of treating our texts within a source-paradigm is that we impute to their authors a concern—or lack of concern—with their own sources. There is nothing wrong in being interested in the authorities or models on which medieval authors were basing their work, but this scholarly sport has had a logic of its own which tends to be obsessive and to create some blind spots.

The Norwegian 'synoptics'

My first example concerns three short Norwegian chronicles from the second half of the twelfth century. They are much briefer than the great Kings' Sagas of the thirteenth century, but have attracted some attention because they are the first specimens we know of Norwegian historical

writing. In scholarly literature they are known by the name of the ‘Norwegian synoptics’:⁵

Historia Norwegie / Norwagensium (A History of Norway / Norwegians). [Oslo (?), c.1170.] Covers origins to 1015 (originally, probably to c.1170)

Theodoricus Monachus, *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* (A History of the Ancient Norwegian Kings)

[Trondheim, c. 1180.] Covers 9th century to 1130

Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sǫgum (Summary of the Sagas of the Kings of Norway)

[Trondheim, c. 1190.] Covers 9th century to 1137 (originally, to c.1177)

Parts of these three texts are clearly interrelated in some way, and passages in Theodoricus and *Ágrip*, especially, are very close. A number of later sagas also rely on them, or on some of their possible common sources. The literature on this subject is rather substantial, but no commonly accepted conclusion has been reached (see Andersson 1985 for various models). The simple point I want to make here is that by calling them ‘the Norwegian synoptics’ we imply that their main interest is that of their place in a matrix of interdependent ‘sources’; they become directed to the work of the modern historian. A better known source study of three texts covering the same story is of course found in New Testament scholarship. The models put up for understanding the relationship between the synoptic gospels (Mark, Matthew and Luke plus the lost ‘Q’) are very similar to those suggested for *Ágrip*, Theodoricus and *Historia Norwegie*.

The term ‘synoptic’ indicates to us that they should be read together, and perhaps also hints at a fascination with the idea that disentangling them is the closest we can get to the *Urgeschichte* of Norwegian kings. (I am aware that ‘synoptic’ is also used in the scholarly literature in the sense of a ‘survey’, but the suggestion of a link with New Testament studies can hardly be coincidental; they also ‘survey’ the same early period of Norwegian history, obviously inviting source-analysis as the main research method).

When I co-edited the *Historia Norwegie* (with Ekrem 2003), I was surprised to find that a salient literary feature of this text had gone unanalysed

⁵ The word seems to have been introduced in this context by Turville-Petre (1953, 169) and has been current since then; see Andersson (1985) and Driscoll (1995) who includes it in the title of his edition of *Ágrip: A twelfth-century synoptic history of the Kings of Norway*. ‘Norwegian synoptics’ is also (July 2014) the title of a wikipedia article.

in the heat of the source debate. It was known that this 25-page Latin chronicle had originally been longer, but lost parts of a text are, of course, uninteresting when one only sees the narrative as a source to be compared with other sources. But the long geographical introduction to the *Historia Norwegie* only makes sense rhetorically and within its historiographical genre if this had originally been a long text—perhaps three or four times longer than our existing excerpt, perhaps even several hundred pages. It was furthermore possible to establish German links for its Latin learning and to suggest an eastern Norwegian context for the composition, perhaps the bishopric of Oslo. A long, rhetorically elaborate historical work in Latin, one that was not related to the dominating literary environment of Trondheim with its mainly French and English learning, therefore appeared to be a good possibility. I admit to monumentalising a work which seems negligible in its extant form, but this is, I hope, also a timely antidote to a long line of research which only wanted to make the text transparent as a source of events (or to guess at its unknown author). The logic seems to have been that since *Historia Norwegie* did not qualify as literature (as everyone agreed without hesitation), the only investigation of any interest would aim to establish its source value by uncovering its own 'sources'. What the text might have accomplished in its own time and what it reveals about learning, books and episcopal attitudes in the second half of the twelfth century fell under the radar.⁶

Anders Sunesen's Hexaameron

It is not only narrative historical texts that have been eagerly split up in search of their sources and models. I am guilty myself of pursuing this discipline in a contribution on the long didactic theological poem by the Archbishop of Lund, Anders Sunesen, from around 1200—the 'Work of Six Days', the *Hexaameron*. I participated in a project back in the mid-1980s which aimed at providing a more precise learned framework for this substantial text and its author; one of its results was to establish that a good part of the theological material came directly out of the classroom of Stephen Langton, later archbishop of Canterbury, who, like Sunesen, was active in the vibrant Paris schools of the 1180s and 1190s.⁷

⁶ A deeper analysis of *Ágrip* is now found in Driscoll 1995 and Andersson 2011. For Theodoricus, see Bagge 1989 and 2011 and Mortensen 2012a. For *Historia Norwegie*, see Ekrem and Mortensen 2003 and Mortensen 2011.

⁷ The project was led by Sten Ebbesen and resulted in a new edition (Ebbesen and Mortensen 1985–88) and a number of studies (see Ebbesen 2012 with further references).

Anders Sunesen's poem relies heavily on the new encyclopaedic literature of the second half of the twelfth century, works such as Peter Comestor's long retelling of the narrative parts of the Bible, *Historia Ecclesiastica* (c.1170), on the all-important thematic collection of theological topics by Peter the Lombard (*Sententiae*, c.1160), on the standard Biblical gloss and others—in fact, almost every statement in Sunesen's didactic poem could be accounted for by written authorities. (This fact alone would have relegated this substantial composition to a very marginal place in literary history, had its Latinity and its subject matter not already done so.) One issue which the project left hovering somewhat in the air was the place of composition, and the intended audience of a work which seemed strangely sophisticated and out of place in Lund. In the prologue to the poem Sunesen says directly that it is intended for schoolboys, who ought to know the right pronunciation of Latin—otherwise they would be the laughing-stock of others—while at the same time learning something much more useful and less dangerous than the frivolous pagan Roman poetry that was so popular in twelfth-century cathedral schools. Latin prosody was a very serious matter and should be learned early. It was suggested in our publications that Sunesen exaggerated the youth of his audience and that the work made better sense on the level of the arts at the emerging university of Paris rather than at home in Denmark.

Looking at the poem again, this time not analysing it into pieces according to their source, but rather as a whole, packaged for rote learning and with no concern for the constituent parts of which it is made up, as it must have appeared to contemporary readers—I am not so sure. When twelfth-century schoolboys were reading pagan poets, and often just small pieces of them, they were exposed to some quite inaccessible mythology, plots and attitudes. Learning parts of the *Hexaemeron* would indeed provide schoolboys with ready exegetical or theological wisdom and at the same time with knowledge of Latin syllable lengths. It is true that the parts dealing with Trinitarian and Christological questions must still have been hard to digest, but the poem does give a good blend of scriptural exegesis and narrative (from the Creation to the Day of Judgement) and theological teachings and precepts. That Sunesen could have seen his great poem (and a similar lost one on the sacraments) work in a Danish environment is also to be deduced from the evidence of a number of Danish medieval copies of the text, no doubt emanating from the archiepiscopal see in Lund.

Sunesen did go into the field to spread his deep insights, as is witnessed by Henry of Livonia; in his Chronicle on the Livonian and Estonian mission from the 1220s he describes how Sunesen as the head of the Danish

mission (or Crusade) was forced by unforeseen circumstances to spend the winter of 1206/7 in Riga (*Chronicon Livoniae* 10.13): 'After this the archbishop gathered all the clerics and expounded the doctrine of theology; they spent all winter reading the Psalter and contemplating God' (*Post hec archiepiscopus convocando omnem clerum doctrinam proponit theologiam et legendo in psalterio totam hyemem in divina contemplatione deducunt*).

What the exact relationship was between his Paris notes and this teaching in the field we cannot know, nor can we assess his pedagogical success. The point is that this may be more about authority than understanding. Through a learned, powerful and well-connected archbishop, the local clergy in Riga were confirmed in the order of the hierarchy they belonged to; an important part of this hierarchy was divine knowledge, ranging from the theologian at the top to the recently converted pagan at the bottom. We know from conversion stories that getting a few rituals and formulas right was enough for the mission, but this was only valid because the hierarchy of insight (and obviously of ordination) was in place above and behind the missionaries. The exact extent of the Riga clergy's understanding of Anders Sunesen was not important, though the archbishop was of course still held to the highest standards.⁸ Again one could say that hunting for the sources of a medieval text to help *our* understanding of it has diminished our interest in how the text and the knowledge it represented worked in its own time.

Saxo and Knýtlinga saga

Let me refer to one more instance of how thinking confined within the 'source' metaphor can create blind spots. Again it concerns historiography. But this example also serves to illustrate the peculiar results of fixed ideas about how vernacular texts supposedly lived in a different world from Latin texts. So here the culprits are all the four fields I mentioned in the beginning: history, vernacular philology, Latin philology and literary history—and perhaps not least a good dose of methodological nationalism (cf. Rigney 2012).⁹

⁸ On Anders and his learning, see Ebbesen and Mortensen 1985 and Ebbesen 2012 with further references. For the social mechanisms of bringing back learning from abroad in this context, see also Mortensen 1999 and Mortensen and Lehtonen 2013, 18–23.

⁹ I have argued the case for the dependency of *Knýtlinga* on Saxo's later books in Mortensen 2012b; here I just give the main points very briefly.

Saxo Grammaticus wrote his voluminous *Gesta Danorum* at the same time as Anders Sunesen composed the *Hexaemeron*. In fact Saxo dedicated the work to Archbishop Sunesen, because the man behind the commission, Sunesen's predecessor, archbishop Absalon, had died in 1201. Absalon is the protagonist in Saxo's later books (14–16) although they deal with the fight for the throne between Svend, Knud and Valdemar (1146–57), and he completes the narrative with the sole reign of Valdemar (1157–82) and the first years (up to 1185) of the reign of his son Knud VI (1182–1202).¹⁰ Some of the highlights of these books are Absalon's flight at the blood feast at Roskilde (1157) where Svend killed Knud and wounded Valdemar; Absalon is also centre stage at his controversial election as archbishop in 1177; and in spite of his clerical status Absalon is also depicted as the *de facto* leader in a series of military campaigns against the pagan Vends leading to the dramatic destruction of their idol Svantevit. Saxo's sixteenth and last book ends, no doubt deliberately, with the submission of the Pomerians (1185) whose wise leader, Bugislav, had learnt the lesson and became a great friend of the Danes before he died in peace in 1187.

It is quite clear from the narratives themselves that Saxo had been listening to Absalon, and this is also what Saxo's older colleague, Sven Aggesen, says.¹¹ Saxo even states himself in the preface that he listened to Absalon's stories as a *diuinum magisterium* (a divine teaching, *Praefatio* I,5). There can be no doubt that Absalon was the authority (or should we say source?) behind much of the later books.

The first text to engage with Danish history on a grand narrative scale after Saxo was *Knýtlínga saga* (The Story of Canute's Successors) composed around 1250 by an Icelander in Denmark, very probably Óláfr Þórðarson, Snorri's nephew (Bjarni Guðnason 1982). The Canute in question must be Saint Canute who is the subject of the middle third of the work, just as the story of Saint Olaf forms the middle part of *Heimskringla*. What interests us here is that the last third of the saga (chs 99–130) also places Absalon centre stage and ends with exactly the same events in 1185 / 87 that we saw in Saxo.

I refer to Gustav Albeck (1946) and my own discussion (2012) for the long scholarly debate about the relationship between Saxo's books 14–16 and the last part of the saga, which share so many features and details. The similarities were already noted in the early nineteenth century, but

¹⁰ A brief survey of Saxo scholarship can be found in Friis-Jensen 2012 with references to translations, editions etc. A new edition by Friis-Jensen with English translation by Peter Fisher is about to appear in Oxford Medieval Texts.

¹¹ See Mortensen 2011 for the debated passage in Sven Aggesen's *History*.

the dominant theory was that the Icelandic author got so much right (as we can see from Saxo) simply because he relied on such a strong oral tradition. The great figure of Nordic *Quellenforschung*, Curt Weibull, then stated in 1915 that the similarities could only be explained textually, and he devised a theory in which the two authors were drawing on the same (lost) annalistic source, each distorting it in specific ways. Finally Gustav Albeck demolished this construction in 1946 and set out the straightforward explanation that the author of *Knýtlinga saga* had read Saxo's later books, abbreviated them and supplemented them with other material. But his thorough and brilliant analysis unfortunately did not change much for either Old Norse scholars, historians or literary historians, who all seemed to have sworn an oath against allowing an Icelandic storyteller to rely heavily on a Latin book (even though Óláfr Þórðarson was known from separate testimony to have been a highly learned man). But this oath was apparently the only thing they communicated about, and the whole issue stands as an exemplary case of the lack of mutual interest between the disciplines and the national research traditions involved.¹² And again the fixation on the problem of our sources' sources (and a concomitant expulsion of *Knýtlinga* from any literary canon) have prevented us from dealing with the interesting questions of the reading (and readership) of Saxo's enormous work (of which we have no other near-contemporary testimonies), of the Danish royal commissioning of a work in Old Norse, and of how Absalon came to dominate Danish cultural memory of the later twelfth century for ever after.

From Ari to Snorri

Like history, literary history is completely dependent on narrative to make its subject matter understandable at all. The crucial difference is that whereas modern historians want to replace medieval narratives with their own, literary history aims to dust off, polish and display medieval texts. Connecting the dots between the works on display, however, also entails building some dangers into the epistemological framework.

Through the surge in recent decades of manuscript fragment studies in Sweden, Norway and Finland by scholars such as Jan Brunius, Åslaug

¹² I am grateful to Alexandra Petrulevich who is completing an onomastic thesis at Uppsala University on *Knýtlinga*; she is not convinced that *Knýtlinga* relied directly on Saxo. The only systematic exploration of this thesis remains Albeck 1946, and further analysis should be carried out. Gelting 2012, 330 and Mortensen 2012 argue in favour of Albeck from scholarly history and general probability.

Ommundsen, Tuomas Heikkilä and many others, the introduction and early phases of book culture in the North have been marvellously elucidated.¹³ In the last third of the eleventh century books were imported and gradually locally produced in Denmark and probably in parts of Sweden, Norway and Iceland, whereas Finland had to wait another century. The decades around 1075 also saw firm episcopal structures emerging, thus laying the necessary foundations of a local book culture, however modest in the beginning. The rise of a vernacular adaptation of this book culture in Iceland happened surprisingly quickly, with written laws already before 1120, and the small but seminal works of Ari Þorgilsson from around 1120/1130, including the famous *Book of Icelanders*.

A hundred years later Snorri stated in his prologue to *Heimskringla* that he was relying partly on the authority of Ari—thus pointing to a long continuous chain of historical writing. In the practice of Icelandic literary history, and in Old Norse studies in general, Snorri's claim of continuity has, it seems to me, been an article of faith. If one charts the surviving writings in Old Norse between the two, whether produced in Iceland or Norway, and compares them with the rise of other vernacular literatures in Northern Europe, a clear pattern emerges: after the introduction of Latin liturgical books and small local writings in Latin, the vernacular literatures go through a long phase of translations and adaptations of texts from Latin books (Mortensen 2005). The so-called *First Grammatical Treatise*, which is usually placed around 1150, gives us a good glimpse of this pioneering phase of a new language for books. It discusses ideas of orthography—apparently still a matter to be negotiated—and it importantly states that four kinds of writings exist in the vernacular: explanations / translations of sacred writings (probably including Saints' Lives and so on), the writings of Ari, genealogies and laws. This is in fact what exists in the vernacular in Iceland and Norway from the time of Ari up to the end of the twelfth century, but this so-called 'useful' literature has not been part of the classroom canon and hence of mainstream literary history (Wellendorf 2013). None of these works has gone unmentioned, and now their role is being seriously researched, but they have had little influence on the structure presented in literary-historical narratives.

After these foundations had been laid, Snorri and his colleagues from the beginning of the thirteenth century were in a position to take part in a much

¹³ See Brunius 2005, Karlsen 2013, Heikkilä 2013, Ommundsen 2013 with further references. Most of these fragments can now be accessed on institutional websites.

more recent dynamic which has clear counterparts in French, German and other literatures: around 1200 a new constellation of textual production in vernacular prose received momentum from the aristocracy rather suddenly taking part in book culture. The great Kings' Sagas formed part of this momentum, and were not a continuation of any dynamic created by Ari a hundred years earlier. But it has been very easy to pretend this was the case when the Latin texts or their vernacular translations and adaptations from the long period in between were never put on the classroom table. Literary history can mislead one into thinking that the Kings' Sagas were inevitable from the moment Ari decided to write in Icelandic. But he was an exception in his time. This state of affairs resulted from a narrow, modern definition of 'literature'.

Mythopoietic moments

My last example also stems from a comparative look at some specimens of Nordic literature, in this case legends of royal saints. The importance of local, especially royal saints in the North has been increasingly acknowledged throughout the last decades, a thriving field with a recent survey collection edited by Haki Antonsson and Ildar Garipzanov (2011). When I was editing a previous collection (Mortensen 2006) and studied the evidence from a philological and literary perspective, I realised that it might be a good idea first to break down the time-honoured distinction between hagiography and historiography; of course these were distinct genres in the Middle Ages and recognised as such, but they were not reflections of two entirely separate discourses. Local saints were not only real figures from the past, but came to form the most important part of a common cultural memory—as we saw before in the structures of *Heimskringla* and *Knýtlinga*. Furthermore, it seemed as if both historians and literary historians of the Protestant North entertained ideas about the genre of miracles and legends as a kind of literature satisfying popular demand, and that the saints gradually grew in their reputation because of some kind of popular pressure. Perhaps because of this, or perhaps because of a lack of interest in other nations' saints, it had gone unnoticed, I think, that hagiographic writing had a clear tendency to cluster around significant assemblies or celebrations, and that the written establishment of the sanctity of one's local saint always preceded what we would label real historiography. My suggestion was that it makes sense to talk of brief periods of mythmaking ('mythopoiesis') within the élite—a point of no return for the main structure of a cultural memory (Mortensen 2006). In short, this was a sudden-change and top-down model which also got rid of the Protestant

vision of a cynical élite manipulating the credulous Catholic masses. However this may be, I think at least that literary history—again—can benefit from comparative and interdisciplinary approaches in challenging nationally received or linguistically defined canons that have been pressed into service for a classroom narrative.

Conclusion

Although the old disciplinary edifice is showing some structural weaknesses, it is of course not going to crumble and send us back to the pre-disciplinary antiquarian views of Torfæus. But there is increasing doubt that the disciplines can be as self-referential, self-justified and self-contained as they were from the mid-nineteenth century until very recently. History, literary history and the philologies all need each other more—and a number of other disciplines too. Where one could say perhaps twenty years ago that interdisciplinarity was of no value if the participants were not really mastering their own disciplines, I think one would be more concerned today if somebody mastered the traditional technicalities of the discipline but still believed that important innovation would come exclusively from within such an enclosed intellectual space.

My point here has not been to try to abolish the borders between medieval history and medieval literary and philological studies, but only to show that new insights can be gained in the border-zones when one does not routinely compartmentalise medieval texts or textual features under the headings of ‘sources’ and ‘literature’; these two key concepts served very specific needs in the rise of humanistic scholarship in the nineteenth century, but may have become more of a stumbling block today in some contexts.

There is no question of simply getting rid of them, and I do not think we are ready to venture on any systematic alternative. Most of my examples have been about the effects and the agency of texts. While recognising—with many medievalists today, I believe—that we are not exhausting our understanding of medieval texts by making them into either transparent sources or literary monuments alone, the way ahead is perhaps to develop models and concepts for how texts were agents in different hierarchies.

First of all, written texts were speech acts within a hierarchy of contemporary discourse. A piece of medieval writing relates to, positions itself within and modifies a certain discourse. The pitfalls to avoid here, again, are to use them as transparent sources for that discourse or to make them equally representative of each genre’s discourse or authorial mind-set—which would be a common fallacy of literary history. Some texts were

entirely marginal and strange in their own time, some were typical of a certain discourse (which can still be problematic to identify), some became canonical—and thus modified a discourse significantly—even as they were being composed. In their immediate surroundings texts were thus both utterances in a social space and symptoms of a discourse—with all its complicated parameters of language, rhetoric, register, intended audience and so forth. From the examples above I think that Sunesen's *Hexaemeron* and the deep learning it codifies can better be seen as a possibly efficient local speech act of ideological power rather than just a grey reflection of teachings derived from the Parisian schools. The Saints' Lives of Olaf and Canute were similarly related to a mythopoetical moment—forming part of a group of ritualised speech acts. Also, the contemporary force of *Historia Norwegie* had been lost in research which dealt only with it as a source and with its sources, overlooking the fact that this was in its time a major text. One objection against such interdisciplinary readings would be that they exaggerate the importance of these small, fragmented and sometimes not very widely diffused texts. There is a twofold answer to that. One is that all readings of the precious leftovers from a distant past are bound to be asymmetrical to their contemporary significance (given the loss of context and of many other texts from the period). The other is that focusing on what these texts might have done in their historical context *does* take into account the fact that they formed part of a whole system of communication, written and spoken, which the 'sources' or 'literature' approach can often neglect.

