

The Beating Royal Heart and the Unruly Limbs

Bodily Imagery in *Rauðúlfs þáttur* and the *Speech against the Bishops*

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Bodies are close at hand and easy to relate to.¹ They may come in different forms, shapes, and hues, but the fact that we all have a body, at least for the time being, means that they, as the phrase goes, are good to think with.² We intuitively understand that an ailing body needs healing to restore equilibrium and that in cases where no healing is feasible, the best cure may be to isolate and remove the ailment, even if this may cause irreversible damage to the integrity of the body. The immediate relatability of bodies means that they can be used to raise questions, both great and small, about human existence, history, society, the universe, and more or less everything else.

Old Norse literature is rife with instances of such bodily imagery. The myth of the killing of Ymir (related in *Grímnismál*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, and *Gylfaginning*), and the Prologue to the Prose *Edda* both develop, although in somewhat different ways, the idea of a correspondence between the earth and a body. Whereas the Ymir myth identifies aspects of the world as parts of Ymir's dismembered body, the learned Prose *Edda* prologue differentiates the two and sees an analogy: One finds water by digging into the surface of the earth, similarly one finds blood by digging under the skin of a living

¹ A first draft of this text was presented at the annual SASS meeting in 2023 in a session organized by Kate Heslop and T. Liam Waters.

² The phrase is derived from Lévy-Strauss (1963: 89).

being. However, having rejected the Light of Truth, primordial humankind according to the *Prose Edda* prologue mistook analogy for identity.

A different use of bodily imagery is found in the *Norwegian Book of Homilies*. This compilation draws on the body to drive home a series of points of a more spiritual nature. “Just as the body is nurtured by bodily food“, we read in the translation of Alcuin’s *De virtutibus et vitiis*, “so the spirit is fed and sated by divine words.”³ The so-called Stave Church Homily, “In dedicatione templi”, contained in the same manuscript, exhorts its audience to turn their bodies into temples of God by performing good deeds:

And just as we say that the church signifies the Christian community, it may also signify each individual Christian who truly becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit through good deeds. For each person shall build a spiritual church inside themselves, not out of timber or stone, but rather out of good deeds.⁴

In this tradition – and additional examples could easily be accumulated – one sees a strong normative thrust in the use of body imagery. Order is opposed to disorder, harmony to disharmony, and the conventionally functioning body to one that is not:

The blind falls more often than the sighted. Similarly, one who is unaware of God’s law commits sins more frequently than one who is knowledgeable. Just like a blind person cannot stay on the correct path without a guide, a person cannot walk straight without a teacher.⁵

The examples take their point of departure from everyday physical bodies and their functions, and with some schematic deftness, they transition to a tropological exposition.⁶

In what follows, two elaborate Old Norse textual passages that engage with bodily imagery along allegorical and political lines will be discussed in

³ Svá sem líkamr fœðisk af líkamligum fœzlum, svá fœðisk ok sezk ǫndin af guðligum málum (ed. Indrebø 1931: 4). Quotations in Old Norse are given in normalized orthography throughout.

⁴ En svá sem vér segjum kirkju merkja allan kristinn lýð, svá má hon merkja sér hvern kristinn mann þann er sannliga gerisk mysteri heilags anda í góðum siðum. Því at hvern maðr skal smíða andliga kirkju í sér, eigi ór trjáum né steinum, heldr ór góðum verkum (ed. Indrebø 1931: 97). See Hjelde (1990: 290–306) for an analysis of this text and its sources.

⁵ Oftar fellr blindr en sjándi. Svá er ok: oftar misgerir óvitandi lög Guðs en hinn er veit. Svá sem blindr gengr eigi rétta götu án leiðtoga, svá gengr ok eigi maðr rétt án kennanda (ed. Indrebø 1931: 4).

⁶ In the pervasive interpretive framework used for Biblical accounts, and later also non-biblical accounts, events, objects, ideas etc., the tropological mode of interpretation gives a moral interpretation of the interpretandum as it relates to every individual human being.

some detail. In the first example, the body is used to reflect on the anatomy of history in a diachronic manner, while the second example uses the body to contemplate the order of society synchronously. As will be seen, both examples belong to broader medieval intellectual traditions with roots in Antiquity. The protean nature of these traditions has generated a multitude of hermeneutic possibilities and trajectories. Far from being stale reiterations, the Norse examples mobilize and inflect the fundamental concepts of this enduring tradition in unconventional ways to shape or reveal new layers of meaning.

The dream figure of *Rauðúlfs þáttur*

Óláfs saga helga in *Heimskringla* contains a curious and somewhat obliquely told anecdote in which Björn, King Óláfr's deputy (*ármaðr*) in Eystridalir, accuses Sigurðr and Dagr, the sons of a certain Rauðr, of cattle theft. An encounter with the two brothers convinces Óláfr that they are *óþjóflegir* or not inclined to thievery. The king also learns of the brothers' unusual abilities: Sigurðr can interpret dreams and tell the time of day without seeing the sun. Dagr, on the other hand, is able to discern the virtues and vices of whomever he meets by looking into their eyes. Dagr proves his abilities by revealing to Óláfr his main character flaw (although *Óláfs saga* does not disclose to its audience what that flaw is). This convinces Óláfr of the validity and accuracy of Dagr's abilities, and he then asks Dagr to reveal Björn's major flaw. It turns out to be thievery, and thus it becomes apparent that Björn is the cattle thief, leading to his expulsion from Norway (*Hkr* II: 298–299).

A fuller version of this story is related in *Rauðúlfs þáttur*, which is found in some manuscripts containing the *Great Saga of Óláfr Haraldsson* (ed. Johnsen and Jón Helgason 1941: 655–82).⁷ In this tale, Óláfr visits the farm of Rauðr or Rauðúlfr in Eystridalir. At the farm, Rauðúlfr has constructed a highly unusual circular, revolving building that is described in great detail.⁸ Sleeping in the turning building