Moreover, medieval texts were positioning themselves in another hierarchy of a much longer duration, namely that of other writings—recent or old. This hierarchy both superseded the immediate discourse it was called into, and was, of course, also embedded in it and subservient to it. But it is important to recognise the autonomy of this hierarchy, since old texts often displayed a remarkable resilience. Naturally, their survival is not a result of rational mechanisms, but of a complicated pattern of forgetting and remembering—again related to dominant written languages, registers and so forth—which however were to a large extent defined by old texts written in a completely different communicative situation. In analysing these mechanisms one pitfall, I think, is to recur to the concept of 'tradition', which has a tendency to blur the dynamics and agency of texts and specific concrete learned environments. One example cited above is Snorri's calling on Ari, thus revalorising an old text. Another instance is the Saints' Lives, which obviously draw both on the Bible and on early hagiography to claim

their own authority. The understanding of these long-distance textual relationships is also better served by seeking other explanations than just sources or literary tradition.

Note I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Viking Society for inviting me to give the Dorothea Coke Memorial Lecture in London in 2011 and to rework it for publication. This gave me an opportunity to connect some points that derived, inevitably, from my own previous research; I hope, nevertheless, that an overview in the present updated form engages meaningfully with other recent developments within Nordic studies and with reflections on benefits and challenges of emerging interdisciplinary practices, as developed in the Centre for Medieval Literature (Odense / York, grant no. DNRF1021D).

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JÓNAS KRISTJÁNSSON
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It is with great sadness that members of the Viking Society will have learnt of the death of Jónas Kristjánsson. A close friend of the Society, Jónas spent a year in England in 1978–79, and during that time addressed the Society and the Colloquium for Teachers of Old Norse, both at University College London, and also lectured by invitation at a number of British universities, including Leeds. After his lecture at Leeds he told me that in introducing him I had succeeded in mentioning, among his many publications, an article that he had forgotten he had written! This illustrates not only the extraordinarily productive nature of his work as a scholar, but also the difficulty of paying tribute to it, which can be done here only selectively. Three of his many writings may be briefly discussed.

In his doctoral thesis, *Um Fóstbræðra sögu* (1972), Jónas argued, with great acumen and in wonderfully clear Icelandic, that *Fóstbræðra saga*, earlier thought to be one of the oldest of the Family Sagas, was in fact one of the youngest, written in the last decades of the thirteenth century and showing the influence of the translated romances and the florid style. His conclusions here have important implications for the dating of the sagas, for the analysis of saga style and, as Preben Meulengracht Sørensen has shown (*Saga and Society* (1993), 122–24), for the study of the nature of divergences between surviving saga versions. In 1990, on the other hand, in an article in *Andvari* (115, new series 32, pp. 85–105), Jónas argued that *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* was the oldest of the Family Sagas, composed, as he maintained, c.1230 by Snorri Sturluson, who thus initiated the Family Saga genre at a time when he had completed the greater part of his work on *Heimskringla*. This argument, if accepted, raises the interesting question of the nature of the relationship between the Family Sagas and the prose *Edda*, Snorri's authorship of which Jónas seems here to accept but which he hardly mentions, and which Magnus Magnusson has described as 'not a saga, as such' (*Iceland Saga* (1987), 193). Could Snorri, in writing his *Edda*, have been experimenting with narrative form in preparation for writing *Egils saga*? In his article in *Skáldskaparmál* 3 (1994), 216–31, finally, Jónas raised the question of whether *Egils saga* could be described as 'Norse'. He was here developing a point he often made at international conferences: that the term 'Norse', which he equated perhaps a little too easily with 'Norwegian', was used inappropriately by scholars writing in English about specifically Icelandic works of literature.

With his work on *Fóstbræðra saga* and his earlier scholarly editions of *Dínus saga drambláta* (1960), *Viktors saga ok Blávus* (1964) and *Svarfdæla saga* (1966), Jónas was eminently qualified for the post of Director of the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi (as it was then named), which he held from 1972 until his retirement in 1994. He brought to the post the further experience of a teacher, having taught at the Samvinnuskóli from 1952–55, and of an archivist, having worked at the Þjóðskjalasafn from 1957–63. Among many other subsequent commitments, he played a crucial role in the return of the Icelandic manuscripts to Iceland from Denmark, representing Iceland in negotiations with the Danish authorities from 1972–86.

From 1979 he served on the editorial board of Hið íslenska fornritafélag, for which he had earlier edited the *Eyfirðinga sögur* (including *Svarfdæla saga*) as volume IX in the *Íslensk fornrit* series (1956). In 1999 Jóhannes Nordal, Chairman of Hið íslenska fornritafélag, asked him to oversee the editions of the *Biskupa sögur* I–II, which he completed in 2002 and 2003 with the help of Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, who became co-editor of the series with him for all subsequent volumes. Jónas's edition of the *Poetic Edda* for the series, done jointly with Vésteinn Ólason, was complete at the time of his death, and when published will take its place among the many memorial witnesses to his achievement as a scholar.

His discursive writings are mainly in Icelandic, but his *Eddas and Sagas* (1988), translated by Peter Foote, and his *Icelandic Manuscripts* (1993), translated by Jeffrey Cosser, both authoritative introductions to their subjects, bring his work to the attention of an international audience. Among his further writings are two historical novels, a history of Iceland in the Commonwealth period, and translations into Icelandic of historical works and plays, including respectively Will Durant's *The Life of Greece* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.

I am told that Jónas was known as *fóstri* to his colleagues at the Árnastofnun, a nickname which brings out well both his fatherly and his teacherly qualities. Foreign visitors to the Stofnun will remember the warmth of his welcome, his own and Sigríður's splendid hospitality at their house on Oddagata, and Jónas acting, not always officially, as a guide on conference excursions. On these he would announce on the microphone, whenever the coach passed a place of particular interest, that he was going to 'read' (*lesa*) a poem, or perhaps a folktale, that was in some way relevant to the place in question. The 'reading' invariably turned out to be a recitation from memory, as those sitting near him would notice. He would also lead the singing on these occasions, sailing easily through

all the stanzas of ‘Ólafur liljurós’, while the rest of us would be lucky if we could reach the stanza in which Ólafur declines the elves’ invitation to join them. It was heart-warming to see this diligent and painstaking scholar so obviously relaxing and enjoying himself.

While disapproving of the word ‘Norse’ in specifically Icelandic contexts, as noted above, Jónas was prepared to allow the terms ‘Norse–Icelandic’ and ‘Nordic’ where the common heritage of Iceland and Norway was concerned. What would he have thought of the term ‘Northern’, one wonders? We in the Viking Society for Northern Research offer him in any case our heartfelt thanks for his friendship and for his magnificent contribution to our field of study, while sending our deep sympathies to his wife Sigríður, his children Kristján, Aðalbjörg, Gunnlaugur and Áslaug, his stepson Egill, and their families.

RWMcT

REVIEWS

NINE SAGA STUDIES. THE CRITICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE ICELANDIC SAGAS. By ÁRMANN JAKOBSSON. *University of Iceland Press*. Reykjavík, 2013. 247 pp. ISBN 978-9979-54-997-0.

This anthology of previously published articles is united by the author's introduction, in which he calls for a discussion of the sagas as literature. Without denying recent developments in the study of oral traditions or textual criticism, the author nevertheless seeks to return our attention to issues that lie within the narrative, rather than outside it (p. 16). The introduction adopts an attitude of bemused exasperation with questions such as 'who wrote the *Íslendingasögur*?' and advocates instead a conversation regarding the validity and usefulness of the psychological and literary readings contained within this volume. The author's desire to foster a discussion of this approach is clear when he admits that, whilst these articles have thus far not made 'their mark', he hopes 'to bring them to the attention of more scholars with the publication of this book' (p. 38).

I share the author's hope; the articles have been carefully chosen and arranged to form a coherent, cohesive reading of some of the most famous sagas, and they deserve more consideration than they have perhaps received thus far. Arranged by general themes, as the sub-headings of the introduction suggest ('Saga witches, saga trolls', 'Gender troubles'), the shared content of the articles ensures that they complement each other excellently. Trollishness, *ergi* and marginality are themes that recur throughout the nine articles, but they do so without growing repetitive. As a whole, the articles perceptively balance detailed lexical analysis and recognition of the broader outlook of particular texts. The author has time for both marginal figures and what we might refer to as the 'big questions' regarding the personalities of such towering figures as Njáll Þorgeirsson, Guðrún Ósvífisdóttir, Grettir Ásmundarson and Egill Skallagrímsson. The value of literary criticism as a methodology for examining the sagas is demonstrated by much of the material here; although in some instances (particularly concerning Þráinn Sigfússon) the drawback of a thorough character analysis is clear. By elucidating Þráinn's personality so comprehensively, the author leaves us little room for further comment; Þráinn is neatly summed up as one who 'falls short of his own ambition' (p. 202). To this reviewer at least, he emerges as merely another foil to the 'main characters' of the saga, whose own actions now need no more explanation than 'that is the kind of person he is'. Nevertheless, the approach taken in these studies is refreshing, and the author's pleasure in discussing the texts palpable.

The nine articles included here focus on six major *Íslendingasögur*: *Eyrbyggja saga* ('The Specter of Old Age'; 'Two Wise Women and their Young Apprentice'), *Gísla saga* ('The Trollish Acts of Þorgrím the Witch'), *Grettis saga* ('The Fearless Vampire Killers'), *Egils saga* ('Beast and Man'; '*Egils saga* and Empathy'), *Laxdæla saga* ('*Laxdæla* Dreaming') and *Njáls saga* ('The Impetuousness of Þráinn Sigfússon'; 'Masculinity and Politics in *Njáls saga*'). A concern with the

problems of classification runs through nearly all of these. The ways in which old men cope with their marginalisation is covered by 'Specter', which demonstrates how hard it is to generalise about such figures. 'Wise Women' displays the difficulties of interpreting *ergi* and magic, and warns against judgements as to whether such attributes can be qualified as 'good' or 'bad' (p. 89). The vagaries of *ergi* and trollishness are expanded upon in 'Trollish Acts', whilst 'Vampire Killers' shows how equating certain horrors in the sagas with vampires might helpfully explain the otherness of their counterparts, the vampire slayers. 'Beast and Man' further dissects the definition of 'troll', demonstrating the manipulation of 'troll potentiality' (p. 152) in *Egils saga*, which invites various interpretations of its characters by using a variety of distancing techniques. 'Empathy' takes a self-proclaimed 'experimental' (p. 156) approach, inferring a great deal about Egill Skallagrímsson's childhood and his brother Þórólfr's empathetic nature from a few carefully chosen scenes in the saga, whilst 'Dreaming' harks back to the differences in audience interpretations that 'Beast and Man' allowed for, suggesting that Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir may be seen to be controlling her own destiny through the invention of her elaborate dreams (p. 187). 'Impetuousness' provides neat character studies of Þráinn Sigfússon and Hrappr Örgumleiðason, and by drawing our attention to these minor characters the article highlights how they affect our view of the main characters of *Njáls saga*. Finally, 'Masculinity' presents a systematic analysis of the way in which *Njáls saga* undermines the hyper-masculine culture it presents, showing that Njáll, 'the least masculine of men may be the most powerful' (p. 237).

The author apparently struggled with some articles in the preliminary stages of their preparation ('Specter', p. 30; 'Dreaming', p. 35; 'Impetuousness', p. 36). He disarmingly informs us of the self-critical process that led to the finished publications contained in this volume; moments where an interpretation must be elucidated in more detail, or conclusions must be made more solid and clear will be familiar to many of his peers. Nevertheless, these articles are safely placed in a context that allows the reader to make the most sense of them and their intentions. This placing does, at times, have the effect of highlighting differences between the articles; 'Empathy' in particular stands out for its readiness to infer much more from the sources, which may be a methodology that has been superseded by the author's recent impulse towards studies of 'individual words and concepts' (p. 32), or may be a product of its 'experimental' (p. 156) approach. Regardless, it does not stand out so much as to appear unsuitable for the collection, and grouping the articles by saga discussed rather than by date published certainly works well.

Although the articles can be seen to have a great deal in common, the author's introduction remains important in successfully unifying his work: his concern with authorial intentions *vs* audience interpretation informs his discussion of the initial public reaction to 'Masculinity', but it is delightfully—and perhaps inadvertently—echoed later in 'Beast and Man' and 'Dreaming', which show sagas inviting various interpretative possibilities. The international crowd of modern authors and critics whose names pepper the introduction similarly appear throughout the articles, reinforcing the author's contention that these texts are part of a long tradition of good

story-telling. Additionally, his lack of interest in saga origins and what lies ‘outside’ the text is resurrected in an aside at the outset of nearly every article, demonstrating the author’s long-standing impatience with such issues. He is happy to concede that these are thirteenth-century texts, but sees no reason to seek a more specific date, an approach I heartily endorse—the comparative dating of the *Íslendingasögur* might be thought as much a ‘parlour game’ (p. 29) as the search for saga authors.

In light of the unity of the material it is somewhat disappointing that it was decided not to ‘disguise what is originally an anthology’ (p. 38), as the inconsistent editorial practice of the pieces gathered here is frustrating. The sudden change from footnotes to endnotes in ‘Vampire Killers’ and the lack of bibliography in ‘Specter’, ‘Dreaming’ and ‘Masculinity’ are only minor annoyances, but as the author has made the effort to include an index to the whole volume, one regrets that a uniform style was not adopted also for greater ease of reference. Reference is, after all, another legacy that the author intends this book to have, hoping that it will function as a handbook for students new to the *Íslendingasögur* (p. 27). Whilst I would recommend the introduction to all such students, the specific nature of the articles may disqualify it as a work of general reference—although I confess to being unfamiliar with the author’s other reference book, *Illa fenginn mjöður* (Reykjavík, 2009, reviewed in *Saga-Book* XXXVI (2012), 158–61), to which he sees this as a companion piece.

Recognising the autobiographical quality of a compilation such as this, the introduction not only gives a summary of the author’s career thus far, but also a full list of his publications. It is a list diverse in subject matter and in language of publication, and ought to be as useful to any reader as the wide-ranging references in each article. The genesis of this work in contemporary Icelandic society is evident, and it is important to understand this in order to contextualise the author’s reluctance to engage with parlour games and guesswork. Like many Icelandic academics, he appears exasperated with the term ‘cultural heritage’, and the public misunderstanding of the role of scholars who study the sagas. Whilst admitting that the introduction was begun in an ‘irascible’ frame of mind (p. 29), the author in the end appears more perplexed than anything by the continued interest in what he considers to be distractions and irrelevancies to the most defensible, valuable way of reading the sagas; that is, as literature.

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THE LEGENDS OF THE SAINTS IN OLD NORSE–ICELANDIC PROSE. By KIRSTEN WOLF. *University of Toronto Press*. Toronto, 2013. xi + 405 pp. ISBN 978-1-4426-4621-6.

Kirsten Wolf’s bibliography is intended as ‘a complete revision’ of the fifty-year-old handlist ‘The Lives of the Saints in Old Norse Prose’ by Ole Widding, Hans Bekker-Nielsen and Laurence Shook in *Mediaeval Studies* 25 (1963), 294–337. Wolf states in the preface that ‘the present list does not presume to be exhaustive, but I hope that most books and mainstream journals within the field of Old Norse–Icelandic language and literature have been covered’ (p. xi). The cut-off date for

consideration in the volume is given as Autumn 2011. Wolf admits a 'slight bias towards more recent publications and ones written in the Scandinavian languages, Icelandic, English, German, and French' (p. xi), an inclination which most readers will surely forgive as, with the possible exception of Italian and Russian, this would seem to cover quite admirably the languages and contexts in which most Old Norse studies are published.

Having defined the scope and purpose of the bibliography in a brief preface, Wolf turns to the matter itself. The bibliography is arranged alphabetically by saints' names from Agatha to Walburga. Icelandic saints are given their original names rather than their Anglicised equivalents, e.g. Guðmundr not Gudmund, Þorlákr not Thorlac (Þ is alphabetised between T and U). Each entry begins with the saint's name and feast day, followed by the texts in which they appear, the shelfmarks of the manuscripts in which those texts are preserved, the editions in which the texts can be found, translations into modern languages and a list of secondary literature. Wolf also adds short notes which helpfully provide 'at-a-glance' clarification of the various hagiographic traditions concerning a particular saint. For example, in the entry for St Erasmus Wolf distinguishes between one *Erasmuss saga* 'probably based on one of the recensions of the Latin *passio*' and another 'translated from a now-lost Low German redaction' (pp. 102–03). This is the sort of information that scholars of Old Norse religious prose have long been accustomed to trudging through Unger's italicised small-point introductions in order to find. It is very convenient to have the various traditions succinctly clarified, with advances in scholarship since Widding's 'Handlist' taken into account.

An area of special interest in the bibliography is the treatment of the Old Norse Marian miracles. A note under the entry for 'Mary the Blessed Virgin' cross-references several saints to clarify that entries for saints such as St Anselm or St Basil who feature in Old Norse translations of Marian miracles are listed both under their own names and again under Mary the Blessed Virgin (p. 245). The cross-referencing is not comprehensive: some saints who fall into this category are not credited for their Marian appearance. In the case of St Benedict, who appears in the two recensions of the Marian vision *Gundelinus leiðsla* (*Maríu saga*, ed. C. R. Unger (1871), 534–41, 1162–68), readers will not find any mention of his inclusion in Marian material. The same is true of St Guðmundr Arason. His appearance in two of the only three wholly original Icelandic Marian miracles (*Maríu saga* 155–57) is not cited at all. Neither is that of St Þorlákr in the third (154–55). However, these shortcomings are minor. It is never possible to include everything in a work of this kind, and the specialist will either already be aware of these saintly cameos or soon discover them in consulting the primary sources themselves. Indeed, Wolf's overview of the Marian *miracula* is otherwise very impressive. The full enumeration of the complex manuscript tradition behind Unger's behemoth 1,204-page edition, complete with dates, is particularly valuable.

As Wolf promises in her preface, the secondary literature provided in each entry considerably updates the 'Handlist'. The important scholarly contributions concerning each saint are well represented. Wolf's attention to unpublished PhD theses is welcome in widening the scholarly base upon which Old Norse

hagiographic endeavours may be built. Indeed, Wolf is well placed to give an authoritative state-of-the-field in this genre of scholarship, following *An Annotated Bibliography of North American Doctoral Dissertations on Old Norse–Icelandic* published in 1998. There are also several instances where the reader will discover Old Norse hagiographic intervention in an unexpected place, such as Jørgen Højgaard Jørgensen's 'Hagiography and the Icelandic Bishop Sagas' in *Peritia* 1 (1982), 1–16—a journal which will be more familiar to Celticists than Scandinavianists. Similarly, Ásdís Egilsdóttir's article, 'Konur, draumur, dýrlingar', in a *Festschrift* for Turið Sigurðardóttir (*Bókmenntaljós. Heiðursrit til Turið Sigurðardóttur*, ed. Malan Marnersdóttir et al. (Tórshavn, 2006), 351–58) or the article Ásdís co-authored with Ármann Jakobsson, 'Er Oddaverjapætti treystandi?' (*Ný saga* 11 (1999), 91–100) may have escaped the attention of many Anglophone scholars. It is fortunate that Wolf remedies this potential oversight.

The book is handsomely bound in hardcover with an image of an early sixteenth-century statuette of St Óláfr on the dust jacket. The typesetting is clear and neat, and if there are any typographical errors they are so slight as to escape detection even after strenuous examination. If pressed, the reviewer will find a few pedantic areas for improvement. The preface implies that Ole Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen were working 'in the decades following the mid-nineteenth century' (p. ix); a somewhat distorted chronology, since Widding was born no earlier than 1907 and gained his first degree in 1932; Bekker-Nielsen graduated in 1959. Passing mentions are made of the sole Old Norse–Icelandic references to St Canute and St Canute Lavard in *Knýtlinga saga*. Wolf notes that the chapters on Canute in *Knýtlinga saga* 'cannot be regarded as a proper saint's legend' (p. 68). If saints who lack proper legends but are otherwise mentioned in Old Norse literature were to be included, it might have been interesting to see also entries for St Gertrude of Nivelles (*Maríu saga*, 970) and William of Norwich (*Íslendzk Æventyri. Ísländische Legenden, Novellen und Märchen*, ed. H. Gering (Halle, 1882–84), I 305). The miracle of St Magnús attached to the end of *Árna saga biskups* (*Biskupa sögur* III, Íslenzk fornrit XVII (1998), 206–07) might also have been a welcome addition. However, these are minor quibbles that in no way detract from the fact that the book is thoroughly researched and extremely useful.

A particular joy in using Wolf's bibliography is that idle perusal thereof reminds the reader of saints whose legends or *vitae* one had briefly noticed but never properly considered, or brings to the reader's attention entirely new sources of which one had not previously been aware. That Old Norse sources treat Sts Henry and Cunegund, St John Chrysostom (known rather charmingly in Old Norse as *Jón gullmunnr*), St Gangulphus, St Lucy of Syracuse and St Walburga was a pleasure to discover. Those who are already very familiar with Old Norse hagiography are thus still likely to find new information between the pages of this volume, while at the same time scholars who are perhaps just 'hagio-curious' will be sure to find a lead here that sparks their interest.

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ALTWESTNORDISCHE FARBSEMANTIK. By GEORG C. BRÜCKMANN. *Münchener Nordistische Studien* 11. Herbert Utz Verlag. Munich, 2012. 123 pp. ISBN 978-3-8316-4168-0.

The use of colour-terms in ancient and medieval literature is a well-investigated topic, and there has been more than a trickle of recent works on the subject. Nor does Brückmann claim to be a pioneer in this area of Old Norse studies. The bibliography appended to his slim volume shows how often scholars have tried to understand what seems obvious at first sight but proves to be puzzling and even erratic. Shades, hues and all kinds of intermediate colours have names that baffle us in the works of old authors. Even some 'basic' words, such as *black* and *white*, if they meant what they do today, make us ask questions about the vision (physical, not metaphorical!) of saga-tellers. Why should a black man be 'blue' (*blámaðr*) and a sword 'white' (*hvítr*) in Icelandic? Such riddles confront the reader at every step. Most, but not all, have been solved in the past with varying degrees of persuasiveness.

Brückmann's goal consists in providing a complete list of occurrences of colour-words in Old Norse prose. He is of course aware of their use in poetry but mentions the *Edda* and the skalds only in a few instances. The resulting work looks like an annotated motif index. Brückmann does not shy away from tackling some controversial questions, but polemic has little interest for him. The main part of the book is devoted to separate colour-names: *blár*, *brúnn*, *grár*, *grønn*, *gulr*, *hvítr*, *rauðr* and *svartr*. This is followed by a few pages on the use of such words for stylistic purposes and in describing animals, people, monsters, the human face, clothes, metals and armour; colour-words in nicknames; *blár* auguring murder; and colour-names in *Gylfaginning*. Every section has a few lines on the word's etymology, borrowed from standard sources, mainly from *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der germanischen Primäradjektive* by Frank Heidermanns (*Studia linguistica Germanica* 33 (Berlin and New York, 1999)). Then we are told what kind of textual evidence has been used for the survey and how the colour-name in question was used for describing animals, plants, stones, clothes, food, people and so forth. One constant rubric is devoted to positive and negative connotations of colour-names.

Since this book is mainly about evidence, quibbles would look redundant in a review of it. Yet I shall mention several things that caught my attention. The tradition, in folklore and literature, of calling flame blue can hardly be accounted for only by the physical properties of fire, which is mainly perceived as bright yellow or red. Likewise, no rationalising will explain the use of green (*grønn*) for meat, fish and butter, or of red (*rauðr*) for yolk. Brückmann expresses little surprise when encountering such strikingly non-trivial epithets, but they make us wonder, and will keep embarrassing researchers in the future.

Even less unusual collocations need a closer look. Gold is red in European folklore and epic poetry (so not only in Icelandic prose), and again, however attentively we may look at gold and especially when we remember the etymology of the word *gold*, we shall arrive at the same trivial results: *gold* means 'yellow' (just like *yolk*!) and should not be called red. Sometimes we run into a convincing

explanation, as when Brückmann cites the idiom *rault mun fyrir brenna* ‘there is some hope yet’ (literally, ‘it burns red afar’). The phrase could indeed have originated with reference to expected good weather when the sun is red in the evening. But such cases are rare. When we are told that someone has a shield that is half-white and half-red (p. 59), we could expect a comment not only on the metals (gold and silver) but also on the ambiguity of a shield proclaiming war and peace at the same time. Brückmann seems to have missed the complexity of Old Icelandic *grár*. The word meant ‘grey’ and ‘terrible’. Regardless of whether we are dealing with an extension of a colour-name (if so, the process is not trivial) or with homonyms (this path may look more probable in light of German *grau versus grausam*), it won’t do to say that Sleipnir was just grey like so many other horses and that the grey ‘cat’ which Þórr failed to pick up was also grey like wolves and some other beasts. Even if Snorri thought so, we should risk suggesting that both the stallion and the ‘cat’ (in reality, the World Serpent) were described in ancient myths as awe-inspiring and terrible.

It should be repeated that Brückmann offers his notes as a condensed commentary on the ‘motif index’. He points out that he has aimed at a complete overview of the material, and this aim he has achieved. I can only add that, when we deal with old literature, we often overlook the fact that modern speech is at times equally ‘exotic’. We come across familiar word-combinations that we take for granted, even though they would have surprised us in a saga. Compare the uses of *green* in present-day English: *green Christmas*; *green meat* (with *meat* having its old meaning ‘food’), as opposed to *green apples*; *green tea*; *green old age*, as opposed to *green years*, and so on, let alone *green-eyed beast* (jealousy). The ‘emotional’ and symbolic use of colour-names has been recorded in Old Icelandic, but it is not a great rarity in modern literature either. The Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov endowed all the men and women he liked with blue eyes. That is why, when he describes real rather than fictional characters, there is no certainty that the verbal portrait is true to life. The formulaic use of colour is also extant as part of modern idiom.

We now have all the references to colour-words in Old Icelandic prose. In the majority of cases, Brückmann confirms the results arrived at by Ernst Schwentner a hundred years ago (see his dissertation *Eine sprachgeschichtliche Untersuchung über den Gebrauch und die Bedeutung der altgermanischen Farbenbezeichnungen*, PhD dissertation, University of Göttingen 1915), though Brückmann disagrees with his theoretical stance. He also quotes (ironically) Wolfgang Schultze’s statement that the ancient Greeks seem to have been colour-blind. Colour-blind our remote ancestors were not, but we do sometimes look at the world through different glasses and wonder how, among many other things, they dealt with red yolk and green butter. Many questions remain open, but then they always do.

FJQLD VEIT HON FRÆÐA. UTVALDE ARBEID AV ELSE MUNDAL. Edited by ODD EINAR HAUGEN, BERNT ØYVIND THORVALDSEN and JONAS WELLENDOF. *Bibliotheca nordica* 4. *Novus*. Oslo, 2012. 429 pp. ISBN 978-82-7099-706-0.

The phrase *Fjöld veit hon fræða* ‘much wisdom she knows’ in the title of this sizeable volume is from the Eddic poem *Völuspá*, in which it appears three times. In *Völuspá*, the phrase is the anonymous poet’s compliment to the seeress’s immense knowledge and her ability to describe not only the past, but also the future. In the present volume, the editors use the phrase to describe Else Mundal’s accomplishments as ‘ei av dei kunnigaste på sitt felt, ein forskar og lærar med ein uvanleg brei kunnskap om den norrøne kulturen og litteraturen’ (p. 7) [one of the most knowledgeable in her field, a scholar and teacher with an unusually broad knowledge of Norse culture and literature]. The volume is a tribute to Else Mundal and was published on the occasion of her retirement in 2012/2013 as professor of Old Norse–Icelandic philology at the University of Bergen, where she had taught and conducted research since 1994.

Fjöld veit hon fræða contains twenty article and book chapters by Else Mundal published in scholarly journals, Festschrifts, conference proceedings and anthologies during a thirty-year time span (1978–2008). Sixteen articles are in Norwegian and four in English. Considering Else Mundal’s total of 235 publications, which also include books and reviews, the editors express uncertainty whether they ‘vågar å seie at dette er eit representativt utval, men det er eit utval som i det minste får med seg mange av dei sentrale interessene til Else’ (p. 8) [dare to say that this is a representative selection, but it is a selection that at least includes many of Else’s primary interests]. To the mind of this reviewer, the choice of articles is ideal. The articles and book chapters have been adjusted to fit the style used in *Bibliotheca nordica*. Amongst other things, some notes have been incorporated into the main text, footnotes rather than endnotes are used, and here and there smaller revisions have been undertaken. According to the editors, ‘alt dette gjer at artiklane i denne boka må reknast som andre utgåve; det vil vere avvik i forhold til den første utgåva av kvar av dei. Så får det vere opp til dei som les boka og ønskjer å referere til artiklar i denne, om dei vil gå til førsteutgåva av artiklane eller andreutgåva i denne boka. Skal ein følgje prinsippet om *Ausgabe letzter Hand*, bør ein gjere det siste’ (p. 9) [all this means that the articles in this book must be considered a second edition; there will be divergences in relation to the first edition of each of them. It will be up to those who read the book and wish to refer to the articles in it to choose the first edition of the articles or the second edition in this book. If one is to follow the principle of *Ausgabe letzter Hand*, one ought to do the latter].

The topic of women has been central to Else Mundal’s research over the years. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that almost half of the articles are devoted to discussions of the position of women, the attitude toward women, and gender roles in general in medieval Iceland and Norway. These articles comprise ‘Kvöld eru kvenna ráð’ (1978), ‘Kvinnebletet i nokre mellomaldergenrar’ (1982), ‘Overgangen frå munnleg til skriftleg kultur—ei ulukke for

kvinnene?’ (1983), ‘Kvinner som vitne i norske og islandske lover i mellomalderen’ (1994), ‘Korleis påverka kristninga og kyrkja kjønnsrollemønstra?’ (1996), ‘Kvinnesyntet og forståinga av biologisk arv i den norrøne kulturen’ (1998), ‘Snorri’s Portrayals of Women and their Literary Function’ (2004) and to some extent ‘Heilagmann som sa sex. Lausavise nr. 7 etter Óláfr Haraldsson’ (1984). However, Else Mundal’s work on marginalised groups is not limited to women. She has also examined the position of children and the depiction of the Sámi in Old Norse–Icelandic literature. Representing her work in this area, the articles ‘Forholdet mellom born og foreldre i det norrøne kjeldematerialet’ (1988), ‘The Perception of the Saamis and their Religion in Old Norse Sources’ (1996), ‘Kong Harald Hårfagre og samejenta Snøfrid. Samefolket sin plass i den norske rikssamlingsmyten’ (1997) and ‘Håkon Magnussons rettarbot for Hålogaland av 1313 og andre kjelder til kristninga av samane i mellomalderen’ (2006) are included. In addition, much of Else Mundal’s research has been concerned with Norse mythology in general and the Eddic poem *Völuspá* in particular, as witnessed by the six articles on the topic in the volume: ‘Korleis endar eigentleg *Völuspá*?’ (1989), ‘Forholdet mellom gudar og jotnar i norrøn mytologi i lys av det mytologiske namnematerialet’ (1990), ‘Forholdet mellom myteinnehald og myteform’ (1991), ‘Heiðrún—den mjødmjølkkande geita på Valhalls tak’ (1992), ‘Androgyny as an Image of Chaos in Old Norse Mythology’ (1998), ‘*Austr sat in aldna* . . . Giantesses and female powers in *Völuspá*’ (2002) and ‘Oral or Scribal Variation in *Völuspá*: A Case Study in Old Norse Poetry’ (2008). The final article, ‘Íslendingabók, ættar tala og konunga ævi’ (1984) testifies to Else Mundal’s eye for detail.

Common to Else Mundal’s articles in this volume and her scholarly works in general is that she does not superimpose modern literary and historical theories on medieval texts, which in the opinion of this reviewer is a blessing. She also avoids theoretical jargon, which in the opinion of this reviewer is another blessing. Although academic, her articles are written in a down-to-earth and clear, yet elegant, style. The editors of the volume are right to maintain that ‘denne boka kan lesast like godt i stova som på arbeidsrommet’ (p. 8) [this book can be read as well in the living room as in the office].

Fjöld veit hon fræða is prefaced by a brief introduction by the three editors, a *tabula gratulatoria* and biographical details about Else Mundal. It concludes with a list of Else Mundal’s scholarly production and an index of names in the twenty articles. The latter makes the book easy to navigate for a reader seeking information about a specific character, an individual place or a particular literary work. The editors have done an exemplary job. The volume is a fine declaration of gratitude to and admiration of a distinguished scholar in the field of Old Norse–Icelandic studies.

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REVISITING THE POETIC EDDA. ESSAYS ON OLD NORSE HEROIC LEGEND. Edited by PAUL ACKER and CAROLYNE LARRINGTON. *Routledge*. Abingdon and New York, 2013. xxii + 272 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-88861-5.

More than a decade after the publication of *The Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Mythology* (Abingdon and New York 2002, reviewed in *Saga-Book XXVII* (2003), 129–32), Paul Acker and Carlyne Larrington have followed their collection of essays on mythological Eddic poetry with a similar volume dealing with the heroic poems of the Edda. Newly commissioned essays by rising early career researchers and seasoned scholars are assembled alongside reprints of previously published articles (some revised) and a translation into English of Edgar Haimel's article on the *Jungsigurddichtung*. Whereas most of the mythological poems covered in Acker and Larrington's previous collection were treated individually, the heroic poems found in the Codex Regius and elsewhere are addressed in the first eight chapters of the present volume in the groups into which they 'naturally' fall (p. 6). The final four chapters explore aspects of the medieval and post-medieval reception of heroic poetry.

The collection begins with a chapter by David Clark on heroic homosociality and homophobia in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* and *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* (pp. 11–27). Clark investigates the Helgi poems in relation to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's concept of 'homosocial desire' and outlines the modifications which a reading of these poems suggests must be made to this concept for it to be properly applicable to medieval literature. In particular, the triangulation of homosocial desire by a woman in Sedgwick's formulation is shown to be inexact when applied to the Helgi poems. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, the triangulating woman is either an exchange commodity capable of procuring an alliance between men or the contested possession of two rivals, but Clark astutely observes that in the Helgi poems the competing bonds between lovers, rivals, friends and siblings are more complex than those in the material considered by Sedgwick. Nuances such as the exchange of *níð* between representatives of the rivals rather than the rivals themselves and the complication of Helgi and Heðinn's rivalry for Sváva by their fraternal bond in *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* warrant the reformulation of Sedgwick's typology.

In the second chapter, Haimel takes guidance from the manuscript context of the poems concerning the young Sigurðr Fáfnisbani and offers a compelling reading of *Reginismál*, *Fáfnismál* and *Sigrðrífumál* as a single unit (pp. 32–52). He convincingly argues that the redaction of these poems in the Codex Regius is intended to catalogue Sigurðr's evolution into a hero possessed of both *fortitudo* and *sapientia*. Taking into account the manuscript context of a medieval text is especially important in the study of Eddic poetry, which is dominated by the interpretation of poems surviving in the Codex Regius, a single manuscript not necessarily representative of approaches to the preservation of Eddic poetry in the medieval period.

In the following chapter Acker traces the development of the image of the dragon from enormous serpent to winged monster in both textual and pictorial sources

(pp. 53–75). His starting point is the difference between the descriptions of Fáfnir in the prose introduction to *Fáfnismál* and in *Völsunga saga*, and he goes on to consider the depictions of dragons on Manx stone crosses, Swedish runestones and Norwegian stave churches, as well as in Icelandic art. Reflecting Haimeri's demonstration of the importance of taking into account the manuscript context of individual texts, Acker illustrates the necessity of considering the wider artistic context of culturally ubiquitous images and motifs.

Three chapters are given to a group of poems comprising *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu*, *Guðrúnarkviða I*, *Helreið Brynhildar*, *Guðrúnarkviða II*, *Guðrúnarkviða III* and *Oddrúnargrátr*. In the first, Daniel Sävborg rightly argues against prevailing ideas about the so-called 'elegies' of the Codex Regius and demonstrates that grief and lamentation over the dead are native motifs in Eddic heroic poetry (pp. 81–106). According to Sävborg, the 'elegies' are distinct from other Eddic poems in their focus on women, and their preoccupation with grief is not a sign of foreign influence or any indication of date, as many scholars following the work of Andreas Heusler have supposed. Sävborg's critique of the general scholarly acceptance of Heusler's assertion that the 'elegies' represent something fundamentally different from other heroic Eddic poems should warn the academic community against unquestioned allegiance to prominent works of criticism and especially to groupings of texts which may hinder as much as help scholarly enquiry. The grouping of texts by any scholar will always involve a degree of subjectivity, and even the 'natural' groupings employed by Acker and Larrington in the organisation of their collection, no matter how useful, are open to question. Sävborg expertly demonstrates the dangers of consensus in his chapter and offers new insights into the Eddic 'elegies' which make necessary their reintegration into the corpus of heroic poetry.

The theme of grief is taken up again in the chapter on *Guðrúnarkviða I* (pp. 107–16) in which Thomas D. Hill adduces medieval analogues for the idea that tears and the open expression of grief are essential elements of the healing process. Although the currency of this idea in the medieval period is demonstrated by the analogues he considers, which include passages from the prologue to Gottfried von Strassbourg's *Tristan*, the Old French *Lancelot du Lac* and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, it is a pity that Hill does not do more to situate it in a specifically Old Norse–Icelandic context. The story of Creation's thwarted attempt to weep Baldr out of Hel, for example, deserves far greater attention than the brief paragraph it receives toward the end of the chapter, and it would have been particularly fruitful to compare *Guðrúnarkviða I* with Egill Skalla-Grímsson's *Sonatorrek*. The analogues presented in this chapter are interesting, but it is difficult not to want something more than proof of the currency of an idea.

Lament, the verbal expression of grief, is discussed alongside other speech acts performed by women in heroic Eddic poetry in Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir's chapter on women and subversion (pp. 117–35). This provides a thoroughgoing analysis of the ways in which female speakers in Eddic poetry utter oaths, curses, prophecies, incitements and laments to subvert the prevailing heroic order through social critique, expressing in the process anxieties about their own power. The great strength of Jóhanna's examination of the female characters of heroic Eddic

poetry is her assumption from the outset that these figures are representative of thirteenth-century norms of appropriate and subversive female behaviour and her treatment of the material as it appears in its thirteenth-century redaction, regardless of the different forms this material may have taken in other periods and other manuscripts.

In a chapter on *Atlakviða*, *Atlamál*, *Guðrúnarhvöt* and *Hamðismál*, Larrington addresses the theme of sibling drama (pp. 140–56). In her analysis, prompted by the ‘affective turn’ brought to bear on medieval studies in recent years, Larrington expertly untangles the many competing kinship bonds in the final four poems of the Codex Regius. Especially insightful is her discussion of Guðrún’s transformation from child-bearer to sacrificer in murdering her children by Atli in *Atlakviða*. Drawing on the anthropological concept of the exchange of women in marriage and the sacrificial imagery employed in *Atlakviða*, Larrington demonstrates the way in which Guðrún attacks patriliney by destroying sacrificially the symbol of her affinal accord with Atli and remains loyal to her siblings at the expense of her husband and children.

Competing kinship bonds emerge in the course of this collection as one of the essential concerns of heroic Eddic poetry. Complex relations between lovers, rivals, friends and siblings are of primary significance in Clark’s interpretation of the Helgi poems, and relationships between men and women are at the forefront of Jóhanna’s analysis of female speech acts. Together with Larrington’s chapter, these explorations of the various kinship ties presented in Eddic poetry highlight the fragile nature of the heroic world as it is presented in the heroic poems of the Codex Regius and go some way toward uncovering the real-world anxieties these poems reflect.

Within the scheme adopted for the organisation of this volume, *Grottasöngur* constitutes a group of its own, marking its highly individual treatment of the interaction between the heroic and the mythological. Judy Quinn puts forward an intuitive reading of the poem as a mythological exploration of the relationship between a greedy king and the giantesses, presented in terms similar to those used of valkyries, who determine his fate (pp. 159–82). Quinn breaks new critical ground by interpreting *Grottasöngur* in ecological terms, with the millstone Grotti functioning as a natural resource properly belonging to the giants but exploited by King Fróði, who is too foolish and too greedy to appreciate the true mythological import of the milling of Fenja and Menja. *Grottasöngur* cannot fail to strike the reader as a very different poem from the others considered in this volume in light of its predominantly mythological motivation, and Quinn’s brilliant reading of it should encourage us to re-examine the parameters of the mythological and the heroic in Eddic poetry.

Although the final four chapters would perhaps have been better suited to a third volume on the afterlife of Eddic poetry, they are nonetheless interesting examinations of the longevity of Eddic themes. Of these chapters, which address topics including the employment of names and motifs borrowed from the *Völsungar* legend in the *fornaldarsögur* (Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, pp. 202–18), the depiction of Sigurd/Siegfried by William Morris and Richard Wagner (David Ashurst, pp. 219–37), and J. R. R. Tolkien’s adaptation of material relating to Sigurðr Fáfnisbani

and Guðrún Gjúkadóttir in his posthumously published *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* (Tom Shippey, pp. 238–57), the essay by Margaret Clunies Ross should be of particular interest to Eddic scholars (pp. 183–201). Clunies Ross provides an overview of the poetry incorporated in some of the *fornaldarsögur* and explores the extent to which it might be considered ‘Eddic’ by examining its similarities to and differences from the heroic poems of the Codex Regius. She concludes that the closest connection in terms of both subject matter and style between the heroic poems of the Poetic Edda and the *fornaldarsögur* in which poetry is incorporated is the concern with heroic life-history, and that similarities between the two corpora outweigh the differences. Scholarly neglect of poetry contained in the *fornaldarsögur* in Eddic scholarship is shown to be entirely unwarranted, and redefinition of the Eddic corpus to allow both the poetry of the Codex Regius and poetry preserved in the *fornaldarsögur* within its limits should now be a priority.

It is unfortunate that Acker and Larrington provide no epilogue. A collection such as this offers the perfect opportunity to reflect on the current state of scholarship and comment on recent developments in the field. Quinn’s ecological reading of *Grottasöngur*, for example, appears at a time in which ecocriticism is becoming increasingly popular in the humanities, and would have been usefully supplemented by a summary of the editors’ views on the potential applications of the ecocritical approach to Old Norse–Icelandic literature. Despite this minor omission, *Revisiting the Poetic Edda* makes an important contribution to Eddic scholarship. Its broad coverage and the helpful summaries of critical history provided in the editorial introductions to the chapters will be especially valuable to undergraduate readers, and the insightful application of various critical perspectives to the material considered will suggest new directions to specialists and prove that Eddic poetry remains fertile ground for study.

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THE NORDIC APOCALYPSE. APPROACHES TO *VOLUSPÁ* AND NORDIC DAYS OF JUDGEMENT. Edited by TERRY GUNNELL and ANNETTE LASSEN. *Acta Scandinavica 2. Brepols*. Turnhout, 2013. xvii + 239 pp. ISBN 978-2-503-54182-2.

As Pétur Pétursson states in the opening remarks of his introduction to this volume, ‘*Völuspá* is probably the most internationally famous poem in the Old Icelandic corpus—and perhaps the most disputed’ (p. xiii). The celebrity status of the poem, and the extent to which its often elusive content can be subject to interpretation, is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in this volume, which assembles twelve high-quality essays from a group of eminent scholars. The volume has its origins in a two-day conference held at the National Museum of Iceland in 2008, designed to coincide with an exhibition showcasing a Byzantine Judgement Day image associated with the cathedral at Hólar. The aim of the conference was to reflect on Nordic approaches to concepts of apocalypse.

The volume is handsomely produced and presented, and includes six full-colour plates, of which two relate to modern works of art, whilst the others are discussed in only one article. Despite the volume's high production values, I did note a few typographical errors: 'og' for 'or' (p. 69), only a partial translation for the Latin phrase *dies sine nocte, lux sine tenebris* (p. 122), 'propheresses' for 'prophetesses' (p. 170) and an incomplete translation for strophe R61 of *Vǫluspá* (p. 194). The essays are divided amongst four sections: 'The Reception of *Vǫluspá*'; '*Vǫluspá* and The Pre-Christian World: The Oral Tradition'; '*Vǫluspá* and Christianity: The Written Tradition'; and 'The Hólar Judgement Day Images: The Visual Tradition'.

The first section is made up of a single essay, 'The Early Scholarly Reception of *Vǫluspá* from Snorri Sturluson to Árni Magnússon' by Annette Lassen. The first part of this essay deals with medieval presentations of the poem in Snorri's *Edda* and the Codex Regius of the *Poetic Edda*. Whilst it is a pity that Lassen does not devote much space to the Hauksbók version of *Vǫluspá*, the first section of her chapter is not only a concise and informative analysis of the ways in which the text is presented by medieval writers and compilers, but also functions as an excellent introduction to the poem as a whole. The essay then shifts to considering the earliest scholarship on *Vǫluspá*, that produced during the seventeenth century: Lassen again presents an informative but accessible overview of this early academic work, and in so doing she confirms that the poem's controversial status is no recent thing.

The second section opens with Vésteinn Ólason's '*Vǫluspá* and Time'. This essay, like Lassen's, is in essence a two-parter: it considers first the concept of time within the poem, and secondly the idea of the poem as an artefact in time. Vésteinn's arguments are informed and compelling; furthermore his argument that *inn ríki* 'the mighty one', mentioned in the penultimate strophe of the Hauksbók version of *Vǫluspá*, can be identified with Snorri's *Alfǫðr* as a figure distinct from Óðinn, is elegant and persuasive.

Gísli Sigurðsson's '*Vǫluspá* as the Product of an Oral Tradition: What Does That Entail?' ambitiously attempts to convey a great deal of information on a variety of subjects. It begins with an appeal that we abandon the idea of *Vǫluspá* as an original poem by a single author and embrace instead the idea of the poem(s) as something constructed organically out of the cultural milieu of several centuries. Gísli then presents a thorough discussion of the concept of poetry in an oral culture, the possible performative aspects of Eddic poetry, the implications of the narrative frame of the poem, the potentialities of the figure called *inn ríki* in the Hauksbók version and the context of *Vǫluspá* in the Codex Regius as a whole. Much of this is sensible and helpful, but in attempting to cover such a broad range of topics Gísli does sacrifice readability.

Terry Gunnell takes another approach to orality in '*Vǫluspá* in Performance'. By his own admission, his approach to the poem here is limited and subjective, but it is perhaps all the stronger for this. Gunnell makes a compelling case not only for the importance of the sounds of the words used in *Vǫluspá*, but also for how we might understand the impact of these auricular qualities in the performance of the text.

Henning Kure's essay, 'Wading Heavy Currents: Snorri's use of *Vǫluspá* 39', takes a thoughtful view of the places where one has to wade in the afterlife, and

attempts to ascertain whether it is possible to distinguish a heathen idea of a place of punishment from the Christian concept of hell. Kure argues persuasively that scholars have generally failed to make much distinction between this stanza and Snorri's paraphrase of it: if we can accept his argument that Snorri is not simply interpolating Christian elements into *Völuspá* but is instead attempting to make genuinely pagan beliefs about the afterlife agree with the biblical Apocalypse, then Kure's subsequent argument for the existence of a pre-Christian place of punishment in the afterlife is lucid and convincing.

The second section concludes with John McKinnell's 'Heathenism in *Völuspá*: A Preliminary Survey'. Preliminary this may be, but McKinnell's assessment of what may be genuinely heathen content in the poem is comprehensive. It is also, in some respects, an excellent companion piece to Kure's essay: whilst Kure demonstrates the potentialities of a single stanza as possibly indicative of pre-Christian belief, McKinnell's wider survey indicates that there are many other passages to which a similar approach could be made.

Kees Samplonius's 'The Background and Scope of *Völuspá*' represents the start of a new section in this volume, yet it offers (intentionally or otherwise) an opposing view to McKinnell's: Samplonius attempts to prove that various ostensibly heathen aspects of the poem can be read as entirely Christian. Although he concedes that his Christian readings of Surtr, Fenrir and Loki are controversial, his arguments are well supported. The second half of the essay uses the historic spread of Christianity as the basis for arguing that *Völuspá* is the product of a single Christian poet; this argument, however, is less convincing in the light of some of the arguments concerning authorship put forward elsewhere in this volume.

Gro Steinsland's '*Völuspá* and the Sibylline Oracles with a Focus on the "Myth of the Future"' marks a new thematic strand in the volume. Starting with Bang's nineteenth-century theory linking *Völuspá* to the classical tradition of the Sibylline Oracle, Steinsland moves into an engaging and convincing discussion of the poem's view of the post-apocalyptic future, the role of the *völva* in a Christian context, and whether the figure called *inn ríki* might represent a conflation of Christ and Heimdallr (this last being set out in a particularly powerful argument).

In '*Völuspá*, the *Tiburtine Sibyl*, and the Apocalypse of the North', Karl G. Johansson tackles a similar topic, likewise using Bang as a starting point but focusing on a comparison between *Völuspá* and one particular Sibylline narrative. The essay is highly successful in charting the potential influences of the older text on the younger, and whilst the conclusion is, by its own admission, inconclusive, it nevertheless demonstrates that there is much scope for further investigation in this area.

The final essay of the third part of the volume, Pétur Pétursson's 'Manifest and Latent Biblical Themes in *Völuspá*', picks up many of the themes and ideas raised in previous essays; in doing so it argues ultimately for a predominantly Christian reading of the poem. Pétur is the first scholar in this book to call on the evidence of physical images, of which he makes good use. I am not ultimately convinced, however, by his arguments for the *völva*'s Christian transformation, some of which are tenuous, for example his suggestion that the *völva*'s sinking down in stanza R63

indicates a form of baptism that anticipates her ascension into heaven with Christ (pp. 198–99). Many of his points are nevertheless worthy of further consideration.

The final part of the volume is made up of two short essays that deal with the Hólar image, the exhibition of which gave occasion for the conference from which this collection of essays is derived. The first is Guðrún Harðardóttir's 'A View on the Preservation History of the Last Judgement Panels from Bjarnastaðahlíð, and Some Speculation on the Medieval Cathedrals at Hólar', which attempts to chart as much of the history of this particular Doomsday image as can be pieced together. The final essay is 'A Nocturnal Wake at Hólar: The Judgement Day Panels as a Possible Explanation for a Miracle Legend' by Þóra Kristjánsdóttir, which suggests that the image may have been the source of two quasi-supernatural visions described in *Jóns saga*; an appealing idea, although such a suggestion can never be more than conjecture. Both essays are admirable on their own terms, but suffer from their placement in the greater context of the volume as a seemingly irrelevant postscript to a book otherwise exclusively dealing with *Völuspá*.

The individual essays in this volume are of high quality, but its form raises some problems. As a natural consequence of the fact that ten of the essays engage exclusively with the same poem, a great deal of repetition is evident. This is not the fault of any individual writer, but it becomes apparent in a cover-to-cover reading of the book, and although the constituent essays do occasionally cite each other there is nevertheless little sense that they fit together cohesively. The connection between *Völuspá* and the Hólar image, furthermore, is at best tenuous despite Pétur Pétursson's eloquent attempts to justify it, and in the end I must agree with Vésteinn Ólason that, whilst pictorial art may well have influenced medieval Scandinavian writers, 'individual cases are nonetheless obviously controversial and difficult to prove' (p. 27). On the whole, however, this is a useful and important book: it provides an examination of the 'state of the art' of *Völuspá*, drawing on the recent work of many major scholars. It is essential reading for anyone writing on *Völuspá*, and makes a significant contribution to the study of Old Norse mythology as a whole.

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THE METERS OF OLD NORSE EDDIC POETRY. COMMON GERMANIC INHERITANCE AND NORTH GERMANIC INNOVATION. By SEIICHI SUZUKI. *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 86. *De Gruyter*. Berlin, 2014. 1096 pp. ISBN 978-3-11-033500-2.

In the past decades Old Norse metrists have concentrated their efforts on the intricate *dróttkvætt* form and the other skaldic metres, while the plainer metres of Eddic poetry have suffered comparative neglect. Seiichi Suzuki's weighty tome goes a long way towards restoring balance to the field. One of the principal strengths of Suzuki's work, drawing on his previous detailed studies of the metres of *Beowulf*

and the *Heliand*, is the comparative Germanic perspective. Other strengths include the author's fluency in statistical reasoning and his exceptional thoroughness within his chosen domain.

Suzuki divides his book into three parts: on *fornyrðislag*, *málaháttir* and *ljóðaháttir*. Topics discussed include alliteration, anacrusis, catalexis, Craigie's law, resolution (and its suspension) and stanza construction. A central thread of the book is the classification of verses into metrical types, culminating in the 227-page *Index of scansion*, containing Suzuki's classification of every verse in his corpus. A short appendix deals with the question of structural parallelism between *dróttkvætt* and the Eddic metres.

Suzuki's work is firmly situated in the tradition of Sievers's five-type system and engages with the ideas of scholars such as Hugo Gering and Hans Kuhn. Suzuki accepts and defends Hans Kuhn's bifurcation of *fornyrðislag* poetry into foreign and domestic poems, where the foreign group is characterised by 'subject matter of south German origin' (p. 6). But Suzuki is by no means a slavish follower of Kuhn and criticises him for taking an overly broad view of *fornyrðislag*. Suzuki argues, I think rightly, that *málaháttir* should not be conflated with *fornyrðislag*. He further considers *Atlakviða*, *Hamðismál* and *Hárbarðsljóð* to be metrically distinctive enough for each poem to be dealt with in a separate chapter. This, too, seems sensible.

Suzuki is refreshingly forthright in his approach and presents his arguments and conclusions with confidence and vigour. His text is mercifully free from buzzwords and attempts to pander to or associate with the latest scholarly fashions. While I respect this, I sometimes wish that Suzuki had spent more time engaging with Eddic scholarship of the last fifty years or so.

One of the book's main weaknesses is its inattention to philology, in particular its nearly complete lack of interest in the preservation of the poetry which it deals with. Suzuki accepts the text of the Neckel–Kuhn edition as an authoritative basis for determining the metrical competence of the poets. The possibilities of modification in transmission, lapses in performance and recording and copyist errors are almost entirely ignored. An illustrative example is chapter 1.4 where Suzuki shows that in the b-verse of his *fornyrðislag* corpus, there are, by his analysis, 2989 examples of single alliteration and eight examples of double alliteration. Suzuki argues that the eight instances of double alliteration 'cannot be explained away as occurrences by pure chance' (p. 17). His argument is as follows. If double alliteration in the b-verse was categorically forbidden we would expect 0 out of 2997 verses to have it. If we use Fisher's exact test to compare 0-vs-2997 to 8-vs-2989 we get a p-value of 0.008 and Suzuki feels this justifies his conclusion. I have never seen statistical reasoning like this before. Surely, as soon as you have even one example of double alliteration, the hypothesis that double alliteration doesn't occur is disproved with $p = 0$. But this is a red herring. The real issue is whether the tiny number of instances could be due to slips of the pen and other errors. This philological question is not addressed, and unfortunately this is characteristic of the book as a whole.

The book's other main weakness is the narrow restriction of the corpus. Old Norse poetry outside of the Neckel–Kuhn edition of the *Poetic Edda* is ignored.

While it is reasonable enough to focus on the *Poetic Edda*, Suzuki's treatment of many problems would surely have benefitted from comparison with other sources. Suzuki is concerned with the historical development of the Norse metres and he argues that *ljóðaháttir* is a relatively young phenomenon developing, to some degree, out of *málaháttir* (pp. 792–98). In this connection a discussion of *Haraldskvæði*, *Hákonarmál* and *Eiríksmál* would have been to the point. These archaic poems are composed in a mixture of *málaháttir* and *ljóðaháttir* and seem to provide some support for Suzuki's idea. But they go unmentioned.

Also ignored is court poetry in *fornyrðislag*, such as *Erfikvæði* by Gísl Illugason and *Sigurðarbalkr* by Ívarr Ingimundarson. These poems are composed in a highly regular *fornyrðislag* where each verse has four positions. In contrast, most of the *fornyrðislag* poems in the *Poetic Edda* have occasional instances of verses with three or five positions. Suzuki departs from tradition in analysing verses like *Hymiskviða* 13.5 'Fram gengo þeir' or *Hymiskviða* 31.1 'Harðr reis á kné' as three-position verses (A1-) rather than as four-position verses (of type D or E). But is it not troubling for this analysis that such verses also occur in the skaldic poems (e.g. *Erfikvæði* 1.1 'Ungr framði sik' and *Sigurðarbalkr* 20.3 'vargr gein of val')?

Catalectic (three-position) verses are a feature of Old Norse poetry with no cousin in West Germanic poetry, and Suzuki, to his credit, gives them a good deal of room in his Eddic analysis. But he never refers to *kviðuháttir*, where catalectic verses are used systematically. Archaic *kviðuháttir* poems, like *Ynglingatal* and *Arinbjarnarkviða*, are never mentioned. The stanza on the Rök stone, which starts with a catalectic verse, is also absent. In the face of constant comparison with *Beowulf* and the *Heliand*, the decision not to make use of any Norse comparative material is puzzling.

Despite these limitations, Suzuki's book is a useful resource for any scholar seeking detailed knowledge of the metrical structure of Eddic poetry. I expect to continue to refer to it for years to come.

HAUKUR ÞORGEIRSSON

Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum

THE POETIC EDDA III. MYTHOLOGICAL POEMS. Edited and translated by URSULA DRONKE. *Oxford University Press*. Oxford, 2011. xii + 159 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-811182-5.

In Ursula Dronke's original plan for her editions of Eddic poems her intention, after the editing of four heroic poems in Volume I and five mythological poems in Volume II, was for Volume III to cover the Helgi poems and the Sigurðr cycle, while Volume IV would complete the collection with editions of all the remaining mythological poems in the Codex Regius, together with *Grottasöngur*. Her actual third volume, however, begins with a Preface which announces a change of plan: 'After the group of major mythological poems edited and presented in Volume II, the most pressing immediate task, it seemed to me, was to complement this group by the four most complex—and in my view most outstanding—among the

remaining mythological poems. That is why I have chosen to focus on *Hávamál*, *Hymiskviða*, *Grímnismál*, and *Grottasöngur* in this third volume' (p. vii). This note suggests a sense that the editor was running out of time—a perception which turned out to be sadly justified. This feeling also pervades the rest of the book, where Dronke's commentaries do not try to address every point of difficulty, but limit themselves to those on which she had new material or a new viewpoint to put forward. For this reason, this edition is best read in conjunction with others, notably the editions of *Hávamál* by David Evans (1986–87), of *Grottasöngur* by Clive Tolley (2008), and the commentary on *Hymiskviða* in volume 2 of *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda* (Klaus von See et al., 1997), or the Italian edition by Carla del Zotto (1979). The bibliography is similarly selective, citing few recent articles except where they are relevant to Dronke's arguments. We may regret this abbreviated treatment of the poems, but no one is immune to the passing of time, and we should be grateful for the insights that these editions provide, however partial they may seem.

Dronke sees *Hávamál* (pp. 1–63) as a collection of various material, but does not try to identify its major constituent parts, or to take notice of the enlarged capitals at the beginnings of stanzas 111 and 138, but rather divides the text wherever there seems to be a new train of thought, so that the section traditionally known as the 'Gnomic Poem' (stt. 1–79) is divided into nearly thirty distinct 'strands'. On a detailed level there is an interesting perception behind this, namely that many of the gnomic stanzas consist of a general philosophical proposition followed by a rejoinder, and that this takes on the appearance of a game of impromptu challenge and response. Thus in stt. 10–11 the same proposition receives two different ripostes (all parallel translations here are Dronke's):

Byrði betri	A better burden
berrat maðr brauto at	no man bears on the road
en sé manvit mikit.	than abundant ingenuity.
Auði betra	Better than riches
þikkir þat í ókunnum stað.	it's reckoned, in a place you don't know.
Slíkt er válaðs vera. (<i>Háv.</i> 10)	The life of the poor is like that.
... Vegnest ver[r]ja	... No worse pack
vegna hann velli at	will he carry over the plain
en sé ofdrykkia ǫls. (<i>Háv.</i> 11,4–6)	than excessive drinking of ale.

Dronke also points out that in st. 65 it seems not to have been possible to add a rejoinder:

Orða þeira	For the words
er maðr ǫðrom segir,	one man says to another,
opt hann giöld um getr . . .	he often receives some return . . .

But this 'proposition' resembles the 'rejoinder' in st. 29,4–6:

Hraðmælt tunga	A headlong tongue
nema haldendr eigi	with none to hold it back
opt sér ógott um gelr.	often calls calamity on itself.

The ‘rejoinder’ at the end of st. 6:

þvíat óbrigðra vin	for a more unfailing friend
fær maðr aldregi	no man will ever acquire
en manvit mikit.	than abundant ingenuity.

looks more like a ‘proposition’ (and indeed, it becomes the ‘proposition’ of stt. 10–11). However, the idea of a ‘game’ of impromptu response to proverbial wisdom is a valuable aid in the understanding of the first major section of *Hávamál*.

The commentary on *Hávamál* has many gaps, but the reader is compensated with the insights and impressions gathered by an outstanding and individual scholar over many years of serious thought. Thus, there are illuminating notes on *líknstafi* (*Háv.* 8,5—one of several notable similarities to *Sigrdrífumál*); the portrayal of begging and its real-life counterpart in *Grágás* (*Háv.* 36–37); *sanda* and *sæva* (*Háv.* 53,1–2); the differing proverbial viewpoints illustrated in *Háv.* 81–83; the comparison of the bitch tied to the bed (*Háv.* 101) with the contents of a verse cited in *Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, which shows that this insult was still understood in Iceland around 1200; *flaumslitom* (*Háv.* 121,7); *Sífiom er þá blandat* (*Háv.* 124,1); the ‘thriving infant’ comparison with *Rígsþula* 8 and 22 in *Háv.* 141,3; and the perception of a mixture of non-Odinic voices in *Háv.* 142–45.

Some other new interpretations seem more questionable but compel the reader to confront new problems or to consider old ones in a new way. These include the puzzling *trémenn* to whom the speaker gives his clothes in *Háv.* 49, which Dronke suggests may be idols of the old gods who ‘lose any divinity they may have had and rejoice as they step out in their new attire. Óðinn easily disposes of an outworn creed’ (p. 54). The difficult MS reading *vel keypts lítar* in *Háv.* 107,1 is emended to *Vélkeypts hlutar* ‘Fraud-bought fortune’, and Dronke thinks (perhaps too charitably) that Óðinn is remorseful about his betrayal of Gunnlōð. In *Háv.* 109, Dronke argues that the *hrímbursar* are a different race of giants from Suttungr, that Óðinn acquired the auger Rati from them in order to bore into the mountain and reach Gunnlōð, and that they expect a share of the stolen mead but are tricked out of it. In *Háv.* 139,6, MS *fell ec apr þatan* is emended to *Fell ek apr[a]ð[r ú]tan* ‘Back I fell from beyond’ and rather strangely illustrated with a leaping figure above a ship in a Bronze-Age rock carving. The note on *Háv.* 140 argues that Óðinn’s giant origins ‘go back to trees’ and interprets *Bestla* and *Bolþorn* accordingly.

In the edition of *Hymiskviða* (pp. 65–108), there are valuable notes on *sumblsamir* (*Hym.* 1,3), *bergþúi* and its rather unexpected application to Ægir (*Hym.* 2,1), *Miskorblinda* (*Hym.* 2,4), *seyði* (*Hym.* 15,7), *briótr berg-Dana* (*Hym.* 18,3) and *hnitbróður* (*Hym.* 24,8). Occasionally one would have liked a rather fuller note: thus it is noted at *Hym.* 5,5 that the poet has invented a father-son relationship between Hymir and Týr, but there is no discussion of the possible reason for this (on which see McKinnell, *Both One and Many* (1994), 76–78). More also needed to be said about the problem raised by *Hróðrs andskoti* (*Hym.* 12,2), since in the myth we know the Wolf’s opponent at Ragnarøk is not Þórr but Víðarr. Similarly, while many of the poet’s kennings are well explained, there is no discussion of

the fact that there are so many more of them than we usually expect to find in an Eddic poem.

In this volume Dronke replaces her usual introduction to each poem with short essays on ‘The winning of the giant’s cauldron’ (pp. 84–88), ‘The Christian origins of the story of Þórr’s killing of the world serpent’ (pp. 89–101), ‘The missing rowing scene after *Hymiskviða* 19’ (pp. 102–05), ‘Two intrusive stanzas in the text of *Hymiskviða*’ (pp. 106–07) and ‘*Hymiskviða* and folk-tale: the breaking of the giant’s glass goblet’ (p. 108). In the first two of these she puts forward the view that *Hymiskviða* is a Christian allegory designed for performance at Christmas, in which Þórr fishing for the Miðgarðsormr represents Christ ‘fishing’ for the devil, as he is said to have done in works by such learned Christian writers as Gregory the Great and Ezzo von Bamberg. She points out that Þórr is referred to as *sá er qldom bergr* ‘he who saves men’ (*Hym.* 23,2), while the serpent is (*umgiqrð*) *sú er goð fía* ‘(the encircler) whom the gods abhor’ (*Hym.* 23,6), and that the last word of the poem is the winter-kenning *eitrhqrmeitið* ‘cutting of the venom-cord’ (i.e. ‘killer of snakes’). However, other kennings of this sort appear in skaldic contexts where there is no hint of Christian allegory: *orms felli* ‘snake’s slayer’ in Árnorr jarlaskáld’s *Porfinnsdrápa* 2; *orms tregi* ‘snake’s grief’ in a verse by Ásgrímur Ketilsson; and the contrasting summer-kenning *dalmiskunn fiska* ‘mercy of valley-fish’ in Egill. *lausavísa* 6 (see Whaley, *The Poetry of Árnorr jarlaskáld* (1998), 222). Dronke also thinks it probable that the entire myth of Þórr’s fishing expedition is an invention influenced by the same Christian allegory, although she accepts the tradition of Loki as the father of the Miðgarðsormr, Fenrir and Hel as genuinely pre-Christian.

It is notoriously difficult to pin down the origins of orally transmitted myths, but it seems to me unlikely either that the myth of Þórr’s fishing expedition is of purely Christian origin (since it was clearly traditional by the time Bragi Bodason and the carver of Ardre stone VIII used it in the ninth century),¹ or that *Hymiskviða* as a whole was designed to be understood as allegory, although the phrases noted above may have suggested momentary comparisons with Christ at particular points. The other characters in the poem—Ægir, Týr, Týr’s mother, Hymir and Egill—have no allegorical equivalents in Dronke’s interpretation, and if the point of the poem were to symbolise Christ’s triumph over the devil, the last part of the poem would become an irrelevant anticlimax. In fact, it seems probable that the poem stitches together three myths that were usually separate, namely those of the quest for the cauldron, the fishing expedition and the laming of Þórr’s goat, and Dronke’s allegory is relevant only to the second of these. However, she also includes a comprehensive anthology of skaldic references to Þórr’s fishing

¹ Þórr’s fishing expedition is also portrayed on the Gosforth fishing stone (Cumbria, tenth century), the Altuna stone (Uppland, Sweden, eleventh century) and the Hørdum stone (N. Jutland, Denmark, undated), and the World Serpent also appears in a Ragnarøk scene at Skipwith (N. Yorkshire) and as the ‘rope that ties all lands’ along both sides of Lowther hogback 4 (Cumbria, tenth century). Of these, only the Gosforth fishing stone includes any comparison of Þórr to Christ.

twelfth century, p. 134) is of composite origin, while the (later?) prose introduction tells a story of rivalry between Óðinn and Frigg of which there is no mention in the verse. Within her edition of the verse she adds a title for each sequence; most of these make obvious sense, e.g. 'Óðinn is tried by fire' (*Grm.* 1–3), 'Óðinn calls the valkyries to bring ale' (*Grm.* 36), 'Earth's origin' (*Grm.* 40–41), 'Óðinn's revenge' (*Grm.* 51–53), but others seem too vague to be useful, e.g. 'Odinic fantasies' (*Grm.* 18–24), 'The state of affairs' (*Grm.* 31–35). Two of them seem to me to impose Dronke's view of the poem on the reader: 'Óðinn reviews the state of his gods and his dead' (*Grm.* 4–16, the list of names of the dwellings of the gods), 'Self-assessment' (*Grm.* 54, the final list of Óðinn's own names).

Dronke's commentary on *Grímnismál* is less a discussion of points of difficulty and interest than a running interpretation of the whole poem along the lines suggested above. Some sections of it are illuminating, as when she outlines the contentment of the gods in their dwellings, which even include those of Skaði (*Grm.* 11) and Njǫrðr (*Grm.* 16) without mentioning the unhappy marriage between them, in which neither could bear to live in the other's home (see *Gylfaginning* ch. 23, ed. Faulkes (1982), 24). The sudden breaking of this soporific mood in stanza 17, in which Víðarr will set out to avenge his father, is effectively described, and there are good insights into the sun's wolves in stanza 39, the 'once upon a time' legends of stanza 43, and the sudden intrusion of two historical people into the list of mythological 'best things' in stanza 44. Elsewhere, however, some problems are glossed over: in the commentary on stanza 42, for example, Ullr is identified as a sun god (which may well be what he anciently was), but no evidence is produced to show that he was perceived as such in the Viking Age or by early Scandinavian Christians. Some mythological names are given debatable translations without further discussion: thus the raven-name *Muninn* in stanza 19 is said to mean 'Heart', although its more obvious meaning might be 'the Memory' (see Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (1977), 395–96); and Þórr's hall *Bilskírnir* in stanza 24 is translated 'Defier of Ruin', which agrees with Finnur Jónsson's interpretation (*Lexicon Poeticum* 47) but not with that of de Vries, who understands it as 'the one shining for a moment (i.e. lightning)' (*AEW* 36–37). These details give the impression of arguments that have been resolved in the mind of the editor but to which the reader is not made privy. Dronke conveys her personal view of the spiritual world of this poem (and others) without spending too much space on the irksome details on the patient resolution of which any overall view of the text must be based. But each reader needs to be able to assess the evidence and resolve the problems for him- or herself.

The volume ends with a brief edition of *Grottasöngur* (pp. 137–52), which is not in the Codex Regius of the *Poetic Edda*, but appears in manuscripts SR and T of *Snorra Edda*, where it is added to the story of why gold is referred to as Fróði's meal (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 43, ed. Faulkes (1998), I 51–57). The text and parallel translation here have much in common with those in Tolley's edition, but are not identical with it; the most striking feature of Dronke's text is that the poem is presented as a play, with speaker labels for Fenja, Menja, the Narrator and Fróði and occasional stage directions. The addition of speaker labels is defensible on

the grounds that some other Eddic poems have sporadic marginal speaker-initials both in the Codex Regius and in AM 748 I 4to (see Terry Gunnell, *The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia* (1995), 206–12) but the stage directions seem less justified. Dronke's commentary on *Grottasöngur* is very brief, but includes interesting material on *gría* (*Grott.* 2,3), *hinnar kvernar* (for *hennar* in both MSS, *Grott.* 10,8), *Beiddum biörnu* (*Grott.* 13,5) and the names *Gotþormr* and *Knúi* in the account of the giant girls' military exploits in Sweden in *Grott.* 14, which Dronke sees as motivated by a moral determination to fight against tyranny. The edition ends with a useful survey of the evidence for knowledge of the same myth outside *Grottasöngur* itself, first in skaldic verses attributed to Eyvindr skáldaspillir (*lausavísa* 8, *Skj.* I B, 64, quoted in *Haralds saga gráfeldar* ch. 1, Íslenzk fornrit XXVI, 200) and Snæbjörn (*lausavísa* 1, *Skj.* I B, 201, quoted in *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 25, ed. Faulkes, I 38), and then in the prose accounts in *Skáldskaparmál*, *Skjöldunga saga* (*Danasaga Arngríms lærða* ch. 3, Íslenzk fornrit XXXV, 5–6 and *Upphaf allra frásagna*, Íslenzk fornrit XXXV, 39–40) and the briefer and slightly different version in the Uppsala MS of *Skáldskaparmál* (ch. 103, ed. Heimir Pálsson, 244–45).

Dronke's parallel translations are scrupulously precise (if occasionally rather idiosyncratic in expression), and generally include an approximation to the alliteration of the originals. The book is handsomely produced, with very few typographic errors (I noticed only a wrong line-spacing in the translation of *Hávamál* 63 (p. 15) and the misspelling 'devine' for 'divine' in the translation of a verse quoted on p. 58). This volume does not cover all the problems that one encounters in reading these poems, and readers should be aware of the need to use other editions alongside it, and to supplement its bibliography; but it does enable us to see these four poems through the eyes of a penetrating and original scholar who will be sadly missed by everyone who studies Eddic poetry.

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SKALDIC POETRY OF THE SCANDINAVIAN MIDDLE AGES. VOLUME I. POETRY FROM THE KINGS' SAGAS 1. FROM MYTHICAL TIMES TO c.1035. 2 volumes. Edited by DIANA WHALEY. *Brepols*. Turnhout, 2013. ccxv + 1206 pp. ISBN 978-2-503-51896-1.

The first two volumes of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* to appear, volumes II and VII, have received a warm welcome from the scholarly community in recent years (reviewed in *Saga-Book* XXXIV (2010), 129–32 and *Saga-Book* XXXV (2011), 75–78). This, the first volume in the series and the third to be published, offers further proof both of the richness of the source texts and of the challenges inherent in so monumental a project. *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1* complements the 2009 volume, *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 2: From c.1035 to c.1300*. Reaching back to the earliest examples of skaldic verse contained within the *konungasögur*, the volume is a testament to the surprising diversity of the early skaldic corpus: genealogies, eulogies and descriptions of battle sit side

by side with insults, requests for money and complaints about the weather or the difficulties of travel. Metres associated with Eddic and skaldic material alike are represented in the verse of some fifty-eight named skalds and a further eighty stanzas whose authors are unknown. The volume includes the work of such notable and much-read poets as Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld Óttarsson and Sigvatr Þórðarson, although the work of these last two is divided somewhat uncomfortably between the two Kings' Sagas volumes. This is, however, due to the laudable editorial decision to arrange the poetry according to its context of preservation rather than the sometimes uncertain attributions given in the sagas and it works, on the whole, very well.

This volume not only introduces the part of the series devoted to poetry from the *konungasögur*, but also contains the introduction to the series as a whole. Readers of *Saga-Book* will be broadly familiar with the aims of the project, which have been discussed in a series of articles published in *skandinavistik* in 2002, in material available on the project website and in numerous conference presentations and round-table discussions. In their general introduction to the series, the editors reiterate the need for a new edition of the skaldic corpus. They then give a useful overview of how and why editorial decisions have been made, both in the scope and organisation of the volumes and in the more detailed processes of emendation, normalisation and the reconstruction of poetic sequences. This introduction begins, rather curiously, with a brief description of Eddic poetry and the Codex Regius. The editors note the difficulties of distinguishing between Eddic and skaldic material while following the well-trodden path of including under the heading of 'skaldic' nearly all poetry that is not associated with the *Poetic Edda*. A good general overview of the skaldic corpus and the history of skaldic editing follows, along with a useful introduction to poetic metre and diction; in particular, there is an extensive discussion of kenning types. The introduction to the present volume, which follows, repeats some of this material, but draws attention also to the importance of verse from the *konungasögur* as a source for the early history of Scandinavia. This section also incorporates a chronological list of rulers and a section on the manuscript context of the verses. This is followed by a series of biographies on the rulers and dignitaries commemorated in the verses. A quibble might be raised over the treatment of Ástríðr Óláfsdóttir: as the only female dedicatee in the volume, and as a notable royal figure in her own right, it is regrettable that she is not herself the subject of a short biography. The reader is instead directed to look for information about her under the heading of her husband, King Óláfr Haraldsson of Norway.

The bulk of the volume is of course devoted to the skaldic corpus itself. Under the direction of the volume editor, Diana Whaley, a further thirteen contributing editors have done excellent work in reappraising the manuscript evidence while offering an engaging and highly informative compendium of verse. Each entry offers a biography of the skald (where known) and an introduction to the stanza or sequence of stanzas in question. As in the previously published volumes, the normalised text is given, along with a prose word order and a translation into English. This is followed by information about the provenance of the verse, variant readings,

references to previous editions, and a brief summary of the prose context(s) in which it appears. Nearly all stanzas are accompanied by extensive notes detailing background information on the historical figures and events mentioned therein, as well as peculiar word choices, metre, syntax and other points of interest. The volume does not offer many radical departures from the established corpus, perhaps because early court poetry has enjoyed relative popularity with editors and scholars when compared with, for example, the later Christian *drápur* (edited in Volume VII, 2007) or runic verse inscriptions (forthcoming in Volume VI). Verse contained within the major *konungasögur* has been edited in the widely available *Íslenzk fornrit* series and other major editions, and these works will no doubt continue to be used alongside *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas*, particularly when the prose context must be considered in a more detailed light than that given here. Nevertheless, the volume draws together a considerable wealth of information about early court poetry; the level of scholarship is both edifying and impressive.

The one exception to the readability of the volume lies in the explication of kennings in the English translations. As the editors note, kennings are complex structures and difficult to understand in Old Norse; they are even more difficult to translate into English. In the case of relatively simple kennings the system of parentheses and capitalisation adopted by the editors works well. When Einarr skálaglamm Helgason refers in *Vellekla* to Jarl Hákon as *hugstórr vörðr foldar*, the English translation explains this as ‘the high-minded guardian of the land [RULER = Hákon jarl]’ (stanza 1, p. 283). However, the translation of more extended periphrastic language is difficult to render fully in a readable and textually appealing manner. For example, stanza 26 of the same poem reads (p. 315):

Ok við frost at freista	þás valserkjar virki
fémíldr konungr vildi	veðrhirði bað stírðan
myrk- Hlóðynjar -markar	fyr hlym-Njörðum hurða
morðalfs, þess's kom norðan,	Hagbarða gramr varða.

This is translated:

And the generous king of the Hlóðyn = Jörð (*jörð* ‘earth’) of the dark forest <= Myrkviðr> [JUTLAND > DANISH KING = Haraldr blátǫnn] wanted at the time of the frost to test the battle-elf [WARRIOR = Hákon jarl] who came from the north, as the ruler bade the unbending keeper of the weather of the shirt of the slain [(*lit.* ‘weather-keeper of the slain-shirt’) MAIL-SHIRT > BATTLE > WARRIOR = Hákon jarl] to defend the rampart against the Nirðir <gods> of the din of the doors of Hagbarði <legendary hero> [(*lit.* ‘din-Nirðir of the doors of Hagbarði’) SHIELDS > BATTLE > WARRIORS].

It is a complicated verse, and the English translation makes a noble attempt to explain the periphrastic language within it. There is no doubt, however, that the editors have privileged a comprehensive unpacking of the many layers of meaning at the expense of clarity of expression. An objection might also be raised that such explanations appear to set in stone the interpretation of multi-referent kennings, despite their complexity and potential to accommodate multiple interpretations.

Indeed, one is reminded of Finnur Jónsson's comments in his own edition of the verses: 'det smukke i kenningerne og hele det dertil svarende ordvalg kunde alligevel umulig gengives nøjagtig' [the beauty of the kennings and of all of the corresponding word-choices would nevertheless be impossible to reproduce faithfully] (*Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, A I viii). Such cases reveal the inevitable compromises that must be made in any critical edition and translation.

The Skaldic Project website (<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/skaldic/>) has been used to facilitate the sharing of source material and work in progress throughout the editing process. It now offers a full electronic version of this volume which can be even more useful than the print edition. The ability to search the corpus by poet, poem, text, manuscript and lemma is a true innovation in the field of skaldic studies. The website offers an opportunity for the further exploration and cross-referencing of variant readings, uncertain kennings and obscure metaphorical language. As has long been noted, electronic editing has the potential to offer a safe path around the looming figure of *Monsieur Procruste, philologue*. For a style of poetry which so privileges the riddling, the complex and the mysteriously allusive, advances in this area are greatly to be welcomed.

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HÁKONAR SAGA HÁKONARSONAR. BÖGLUNGA SAGA. MAGNÚSS SAGA LAGABÆTIS. Edited by SVERRIR JAKOBSSON, ÞORLEIFUR HAUSSON and TOR ULSET. *Íslenzk fornrit XXXI–XXXII. Hið íslenska fornritafélag*. Reykjavík, 2013. lxvii + 333, xcix + 341 pp. 14 maps, 24 colour plates. ISBN 978-9979-893-98-1.

With this new publication, following on from the recent publications of *Sverris saga* (2007) and *Morkinskinna* (2011), the full sequence of *konungasögur* is now available in the *Íslenzk fornrit* series. In addition to *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, Sturla Þórðarson's extensive biography of the thirteenth-century king, this edition also contains *Böglunga saga* and the fragmentary *Magnúss saga lagabætis*.

The edition is the work of three scholars. Þorleifur Hauksson wrote the introduction to *Böglunga saga* and those sections of the introduction to *Hákonar saga* that relate specifically to the text, in addition to normalising the texts and compiling variants. Sverrir Jakobsson is responsible for those sections of the introduction to *Hákonar saga* that relate to its historical context and for the greater part of the introduction to *Magnúss saga*. Tor Ulset receives credit for providing access to his own forthcoming critical edition of *Hákonar saga*, which this edition uses as its base text.

The edition is divided into two volumes, seemingly because of the length of *Hákonar saga*. This works well with regard to the documentary sources included in the edition, with those dated prior to 1217 appearing in the first volume, after *Böglunga saga*, and those dated after 1217 in the second volume, after *Hákonar saga*. However, the splitting of the text of *Hákonar saga* between the two volumes

at the point of Knútr Hákonarson's submission to Hákon Hákonarson in 1227 may appear to assign rather more significance to this event than it merits. The division of the introduction to *Hákonar saga*, meanwhile, makes sense only in terms of pagination. The index and maps are located in the second volume. Since *Boglunga saga* is largely made up of detailed descriptions of military campaigns and the earliest portions of *Hákonar saga* feature an immense but obscure cast, this requires the reader to flip regularly between volumes. It would be preferable if the editors had instead provided an index to each volume and distributed maps throughout the edition as a whole, as was the practice in the *Íslenzk fornrit* edition of *Heimskringla*. The bibliography shows no obvious omissions, but an extensive and outward-looking bibliography such as that to the edition of *Morkinskinna* is not found here. A sizeable proportion of the works cited emanates from Iceland and the only significant detours from Scandinavian scholarship are some citations of works dealing with thirteenth-century Scotland and Norwegian involvement there.

Boglunga saga is a continuation of *Sverris saga* which is preserved in two separate redactions. These share a common core of material covering the period between 1202 and 1208, particularly from 1204 onwards, but whereas the shorter version (S) comes to an end after the peace of Kvitsøy in 1208, the longer version (L) provides a continuous if rather thin narrative until the death of Ingi Bárðarson in 1217. Though the two redactions tell broadly the same narrative, each includes material absent from the other. Material present in S but not L generally concerns the Baglar (the faction of Sverrir's opponents, from whom *Boglunga saga* takes its modern name) whereas the additional material in L either involves events amongst the Birkibeinar (the faction of Sverrir's heirs and supporters) or presents discreditable information about the Baglar and particularly their leader, Erlingr steinveggr.

Study of the text has generally focused upon the relationship between the two versions, and this edition is no exception. The issue is complicated by the poor preservation of L, which survives only in three short fragments and a translation into Danish from the late sixteenth century. The most recent editor of the text nevertheless argued (contrary to the consensus of previous scholarship) that L was the more faithful representative of the original text of the saga and that S was an abridged version altered to serve the political ends of the Baglar (*Soga om Birkebeinar og Baglar, "Boglunga sǫgur"*, ed. Hallvard Magerøy (Oslo, 1988)). This conclusion relied upon a belief that the original composer of *Boglunga saga* saw himself as an historian, and an accompanying assumption that the version of the text that was more historically 'accurate' was closer to the original.

Porleifur Hauksson rejects Magerøy's conclusions, although without subjecting his methodology to the comprehensive dissection it deserves. He points out that if S had had access to a detailed source like L, it would hardly have said so little about Hákon Sverrisson's reign. Instead he views S as a near-contemporaneous witness, probably finished shortly after its narrative concludes in 1208. He dates L to shortly after 1220, since it views Skúli Bárðarson rather than Hákon Hákonarson as Ingi Bárðarson's legitimate successor and its presentation of Erlingr steinveggr as an impostor fits well with Birkibeinar propaganda against his son Sigurðr ribbungr, who was acclaimed king in opposition to the Birkibeinar in 1219–20. Porleifur's

conclusions about the dating of the texts are credible and convincing. Nevertheless, it is disappointing that the discussion continues to focus on the question of whether S or L has precedence, without pausing to consider how notable it is that we have two separate contemporary or near-contemporary narratives of early thirteenth-century Norway representing opposing political perspectives. The case for a New Philological approach to *Boglunga saga* remains as strong as ever.

The text of S is printed after Skálholtsbók yngsta, except at the end where this is defective and is replaced by Eirspennill. Alternative readings from Eirspennill and a fourteenth-century fragment are given in footnotes throughout. L follows immediately afterwards in the volume, with the Danish translation given at the top of the page and Sveinbjörn Egilsson's 1835 translation of this into Icelandic at the bottom. Finally, all remaining fragments of both versions are printed, along with two papal letters and Hákon Sverrisson's letter to Archbishop Eiríkr of Nidaros.

There are eight manuscripts of *Hákonar saga* with independent textual value, but only two preserve a complete text and most show signs of having been abridged. The choice of a *codex optimus* is therefore of critical importance. The present editors express a preference for Flateyjarbók and Skálholtsbók yngsta, believing that despite their younger age they are closer to the original than older, more heavily abridged manuscripts. Stokkholmsbók becomes the main text at the end of the saga, where Flateyjarbók is abridged and Skálholtsbók yngsta has come to an end, and throughout use is made of other manuscripts for certain readings. These editorial decisions may very well be reasonable, but it is difficult for the reader to judge this since a full justification of the choice of texts is reserved until the publication of Ulset's forthcoming Riksarkivet edition.

The introduction is divided into sections on Hákon Hákonarson himself; the political context in which he grew up; his relationship with Icelanders; his foreign policy; the question whether *Hákonar saga* portrays him as a *rex iustus*; Sturla Þórðarson; a comparison of the saga with other contemporary sources; the saga's ideology; its literary style; its manuscripts; previous editions and the methodology of the present edition. Each of these sections provides a good grounding in the basic issues raised by the saga, but they tend to recapitulate and synthesise previous scholarship rather than building upon it significantly.

An exception can be made for the section on Hákon's relationship with Icelanders, which is also the largest section by some distance. This wide-ranging chapter considers both modern and contemporary perspectives on Hákon and argues cogently that his Icelandic ambitions did not crystallise until 1247. It is only a pity that the enthusiasm and forensic dissection of the sources seen here does not manifest itself more in other sections of the introduction.

Finally, we come to *Magnúss saga lagabætis*. This text is often overlooked but here receives an introduction more or less as extensive as the fragmentary preservation of the text allows. The original length of the saga and its date of composition are comprehensively discussed, though the conclusions necessarily remain tentative. My only complaint would be that the argument that it should be seen as a deliberate continuation of *Hákonar saga* is not fully developed, which is a pity as it would allow interesting parallels to be drawn between it and *Boglunga saga*.

This is a fine edition, which will be of use to those requiring a good critical edition of *Hákonar saga* and which will hopefully raise the profiles of both *Böglunga saga* and *Magnúss saga*. The arguments made in the introductions could have been expounded in more detail and the lack of a proper justification of the choice of texts for *Hákonar saga* is particularly vexing. Nevertheless, these flaws should not overshadow the importance of this edition for anybody with an interest in contemporary *konungasögur*.

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MEDIEVAL TRANSLATIONS AND CULTURAL DISCOURSE. THE MOVEMENT OF TEXTS IN ENGLAND, FRANCE AND SCANDINAVIA. By SIF RÍKHARÐSDÓTTIR. *D. S. Brewer*. Cambridge, 2012. 212 pp. ISBN: 978-1-84384-289-7.

With this book Sif Ríkharðsdóttir makes a timely and thought-provoking contribution to the increasingly popular subject of European romance texts and their translation into Old Norse and other vernacular languages. Building on the work of such scholars as Marianne Kalinke and Rita Copeland, Sif notes the importance of translation and intertextuality in the history of European literature, arguing that translation offers a key site of cultural interaction and, indeed, transformation. Sif's work rejects the assumption that a translated text must be ancillary or subordinate to its source and demonstrates how translation studies can move beyond the point-by-point comparison of such texts, an approach so common in earlier scholarship. She seeks rather to analyse the relationship between imported and native traditions and to uncover the literary, social and ideological forces at play in the movement of texts between different reading communities.

The book draws mainly on Francophone texts composed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, along with their translation into Old Norse and Middle English during the three centuries that followed. Considering the breadth of this geographical expanse and the eventful character of the period in question, it is perhaps no surprise that the unequal power dynamic between political states emerges at the forefront of the work. The book begins with a persuasive argument for the use of modern post-colonial theories in the analysis of pre-modern 'cultural imperialism': the unequal relationship between a culturally dominant state and one perceived as marginal or inferior can, it is argued, replicate the dynamics of empire to a striking degree. The first chapter demonstrates how the translation of texts through different languages and literary traditions has the potential to re-enact this unequal power relationship while simultaneously offering a means of resistance to it. The chapter examines the Old Norse *Strengleikar*, the collection of translated *lais* based on the work of Marie de France and related texts. It notes the important role played by King Hákon Hákonarson of Norway in the promotion of translated romance during the thirteenth century, and the use of such texts in the introduction and establishment of courtly traditions in the north. This section discusses the ways in

which the source text is integrated into existing Norse literary traditions through an examination of narrative voice, gender and the shift from poetry into prose. This is then contrasted to the translation of Marie's *lais* of *Lanval* and *Le Fresne* into Middle English. Unlike the Norse translation, the Middle English *Sir Launfal* emerges as a commentary on contemporary culture, the courtly values so important to the court of King Hákon having little relevance in the fourteenth century for an aspiring English middle class. The Middle English *Lay le Freine*, although closer to Marie's original text, similarly calls attention to the gaps between French and English; it offers a mode of resistance to French language and culture by replacing it with an English alternative.

The second chapter examines *Rúnzivals þátr*, an Old Norse translation of the *Chanson de Roland*. Probably composed at the court of King Hákon as part of the longer *Karlamagnús saga*, the *þátr* is here used to demonstrate how descriptions of behavioural patterns may be translated for a new audience. Noting the centrality of the *chanson de geste* in the construction of medieval French identity and history, the chapter seeks to determine how its translation in Scandinavia affects such culturally determined factors as emotion and social values. The chapter explores the ways in which the poetic text is reworked in a prose style more in keeping with Norse literary traditions; it is further argued that this translation seems to reveal a process of deliberate modification in the representation of emotion and interiority. The *chanson de geste* appears to have been more adaptable than the *lai* to the literary and cultural traditions of Scandinavia, and it is concluded that *Rúnzivals þátr* represents a successful merging of the two traditions.

The third chapter examines the Norse and English translations of Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain, Le Chevalier au Lion*. Turning from changes in behaviour to changes in narrative, this section asks how the conceptual framework of the translators impacts on their reworking of plot, description and narratorial intervention. The Old Norse translation of Chrétien's work, *Ívens saga*, is significantly abridged, a move which focuses the narrative on the adventures of its knightly protagonist and reduces the French emphasis on love and courtesy. The Middle English *Ywain and Gawain* similarly emphasises action, with a focus not on the individuality of characters but on their function within the overall narrative. In both cases, it is argued, the translations reveal a shift in narrative focus away from the psychological and philosophical development of the ideal knight in favour of a more socially-oriented approach. The Norse and English translations show less interest in the courtly ideology of the source text, using the act of translation to explore their own cultural concerns.

The fourth and final chapter introduces the French romance *Partonopeu de Blois* and its Norse and English translations. Noting the relative neglect of *Partalopa saga* in modern scholarship, the chapter gives a thorough description of the complex manuscript history of the different versions; a useful summary of the main redactions is also appended to the chapter. *Partalopa saga* is notable in this book as the only Norse text that does not seem to be linked to the court of King Hákon in Norway, but is more directly related to Icelandic literature and folklore. Varying representations of gender form the core of this chapter, and the centrality

of gender codes and constructions in the wider romance corpus is an important background to the discussion. *Partalopa saga* is unusual in that it makes explicit reference to the Icelandic tradition of the maiden-king, with the portrayal of a politically and sexually powerful woman signalling the integration of the French story into existing Icelandic cultural and literary traditions. The Middle English texts, on the other hand, explore the role of the public and private spheres in the construction of gender and societal codes of conduct, speaking to contemporary social anxieties about female power and consent. It is concluded that the English and French texts trace a process of female subjugation to male authority while the Norse version appears to promote a greater degree of equality between the male and female protagonists.

The conclusion reiterates the argument that underlies all these chapters: the translated texts are often neglected or considered inferior to their sources, and yet the analysis of such translations has much to say about medieval reading and writing communities. The usefulness of post-colonial, narratological and gender theories is emphasised in the examination of cultural identity and interaction during the medieval period. Overall, the work illustrates in an elegant and persuasive manner the centrality of translation to medieval reading and writing processes. It is at all times meticulously researched, with the often complicated manuscript provenance of each text helpfully explained. A timeline and the appended summary of *Partalopa saga*, noted above, are also useful. The book balances a series of close, detailed readings with the nuanced use of modern theoretical approaches in a highly engaging manner. Demonstrating the fundamentally translational nature of medieval literature, Sif's work offers a stimulating reminder of the complexity and richness of vernacular translation.

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FRANCIA ET GERMANIA. STUDIES IN STRENGLEIKAR AND DIDREKS SAGA AF BERN. Edited by KARL G. JOHANSSON and RUNE FLATEN. *Bibliotheca nordica 5. Novus*. Oslo, 2012. 390 pp. ISBN 978-82-7099-714-5.

Johansson and Flaten's edited collection is a multilingual work that represents some of the major linguistic communities engaged in Nordic studies. The essays are written in English, German, Norwegian and Swedish, and the linguistic diversity in a sense reflects the theme of the volume, which focuses on the transmission and reception of two separate narrative strains in Old Norse: the French *lais* and the Germanic heroic epic material of *Piðrekr* (Dietrich/Theoderic the Great).

The starting point of the collection is to be found in two conferences held in Oslo, one on *Strengleikar* in 2006 and the other on *Piðreks saga af Bern* in 2007. The main point in bringing the two topics together is, according to the editors, to foreground the role played by translations in the development of a vernacular literary culture in Norway (and by extension in Iceland and Sweden). The aim of

the volume and the cultural context of the two textual traditions are introduced in the first chapter written by Karl G. Johansson and Stefka Georgieva Eriksen. The chapter proposes what may be considered to be the manifesto of the book: that translations were essential for the development of a vernacular literature in Norway. The authors draw on Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory to elaborate on how the Old Norse 'literary system' may be understood as part of a 'pan-European literary polysystem' (p. 15).

The remaining chapters alternate between the two main topics of the book. Robert Cook's essay examines the concept of love in the French originals of the *Strengleikar* and how they are reproduced in the Old Norse translations, coming to the conclusion that the translator clearly understood his original, but changed it deliberately to reflect his own view of the story. Hélène Tetrel's excellent essay on the Norse translators' conception of the *lais*' generic affiliation or classification raises intriguing questions regarding genre and genre distinction in the transmission process, not least considering the apparent tendency of the Norse translators to recast diverse generic sources (*romanz*, *chansons de geste*, *lais*) in a similar prose format in Old Norse.

Robert Nedoma's essay (written in German) on the Hildebrand episode in *Piðreks saga af Bern* shifts the orientation toward Germanic heroic heritage. Nedoma's essay is a detailed comparison of the representation of the battle between Hildebrand and his son Alebrant in the various extant sources, from the *Jüngeres Hildebrandslied* (The Younger Lay of Hildebrand) to the Middle High German Dietrich epic. His analysis extends back to the presumed ninth-century Old Irish *Aided óenfir Aife* (The Violent Death of Aife's Only Son) and the later Faroese dance-ballad *Sniolv's kvæði* (The Poem of Sniolv), which has manuscript witnesses extending into the eighteenth century. Nedoma comes to the conclusion that the Hildebrand–Alibrand episode in *Piðreks saga* has close parallels to the *Jüngeres Hildebrandslied* and that the close verbal correlations indicate that it must stem from a common branch of the transmission of the epic material. Moreover, Nedoma considers it unlikely that the two versions of the story developed from the Old High German/Old Saxon (Älteres) *Hildebrandslied* (The Older Lay of Hildebrand), and so he assumes they must derive from a different branch.

The two following chapters both focus on *Piðreks saga* and the visual representation of the narrative heritage depicted in the saga. Karoline Kjesrud's essay (written in Norwegian) examines the various visual representations of the Piðrekr/Dietrich material as evidence of the function it may have had within its cultural context, while Pia Bengtssen Melin's essay (written in Swedish) examines the visual representation of the historical figure of Theoderic the Great in relation to images of the epic hero Piðrek of Bern. The chapters are accompanied by beautifully represented colour images depicting the scenes and the artwork discussed.

Kjesrud's and Melin's essays are followed by three chapters on *Strengleikar*. Stefka Georgieva Eriksen focuses on the material context of *Strengleikar* by analysing the sole extant manuscript of the text, the Uppsala University Library MS De la Gardie 4-7 fol., and comparing it to the British Library MS Harley 978

of the *lais*, pointing out similarities in the layout of the two manuscripts. Ingvil Brügger Budal's essay (written in Norwegian) focuses instead on a single scene in the Norse translation of *Bisclavret* and considers the implication of the changes in the werewolf's punishment of his wife. Budal examines the legal and textual history of losing a nose as punishment and argues that the translation shows that the translator did not have insight into contemporary European law, but rather adjusted the punishment code to reflect his own socio-political context. Daniel Sävborg's essay (written in Swedish) finally examines *Strengleikar* in the context of indigenous saga material, particularly the varying textual and narrative modes of representing *kärlek* 'love'. Sävborg suggests that generic differences determine the coding for the representation of emotional or erotic attraction, and that audiences would have been familiar and comfortable with both.

The final three chapters alternate between the two subject matters. Susanne Kramarz-Bein's outstanding essay addresses the ongoing scholarly dispute over the conception of *Piðreks saga*, providing an explication of the 'translation hypothesis' versus the 'compilation hypothesis'. Kramarz-Bein provides solid reasoning in support of what she terms 'milieu theory' or 'composition hypothesis', a modified or elaborated compilation theory (p. 255). She rightly points out certain structural affiliations with another large compilation from the same period and cultural context, the *Karlamagnús saga*, which reveals similar evidence of narrative sequences and *entrelacement* technique. Moreover, she notes that there are no such large compilations known in Middle Low German, while many examples exist in Old Norse literature, supporting the argument that the saga was compiled (or composed, as Kramarz-Bein would argue) in Norway from miscellaneous (mostly Middle Low German) sources.

Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir's essay shifts the focus from sources to the reception and influences of the *Strengleikar* material in Iceland. Aðalheiður argues that *Strengleikar* is likely to have been known in Iceland and to have influenced native writing by drawing on various examples from the *sagnakvæði* 'narrative poems'. The final chapter, written by Jon Gunnar Jørgensen (in Norwegian), follows in the vein of Aðalheiður's essay and queries the post-medieval transmission pattern of *Piðreks saga* in Norway and Sweden. Putting the textual production and translation activity in a historical context of royal translocations, shifting allegiances and the foundation of the Bridgettine order, Jørgensen traces the transmission of the material across Norway and Sweden.

The collection concludes with a list of illustrations, a bibliography, short authorial profiles and indices of names, works and manuscripts. It addresses a previously neglected field of research from various different viewpoints, investigating the impact, function and context of the transmission of the French *lais* and the Germanic epic material. The volume is a most welcome addition to the field and reveals the currently increasing interest in and recognition of a vibrant translative community in the medieval North.

SETTLEMENT AND LORDSHIP IN VIKING AND EARLY MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA. Edited by BJØRN POULSEN and SØREN SINDBÆK. *The Medieval Countryside 9. Brepols*. Turnhout, 2011. xvii + 337 pp. ISBN 978-2-503-53131-1.

This edited collection of papers, all in English, provides a valuable route into the state of current knowledge and thinking on a variety of issues which, broadly speaking, cover the social history of Scandinavia from c.800 to c.1400 AD. Geographically it is mostly restricted to Denmark, but the material covered includes everything from runic inscriptions to settlement archaeology, burial archaeology and the conventional documentary used by historians looking at the later Middle Ages. The book has a substantial, very useful introduction, co-written by the editors, and is then divided into four parts: 'Changing Aristocracies' (four papers), 'Settlement and Social Differentiation' (five), 'Magnates and Manors' (four) and 'Lords, Slaves, and Tenants' (three). The papers range from the presentation of new case studies of particular archaeological phenomena to broader surveys. There is a helpful consolidated bibliography of twenty-eight pages, but no index.

The views of this reviewer are in full or partial agreement with those already expressed by other reviewers, most significantly with regard to the nature of our understanding of societal changes in Scandinavia in relation to western Europe.² While these papers collectively show careful attention to the data they are dealing with, and with their own research questions, they also demonstrate the need for critical engagement with scholarship on other regions. Most crucial is the way the word 'feudal' is used in the volume. Sindbæk is a notable exception in referring to 'feudal modes of landownership' (p. 97), but elsewhere 'feudal' seems to be applied uncritically to describe Scandinavian society after the Viking Age, in a way which I would have thought most historians would not have done since the publication of Susan Reynolds's *Fiefs and Vassals* (1994), which is in the volume's bibliography. This practice may in part actually reflect deference towards scholarship on western Europe, and a willingness to see Scandinavian society as fitting various western European moulds. Poulsen and Sindbæk consider it useful, for example, to draw on the notion of 'tributary' social relations between lords and peasants, which Chris Wickham posits for eighth-century Denmark (pp. 14, 291). Wickham may well be correct in what he says about the weakness of lordship for Denmark in this period, but his views invite further criticism, especially as he did not consider Scandinavia much beyond Denmark, nor anywhere beyond 800. His conclusions on Denmark have otherwise not gone unchallenged even if many would agree with him. The potentially distinctive effects on medieval Scandinavian society of Viking activity might also warrant more discussion than they get here (see Hines 2013, 667), as would demography, which has been a key issue for scholars of the later Middle Ages in Scandinavia and is only touched on

² Orri Vésteinsson 2012. *The Medieval Review*, <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/14716/12.10.10.html?sequence=1>; John Hines. 2013. *Economic History Review* 66, 667–68.

here in relation to slave manumission (Tore Iversen, 'Thralls' manumission, land clearing, and state building in medieval Norway', pp. 263–76).

The editors' introductory essay neatly summarises the diversity of opinion among Scandinavian scholars on the nature of landownership and lordly domination in the Middle Ages which shows up in the rest of the volume. Those that see an abrupt change in the eleventh century, with the sudden arrival of large-scale tenanted estates, are identified here as 'modernists'; those that see greater continuity over time of a pattern where access to land was very unequal are labelled 'primordialists'. There is a rough parallelism here with the debates over the Feudal Revolution for western Europe. In this volume it seems particularly striking that in Part III an archaeologist argues for continuity (Dagfinn Skre, 'Centrality, Landholding, and Trade in Scandinavia c.AD 700–900' (pp. 197–212) while a historian—in the minority in this view—argues for abrupt change introduced by the Church (Nils Hybel, 'The Roman Catholic Institutions and the Creation of Large Landed Estates in Denmark', pp. 223–38).

The subdivisions of the volume are perhaps a bit artificial given the many connections between papers. Part I's notable papers include Judith Jesch's judicious overview of what runic inscriptions can tell us about lordship, which calls for more nuanced and rounded analysis of instances where the terms *drengr* and *þegn* are used. Anne Pedersen provides a survey of Viking-Age weapon burials, flagging up the concentration of tenth-century 'equestrian' burials—albeit few in total—around the Skagerrak and Kattegat which suggests 'the outer limits of a sphere of interest around the Skagerrak and Kattegat, with the funerals demonstrating the position of the families, as well as symbolizing and maintaining their authority' (p. 61). More room might have been given to discussion or justification of this interesting conclusion given the extensive consideration of furnished burial practices for, say, the fifth to seventh centuries in western Europe. In Part II Sindbæk convincingly puts the case for increasing lordly power in Viking-Age Denmark by means of lords' manipulation of infield/outfield grazing systems. Clas Tollin provides a lengthy and dense discussion of a collaborative project on the settlement history of the properties of the Cistercian monastery at Alvastra in Östergötland. Its detailed findings defy easy summary but do demonstrate the value of careful consideration of the full range of evidence for a medieval estate's tenurial history. One key conclusion, though, is that the monastery's estate of the twelfth century was broken up into private properties by the mid-fifteenth century. Skre's essay, mentioned above, is probably the most significant in the latter half of the volume as it offers a thought-provoking typology for Scandinavian central places which might be applicable to other contemporary regions. Many other papers not mentioned here provide a wealth of data and more specific conclusions which will be of interest to students of later medieval socio-economic history. Overall this is a useful volume, but its contents also suggest that there is still a greater need for international dialogue among scholars, especially historians.

THE VIKING AGE: IRELAND AND THE WEST. PAPERS FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIFTEENTH VIKING CONGRESS, CORK, 18–27 AUGUST 2005. Edited by JOHN SHEEHAN and DONNCHADH Ó CORRÁIN. *Four Courts Press*. Dublin, 2010. xxviii + 569 pp. ISBN 978-1-84682-101-1.

For those interested in Scandinavian studies the publication of the proceedings of the Viking Congress is an important event. The fourteen previous published proceedings, dating back to the 1950s, have been the medium through which some of the greatest scholars in their fields have disseminated their research. The editors of the handsomely produced proceedings of the fifteenth Congress have maintained the (now seemingly standard) Viking Congress editorial approach of including a large selection of papers (fifty in this case), which average approximately 11–12 pages in length. Undoubtedly the chief advantages of this approach lie in its inclusivity and enforced authorial concision. An admirably broad spectrum of enquiry is given space, which imbues this volume with a truly interdisciplinary character, while simultaneously requiring the contributors to present their research in readily digestible portions. Unfortunately, the desire to include so many entries may have resulted in the elephantine gestation period of these proceedings. Research has not stood still in the five years between the fifteenth Congress and the date of publication, and many prolific contributors have gone on to publish substantially more. While it is not possible in this short review to offer a critique of each contribution, comments on a handful of essays may prove useful for illustrating the general quality and broad interests on offer in this volume.

There are a few high-quality essays that should certainly not be passed over without mention. The opening essay, ‘Conversion and the Church in Viking-Age Ireland’ by Lesley Abrams (pp. 1–10), is a brief, thoughtful exploration of the shadowy processes of conversion to Christianity, which seeks to anchor Conversion in the context of how Hiberno-Scandinavian society worked, particularly in the case of tenth-century Dublin. Kristin Bornholdt Collins’s discussion of the second Dunmore cave hoard and its place in tenth-century Hiberno-Scandinavian economy (pp. 19–46) is a similarly excellent piece. For those of us who occasionally teach Viking-Age Irish economic history, it will prove a welcome addition to undergraduate reading lists. John Sheehan’s reprovencancing of the Kilkenny West hoard (from western Co. Kilkenny to the barony of Kilkenny West in Co. Westmeath) is the type of historical detective work that you cannot help but delight in reading, and significantly alters our view of the distribution of the limited number of Viking-Age hoards in Ireland (pp. 380–89). Many other articles of note may also be found in this volume, such as Søren Sindbæk’s interesting analysis of long-distance trade as an integral aspect of Viking culture, rather than simply a facet of economic life (pp. 430–40).

Other essays, however, must be treated with caution, such as Emer Purcell’s ‘Ninth-century Viking entries in the Irish annals: “no ‘forty years’ rest”’ (pp. 322–37). The ‘forty years’ rest’ of her title is derived from the eleventh/twelfth-

century encomiastic biography of Brian Bóroma (d. 1014), *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh* (Todd, ed., *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh* (1867), 26–29), which claims that the men of Ireland experienced a period of forty years' respite from Viking attacks, terminating in 915 AD. *Cogadh*'s concept (though not necessarily its dating) has influenced many scholars who have located this forty-year period sometime in the mid-/late-ninth century. Purcell offers a quantitative analysis of annalistic entries relating to the fifty-year period between 825 and 875, concluding that the most significant decline in Viking-related entries occurs in the late 850s (pp. 322–23).

Purcell's methodology is unsatisfactory and consequently question marks must hang over her conclusions. While Purcell is quite right to point out the flaws inherent in relying solely upon the numbers of annalistic entries recorded per year as a means of gauging Viking activity (pp. 323–24), her choice of adopting a quantitative analysis based on word-counts is, if anything, even more flawed. Purcell's quantitative analysis is drawn from only four sets of Irish annals: the *Annals of Ulster*, *Chronicon Scotorum*, *Annals of Inisfallen* and *Annals of the Four Masters*. No explanation is offered for the favouring of these four sources, nor why others like the *Annals of Ros Cré* or *Annals of Boyle* were excluded. Furthermore, does the exclusion of *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh* (qualified as 'saga literature') and the *Fragmentary Annals* (qualified as 'heavily interpolated annals'), which Purcell acknowledges to contain unique information, simply serve to highlight the flaws in trying to pursue this quantitative approach? At what point, in a quantitative analysis based on word counts, may sources be judged too verbose for inclusion, if ever? Even if such criteria could be established, they could not be used to justify the omission from consideration of the succinct *Annals of Ros Cré* or *Annals of Boyle*.

In considering the production and arrangement of this volume, it seems odd that the essays were arranged alphabetically by speakers' names when the Congress sessions were arranged thematically (Congress Diary, pp. xxv–xxviii). Non-attendees and future scholars wishing to know where the speakers and organisers thought this research was located within current scholarly debates may prefer a more thematic presentation. The decision to include a five-page index (pp. 565–69), which must naturally be of limited use for such a large volume, is also somewhat puzzling. The volume is illustrated in considerable detail (147 illustrations and 22 colour plates) and a number of the articles are accompanied by useful appendices (such as archaeological find check-lists and other compilatory material); fortunately each article possesses its own bibliography. Warts and all, the editors have produced an admirable volume that may stand proudly alongside its forbears in the Viking Congress series.

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FAMILIA AND HOUSEHOLD IN THE MEDIEVAL ATLANTIC PROVINCE. Edited by BENJAMIN T. HUDSON. *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* 392; *Penn State Medieval Studies* 3. Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Tempe, 2011. xviii + 214 pp. ISBN 978-0-86698-440-9.

Familia and Household in the Medieval Atlantic Province brings together contributions on the topic of family and household from a variety of different sources, and literary and historical disciplines. As stated in the introduction, the book evolved from a 2005 conference on 'The Medieval Household' held at Pennsylvania State University. The term 'Atlantic province' is, unfortunately, not defined more closely, but the contributions concern medieval Scandinavia, France, Ireland and Scotland, as well as Anglo-Saxon England and the Kingdom of Man and the Isles.

The topics and fields covered in this volume are varied and have the potential to complement each other well (for example, the articles by MacDonald and Hall). It could be argued that other topics that touch on questions regarding *familia* and household, for example foster-kinship or the relevance of the kin-group in a legal context, might also have been mentioned; however, as a volume based on a conference, *Familia and Household* should not necessarily be expected to provide an entirely comprehensive discussion of the overall theme in question. Instead, a number of the articles take on the character of case studies, and, in theory, these can be used either by specialists in that particular subject or as comparative material by scholars working in different areas. One minor criticism is that, although the title refers to the 'medieval Atlantic province', the contributions by Fouracre and Kelly in particular appear to reflect the title of the original conference, which made no reference to the Atlantic, more than that of the book.

Those articles that most clearly relate to the thematic focus of the title are also those that are the clearest and possibly the most useful to scholars outside the fields in question. These are primarily the contributions by Foot, Jaski, Fouracre, Kelly and, to some extent, Valante. Foot's contribution compares both elements of the title of the book, (ecclesiastical) *familia* and (secular) household, and Jaski's article, focusing mainly on Ireland and to some extent Wales, presents a well thought-out discussion which examines what the surviving sources can tell us about the structure of an Irish royal household, but references are also given to non-Irish sources and discussions (e.g. p. 121, n. 146). Fouracre's focus is also clearly on the theme of the book as he considers conflicts between the interests of a particular monastic *familia* and secular families subject to it. The discussion is thus concerned with issues that relate to status and rights and that can apply more generally and may be of interest to scholars working on similar relations in other countries. Kelly's contribution focuses clearly on household-related themes in French texts and he considers how the treatment of such themes may have related to the medieval audiences' historical situations. Finally, Valante also attempts to highlight the more general significance of the particular case she discusses by stating that it 'serves as a reminder of how slowly western European society moved from the cognatic inheritance of late antiquity to the agnatic lineage common in the High Middle Ages' (p. 74).

The remaining contributions, however, do not always relate to the main theme as well as they might. To give an example: Hall's article provides a narrative of the actions of particular individuals within the early Stewart family and the article is about "family", of course, in so far as the individuals discussed are related. But the discussion could have been placed in the more general context of problems associated with having a ruling *family*. For example, Hall implies that adherence to a system of primogeniture contributed to the problems experienced during the time period discussed, stating that 'the Duke of Albany was considered, then and now, a far abler man, perhaps the one who should have become king had issues other than primogeniture been considered' (p. 178), but does not treat the matter further (this is a point which could have complemented Valante's comment, cited above). It should be stressed that my criticism in this regard does not apply only to Hall's contribution; more efforts to highlight the particular aspect of family and/or household considered could, in my opinion, also have been made in the contributions by McTurk (on the possible origins of Ragnarr loðbrók), Calise (on sources concerning Cenél nGabráin, one of the medieval Irish families said to have settled in western Scotland in the early medieval period) and McDonald (on the significance and damaging political effects of kinstrife within the Manx Crovan dynasty). All articles do, of course, address aspects relating to the overall theme, but the relevance of the various discussions appears at times to be implicitly assumed, rather than explicitly addressed or contextualised.

The introduction goes some way towards addressing these criticisms by explaining, in a summary of each chapter, how the individual contributions relate to the overall topic and how the contributions on Marmoutier and on French literature merit inclusion in a book on the 'Atlantic province'. Unfortunately, the explanations are not always entirely satisfying. For example, with regard to Calise's article, the introduction states that medieval genealogies 'were vital tools in maintaining high status with all its privileges' (p. xv); this valid point is not, however, discussed further by Calise. The book would have been a more focused study of the topic as a whole had the relevance of individual contributions to the topic been articulated more clearly. Nevertheless, the introduction attempts to provide the links and contextualisation that some of the articles lack.

One of the attractions of the book is that it brings together a range of source material, but, unfortunately, some factors reduce the primary bibliography's usefulness. For example, the bibliography does not always indicate where editions also include translations although, given the multi-disciplinary nature of the book, this information could be helpful to an interested reader who may not be overly familiar with the language in question. O'Donovan's edition of *Fled Dúin na nGéd*, for example, includes a translation, as does O Daly's edition of *Cath Maige Mucrama*, but this is not noted in either case. Other items, such as Lanfranc's letters, do include the information 'ed. and trans.'. One could also argue that it should be stated when an edition is a reprint. Thus, the details of O'Donovan's edition are given as 'Felinfach, 1995', with no indication that this is a reprint of an 1842 edition.

The bibliography's organisation is inconsistent in other areas too, even if one allows for different approaches to such problems as how to treat anonymous

sources. Thus, there is inconsistency as to whether works by known authors are cited by medieval author or modern editor: a number of Bede's works are listed under B for Bede, but Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* is listed under the name of its editor, Anderson. Many anonymous sources are listed by title, but some are found under the name of the editor. The different collections of Irish annals, for example, are mostly listed under their titles, but other texts, such as the Fragmentary Annals of Ireland, the Irish text *Gein Brandub* and *Njáls saga* are listed under the names of the editors. This is all the more confusing when a collection of texts such as Meyer's *Fianaigecht* appears under F, although *Fianaigecht* is simply the title of the book rather than of any of the texts contained in it. Another confusing case is that of the Irish tale *Fled Dúin na nGéd*: Lehmann's 1964 edition is listed under F, Lehmann's translation in *Lochlann 4* is listed under L, and finally, O'Donovan's edition and translation appears under O. Furthermore, the quality and helpfulness of the references in the footnotes varies considerably across the different articles. In terms of presentation, two of the contributions which contain detailed accounts of family relations, those of Calise and Valante, are made more accessible by including family trees. Calise's article in particular benefits from this, as the large number of names means that it can be difficult to follow the argument even if one is mostly familiar with the names of the various individuals.

These reservations do not negate the usefulness and interest of individual contributions. Personally, I found the chapters by Foot, Jaski, Fouracre and Valante of particular interest; however, as one's views on the book as a whole will depend more strongly than in other cases on each individual reader's interests and expertise, I have focused here on matters of structure and usability. In those terms, while the book presents a number of interesting discussions and the range of subjects is to be welcomed, it could have been more thematically focused as a whole and somewhat more user-friendly, especially if greater attention had been given to the detail of the bibliography and referencing.

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NORSE GREENLAND. SELECTED PAPERS FROM THE HVALSEY CONFERENCE 2008. Edited by JETTE ARNEBORG, GEORG NYEGAARD and ORRI VÉSTEINSSON. *Journal of the North Atlantic Special Volume 2. Eagle Hill Foundation*. Steuben, 2012. 196 pp. ISSN 1935-1984.

This special volume is a collection of articles based on papers given at Greenland's first conference on Norse Greenland, held 12th–19th September 2008. The date was chosen to celebrate the 600th anniversary of the last recorded event from Norse Greenland: a wedding held in the church at Hvalsey in September 1408. The impressive ruins of this church still stand today, and the conference itself took place just down the fjord in the town of Qaqortoq, in the heart of what was once Norse Greenland's Eastern Settlement.

The articles cover a wide range of topics, from broad discussions of identity and ethnicity (Gräslund, Karlsson) to close analyses of single sites and artefacts (Nyegaard, Lynnerup, Arneborg et al., Imer). Archaeological investigations are particularly well represented throughout the volume, but not exclusively so. Jonathan Grove's survey of Greenland in the Old Norse–Icelandic sagas sits firmly at the literary end of the spectrum, while other contributors combine written and material sources to great effect. A number of discussions share a historical depth not confined to the Middle Ages but also encompassing several centuries of enquiry into Norse Greenland, from Frobisher's rediscovery of Greenland (1576–78) up to the present day (Nyegaard, Lynnerup, Arneborg et al., Etting, Sanmark). Vivian Etting's excellent survey of expeditions to Greenland in around 1600 leads the reader out of the medieval period and into the great age of European expansion and discovery, in which Greenland had its own part to play.

The collection opens with an article by Georg Nyegaard of the Greenland National Museum, describing the recent excavation and restoration of the south wall of the church at Hvalsey. As Nyegaard notes, 'the monumental ruin has almost become an icon of the medieval Nordic settlement of Greenland and especially of its extinction some time during the 15th century' (p. 11). Nyegaard's discussion begins with the history of the earliest Hvalsey excavations—beautifully illustrated with nineteenth-century copperplates, watercolours and site plans—and ends with the most recent excavations from 1997–2004. The sloping south wall, Nyegaard suggests, may already have been on the move by the time of the wedding in 1408, due to older graves settling underneath. Today the wall has been realigned and stabilised thanks to the efforts of a team of archaeologists and engineers, hopefully ensuring the preservation of this remarkable building for the next 600 years.

Niels Lynnerup's discussion centres on another set of graves, this time at Herjólfssnes in the far south of the Eastern Settlement. The site is famous for the remarkably well-preserved dresses and hoods discovered during Poul Nørlund's original excavation in 1921. Lynnerup focuses on the investigations that followed Nørlund's dig, particularly F. C. C. Hansen's—now largely disproved—anthropological theory of biological degeneration in the dying days of the Norse colony. In a publication from 1924, Hansen concluded that the Greenlanders had become 'a race of small people, with little strength, physically weakened and with many defects and pathological conditions' (p. 26). Lynnerup demonstrates how these conclusions reflect less about historical reality and more about 'issues of race and the fear of population degeneration that were very much in the foreground in the 1920s and 1930s' (p. 26).

Following three archaeological articles on Norse Greenland, Jonathan Grove's thematic survey of Greenland in the Old Norse–Icelandic sagas signals a timely change of tone. In his discussion of the literary patterns that characterise saga episodes set in Greenland, Grove explores how 'the imaginative writings of this historically marginal society embodied its preoccupation with its own perceived place at the heart of the medieval North Atlantic world' (p. 34). He focuses particularly on 'marginalizing strateg[ies]' that serve 'to place Greenland firmly at the edge of the map' (p. 35). Grove tracks the development of Greenland as a

fantastical setting in post-classical *Íslendingasögur*, the theme of Greenland as a theatre for religious conflict and the construction of Greenland as a place of exile, emphasising a 'tradition of alterity' that grew over time (p. 50).

A similar sense of isolation is picked up in a very different way by Orri Vésteins-son in his investigation into the parish system of Norse Greenland. His conclusion is not encouraging; over time the Norse Greenlanders became doubly isolated, not only from the rest of the world but from each other, an isolation 'which was of an order of magnitude greater than in any other whole society in medieval Christendom' (p. 153). Elsewhere in the volume, the theme of church organisation and location is extended in a pilot study by Berit Gjerland and Christian Keller, who examine Norse graves and churches in the North Atlantic.

Several contributors emphasise how written and archaeological evidence can intersect to shed light on the often shadowy world of Norse Greenland. Lesley Abrams examines evidence for early religious practice in the country, arguing for a mixed society encompassing both traditional religious practices and domestic Christianity. Elsewhere, Birgitta Wallace moves the focus further west to the Norse remains at L'Anse aux Meadows, on the northern tip of Newfoundland. In her thought-provoking analysis she looks at the Vinland sagas 'through the spyglass of archaeology' (p. 119), arguing that these narratives may hold far more facts than are generally credited to them. The sagas, she concludes, 'show all the signs of the flexibility marking transmissions of oral history, sprinkled with later learned concepts' (p. 126).

Some articles are discrete analyses in their own right, whilst others are windows into larger, ongoing projects. Lisbeth M. Imer's paper on runic inscriptions from the Vatnahverfi region is an example of the latter; her work is part of a planned edition of Greenlandic runic inscriptions (of which there are over 100). Alexandra Sanmark concludes the collection with a stimulating discussion of the evidence for Thing sites at Eirfkr's farm at Brattahlíð (now Qasiarsuk) and the bishop's residence at Garðar (now Igaliku), drawing on broader investigations into assembly sites throughout the medieval world.

Throughout this collection of sixteen articles the reader is made aware of how much about Norse Greenland is still unknown, how provisional the results and how speculative the conclusions. Many of the best papers raise more questions than they solve. Naturally, each article stands alone, but taken collectively the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This is a volume in which academics from across various disciplines are in dialogue with each other; the collaborative 'conference spirit' is reflected in the acknowledgements that follow many of the papers, which thank various conference participants for their input. Owing to the historical depth of many of the papers, this dialogue also extends to scholars from past decades and centuries, all of whom have been trying to understand Norse Greenland ever since it faded from the world.

EARLY CORNISH SCULPTURE. By ANN PRESTON-JONES and ELISABETH OKASHA. *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture XI. Oxford University Press for the British Academy.* Oxford, 2013. xvi + 304 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-726595-9.

The history and culture of Cornwall in the Early Middle Ages does not fit easily into any wider national or international patterns of development or schemes of periodisation. The area is a remote and not easily accessible peninsula by land; from and to the sea, by contrast, it is not only open but also provides a prominent landfall on a European Atlantic route between the North Atlantic and Irish Sea on the one hand and the Bay of Biscay and seaways to North Africa and the Mediterranean on the other. When Britain was part of the Roman Empire, the area underwent little Romanisation, even of a military character; however, like Wales and Ireland, it was to emerge unexpectedly as a bastion of Late Antique Christian society, maintaining élite connections with the Mediterranean, in the fifth and sixth centuries AD.

The present volume includes all the sculpted stones of Cornwall that can be assigned to a broadly Anglo-Saxon or Insular-Scandinavian cultural tradition: it thus excludes the distinctly Brythonic 'Early Christian' inscribed monuments. The larger part of the volume is occupied by a detailed descriptive and illustrated catalogue of the material, site by site; ten introductory chapters cover geology and landscape, historical and archaeological context, and synthetic reviews of forms, ornament and groups amongst the carved stones. Oliver Padel's review of the 'historical background' perforce highlights the sequence of encroachment of West Saxon power and the eventual annexation of Cornwall. Early Anglicisation is in evidence along the border with Devon but, as is well known, a Brythonic Cornish language continued to be used well beyond the Norman Conquest.

The particular focus of this volume, related to the series within which it appears, inevitably leads to a concentration on sculpture of a late pre-Conquest period in the tenth and eleventh centuries. This consequently involves material that belongs to the Viking Age—and it is noted how the ninth-century Trewiddle metalwork hoard, eponymous to a Late Anglo-Saxon art-style, was probably deposited precisely because of the insecurity and threat Viking activity brought. Padel, however, discusses the connection between Cornwall and a wider history of the Vikings primarily in relation to the later, 'second' Viking Age—for instance with Óláfr Tryggvason receiving Christianity in the Scillies; a place-name for which, incidentally, Padel is happy to accept a Norse etymology. It is worth emphasising, though, that Cornwall in the eighth and ninth centuries does not appear hopelessly obscure and isolated. The shift in settlement pattern and probably the associated agricultural regime that saw the *trev* sites appear is truly remarkable, while the degree of West Saxon military activity on and across the border with Cornwall in the early ninth century hints that the combined Cornish and Viking raiding force recorded by the West Saxon Chronicle under AD 835 was not simply a one-off and opportunistic enterprise.

The sculpture collected and analysed in this volume clusters in the far west of the county (West Penwith) and around Bodmin Moor and Dartmoor in Mid- and East Cornwall. Stone locally available was usually taken for carving, with a very

high preponderance of granite. Amongst a range of principal types of monument it is the considerable number of free-standing crosses that forms the richest and in most respects the most informative (or thought-provoking) group. It is these and their ornament in particular which reflect both strong and diverse cross-cultural patterns and adaptations. There are, for instance, distinct Welsh parallels, especially in patterns of knot- and fretwork, but these in themselves have to be set in a context of even wider common practices around the Irish and Celtic Seas. Plant ornament, by contrast, points more firmly to West Saxon influence, and accordingly is predominant in East Cornwall. Most striking when considering the material in relation to Scandinavian cultural connections is the dominance of the ring-headed cross, a type with its origins in the Gaelic cultural zone, perhaps initially at Iona, but also widely adopted in the Anglo-Scandinavian sculptural tradition of northern England.

Free-standing carved crosses at Gwinear and Sancreed in West Penwith stand out, not only for being the only two in the Cornish corpus with zoomorphic motifs but also with their crucifixions within the crosshead of a form again strikingly reminiscent of Anglo-Scandinavian northern English sculpture. Both also have inscriptions in Insular uncial letters, including a word *runhol*, which Padel identifies as a Cornish word for 'patrimony'. In Mid-Cornwall, close to Bodmin Moor, the Cardinham cross appears in an isolated context but is exceptionally rich. Here, uniquely and extraordinarily, the ornament includes a Borre-style ring-chain familiar from the Gosforth Cross in Cumbria and especially from the Isle of Man.

The evidence may not be profuse, but it is highly suggestive that Cornwall continued to be involved with and affected by far-reaching connections up to the Irish Sea, presumably also linking the greater Atlantic seaways both to the north and the south up to the end of the Viking Period—and no doubt beyond it. This volume makes available an invaluable collection of data for an area which is too often neglected and overlooked, especially in Scandinavian-oriented studies of the Viking Age. It is clearly and helpfully laid out, and easy to navigate; it is therefore warmly recommended for scholarly attention.

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GODS AND SETTLERS. THE ICONOGRAPHY OF NORSE MYTHOLOGY IN ANGLO-SCANDINAVIAN SCULPTURE. By LILLA KOPÁR. *Studies in the Early Middle Ages* 25. *Brepols*. Turnhout, 2012. xl + 246 pp. 54 black-and-white illustrations. ISBN 978-2-503-52854-0.

This book tackles a fascinating subject: the question of whether we can identify a corpus of ninth- to eleventh-century sculpture in England that depicts images from Scandinavian myth and legend, and if so, what the stones mean. Lilla Kopár's approach is both brave and cautious; brave in that she is venturing into a very well-trodden field, and cautious in that she largely restricts herself to the iconographical verdicts of her predecessors. Kopár's structuring premise is that those monuments which can in some sense be categorised as expressions of a Norse

mythological/heroic sensibility are always products of the period and process of conversion, and that we can use this small corpus of carved stones to track 'conversion as intellectual process through its reflection in art' (p.150). This is not offered as a theory, however, but rather taken for granted throughout the book as a self-evident fact. The book would have been much stronger had this been presented as a hypothesis and tested against alternative interpretative models: that the stones are pagan monuments, for example; that they were erected some generations after conversion; or that they represent a missionary effort on the part of the Northumbrian Church.

The structure of the book does not bolster the argument. On the penultimate page (p. 209), we are told that:

When establishing the corpus of my study, I decided to take an all-inclusive approach and discuss or mention all monuments that had been suggested by previous scholars, justly or unjustly, to show the influence of mythological or heroic iconography. The interpretation of some of the carvings is undoubtedly problematic and uncertain, but these borderline cases are just as interesting as the core monuments.

This statement should have been in the opening paragraph. It finally explains why so many stones which are readily admitted to be of little demonstrable relevance have been included in such detail (these reservations are applied to approximately fifty per cent of the material discussed). There are other structural problems. The book opens with a short survey of the field and the relevant literature, before devoting the first three chapters to case-by-case studies of the stones. Kopár begins with the very small corpus of monuments depicting postulated Weland and Sigurd imagery, and few would quibble at her inclusion of Leeds, Bedale, Sherburn, Halton, Kirby Hill or the York Minster slab, although she does also admit some much more dubious stones. The book then moves on to the struggle between good and evil, and includes here the Gosforth cross and 'fishing stone', but its overall argument is weakened by the assimilation of a wide range of images of bound beasts and human figures into narratives of Fenrir and Loki, with no consideration of the role of stylistic convention. The third category includes all images of warriors or horsemen, particularly those with spears or birds, and, although she admits that these stones are hard to classify, 'aristocratic' segues rather too easily into 'heroic', from which it is but a short step to these images having an 'Odinic function' (p. 121). Overall, the rhetorical movement of the three case-study chapters is thus from 'fairly certain', to 'possible', to 'uncertain', which does the argument no favours.

Contextual material is almost entirely deferred to Chapters Four and Five. Kopár frequently adduces the corpus of skaldic verse plausibly composed in England as evidence for general awareness of particular myths, but only on page 145 is this corpus briefly defined as 'the literary art of the Scandinavian courts'. Similarly, essential topics such as euhemerism and migration theory, and definitions of key terms such as 'Anglo-Scandinavian', are deferred to this section. I would therefore recommend readers begin with these chapters, referring back to the earlier case-studies as necessary.

One of the strongest parts of the book is the treatment of the Gosforth cross, and in particular the analysis of the role of the female figure attending the crucified Christ. Here, Kopár makes the original observation that this could be a personification of Hel as hostess, bringing the 'Cup of Death' to Christ. (Her argument here would have been enriched by reference to relevant work by Hugh Magennis, Veronica Ortenberg, Fredrik Heinemann, Stephanie Hollis and Helen Damico.) However, there is insufficient engagement with the problematic concept of introducing a pagan goddess into the Crucifixion narrative. The other strong section is Chapter Six, which engages closely with the social function of the monuments. The argument here is hampered, however, by its focus on a very small number of stones, and a small number of motifs on those stones. The book commits itself *a priori* to a model in which the stones are monuments to the Conversion process and Scandinavian in their focus, and it pays little attention to the otherwise profoundly conservative and Anglian nature of some of the most plausible examples of Germanic legendary imagery, such as Halton and Leeds. Although Kopár states that these stones 'offer no evidence of actual pagan practices' (p. xxxiv) she is reluctant to entertain them as essentially Christian or to accept that a contemporary observer might have privileged a Christian narrative (indeed, she explicitly rejects John McKinnell's interpretation of the Gosforth cross on those grounds): 'For the contemporary observer all stories formed part of one and the same 'system' or cultural reality' (p. 173).

Perhaps because of this reductive approach to comparative religion, there is in places a shaky grasp of Christian doctrine. The statement, in regard to Odin and Christ, that 'neither of the two gods suffered real death' (p. 122) misrepresents one of the essential tenets of Christianity. The somewhat forced analogy (based, admittedly, on James Lang's reading of the Nunburnholme cross-shaft) between the Eucharist and Sigurd's tasting of the dragon's blood leads to the footnoted comment that 'the only disturbing element in this interpretation is the implied parallel between the blood of the evil Fafnir and that of Christ the Saviour' (p. 53 n. 49). This is a central objection to Lang's hypothesis: it should not have been relegated to the notes.

Kopár's desire for the stones to bear witness to complex and meaningful dialogue between Christianity and Norse paganism is palpable: as she herself confesses at one point in her discussion of the Cross, the Tree of Life, and Yggdrasil, 'it is easy to get carried away by the beauty of these parallels' (p. 127). The book attempts to normalise a profoundly syncretic mode as an integral part of the production of sculpture in Anglo-Scandinavian England. In fact, what this survey really hammers home is the oddness of Gosforth. Merely by existing, the Gosforth stones invite us to analyse other contemporary sculpture to see if it can be decoded in the same terms. However, the case for a widespread syncretic mentality is still to be made.

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RUNES. A HANDBOOK. By MICHAEL P. BARNES. *Boydell Press*. Woodbridge, 2012. xvi + 240 pp. ISBN 978-1-84383-778-7.

The need for a new scholarly introduction to the study of runology has been evident for a number of years. English-speaking students approaching the subject for the first time have had several authoritative overviews of the separate runic traditions at their disposal, including R. I. Page's *An Introduction to English Runes* (2nd edition 1999), Erik Moltke's *Runes and Their Origin. Denmark and Elsewhere* (English edition 1985), and Terje Spurkland's *Norwegian Runes and Runic Inscriptions* (English edition 2005). However, if we discount the many non-academic works that boldly pass themselves off as 'practical guides' to runes (and runic divination!), the most up-to-date English-language overview of these various traditions is Ralph W. V. Elliott's *Runes: An Introduction*, the second edition of which was published in 1989. Barnes's handbook departs from this earlier introductory survey in several important ways, not least in the methodological rigour with which he approaches the discipline and in his concern to do away entirely with more speculative interpretations of runes—particularly the idea that the script was invested with magico-ritualistic significance. Indeed, this is a book that is just as concerned to establish correct procedure and promote sound principles of runological research as it is to introduce and survey the inscriptions themselves.

The layout of the handbook reflects this scrupulously methodological approach, with each of the eighteen chapters carefully divided into sub-sections with short, informative headings. The introduction opens with a brief outline of the aims of the handbook and a discussion of the fundamentals of runology (including an introduction to transcription, the various rune-rows and runology as a subject), before turning to the knotty question of the origins of the script in the second chapter. In his systematic presentation of the evidence and reluctance to speculate on the reasons for the invention or unique arrangement of the *futhork*, the author sets the tone for the remainder of the book. The caution with which Barnes states the facts and probes the assumptions made by previous scholars is exemplary, and his own readings put into practice the 'cultivation of the subjunctive' that he has argued for elsewhere. If students are looking for black-and-white answers or lively speculation they will not find them here—rather, Barnes employs his impressive knowledge of both the Scandinavian and the British material to navigate authoritatively through the territory and to outline the main issues in sober and lucid terms, highlighting the gaps in our knowledge rather than passing over them in silence, and laying the foundations for the systematic and objective study of runic inscriptions.

The body of the handbook consists of pairs of chapters dedicated to the various rune-rows arranged 'more or less chronologically': namely the older *futhork*, the modified Anglo-Frisian *futhorc*, the variations on the reduced younger *futhork* used throughout the Viking Age, and the expanded medieval rune-rows. In each case, an exposition of the rune-row in question and its development (as well as variations within the tradition) is followed by a chapter surveying the inscriptions themselves, and presenting several well-chosen examples in more detail. The remaining chapters give some space to post-Reformation inscriptions, manuscript runes and various antiquarian, popular and political re-uses of the script that 'lie

outside the main lines of development', as well as providing a short history of runology. The chapter on the making of runic inscriptions is a welcome addition to previous introductions, as is the chapter in which Barnes puts his methodology into practice in the reading of three inscriptions—the Kjølevik older *fubark* inscription, the late-tenth or early-eleventh-century St Albans 2 inscription and the (possibly) medieval Birsay 1 inscription—giving students a clear model for correct practice. This chapter succeeds in demonstrating the importance of an organised approach and the pitfalls likely to be encountered in the field, even if the raft of expertise implicated in such a procedure (and a warning against relying on support from other disciplines that are imperfectly understood) might be a little daunting for the intended readership.

That is not to say, however, that Barnes's handbook itself is inaccessible—quite the contrary. One of its strengths lies in the author's ability to synthesise in plain English some very complex debates, about the development of the younger *fubark*, for example, and the short annotated bibliographies that follow each chapter are very user-friendly, pointing the student to more involved discussions of each subject. The glossary and the chapter looking at where to find inscriptions—another welcome addition to existing introductions to runes—are similarly provided with the needs of the student in mind. In light of this obvious concern for usability, it seems a slight oversight not to have included a general index, though this is made up for in part by a detailed table of contents and regular cross-referencing. This is a minor quibble in what is an otherwise impeccably produced handbook. In the case of other editorial decisions that might be questioned (such as the lack of in-text references and the decision to focus exclusively on English-language studies in the bibliographies) the reasoning is made clear in the preface to the handbook, and overall the compromise between readability and scholarly utility seems to be well judged. With a guide in absolute command of his subject and so cautious in his mode of argumentation, the reader can trust that references to scholarly opinion and current views are accurate and for the most part representative, even when specific references are not provided.

Barnes's scholarly approach to the post-medieval history of runic writing is also welcome, and his rational presentation of the material quickly does away with a great deal of misinformation peddled about runes. Modern-day uses of runes are given extremely short shrift, and his restrained treatment of the dubious Kensington inscription is laudable. The reader can sense Barnes's irritation with theories about the magic of runes and the suggestion that they might have been invested with extra-linguistic significance—variations on the statement that runes are 'nothing more or less' than an ordinary script appear on several occasions—but it is gratifying to see the author cut through the nonsense with chisel-like statements of fact rather than rising to the bait. Less gratifying, from my perspective, is the fact that Barnes also sidelines several productive interdisciplinary approaches that might have been gestured towards in the handbook, including efforts in recent years to take into account the material, visual and situational context in order to understand the complete expression of a runic text. Perhaps this is due to the same desire to distance the subject from 'flights of fancy', but it seems to me that the author's

self-professed narrow (and linguistically-oriented) definition of what constitutes runic research also marginalises several emerging areas of study. There is, for example, no reading list following the short chapter on 'Runes and the imagination: literature and politics', implying that the literary afterlife of runes lies well outside the 'main lines of development' in runic research, whilst the contribution made by disciplines as wide-ranging as archaeology, numismatics, cultural studies and art history to the understanding of the ways in which runic texts produce meaning is not fully acknowledged. The author's views on the linguistic centrality of the discipline may be shared by many runologists, but this partiality might have been made clearer to the layperson.

That said, it would be perverse to dwell on a matter of personal preference when reviewing a book that is such a welcome addition to the subject and academically rigorous to a fault. Certainly, what Barnes achieves through his sceptical, cautious and linguistic-centred approach far outweighs what might be lost around the margins of a subject that can be defined in more or less interdisciplinary terms. Elliott, the author of the last survey that introduced runes to an English-speaking audience, came at the discipline from the perspective of a literary scholar, and students looking for further treatment of runes in literature (and, indeed, a more sympathetic approach to imaginative runology) are at liberty to turn to this earlier study—though anyone looking for a firm grounding in the rigours of examining and reading runic inscriptions would be rash not to make *Runes: A Handbook* their primary introduction to the subject. If published in paperback (with a less weighty price tag) it is sure to become the standard textbook for introductory courses on runology, and I have no doubt that Barnes's handbook will soon come to be seen as the big green book of runology to complement Page's 'little red book' of English runes.

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5. References should be given in the form illustrated by the following examples:

— Other death omens of ill-luck are shared by Scandinavian, Orcadian and Gaelic tradition (cf. Almqvist 1974–76, 24, 29–30, 32–33).

— Anne Holtsmark (1939, 78) and others have already drawn attention to this fact.

— Ninth-century Irish brooches have recently been the subject of two studies by the present author (1972; 1973–74), and the bossed penannular brooches have been fully catalogued by O. S. Johansen (1973).

— This is clear from the following sentence: *iðraðist Bolli þegar verksins ok lýsti vígi á hendi sér* (*Laxdæla saga* 1934, 154).

— It is stated quite plainly in *Flateyjarbok* (1860–68, I 419): *hann tok land j Syrlækiarosi*.

— There is every reason to think that this interpretation is correct (cf. *Heilagra manna sǫgur*, II 107–08).

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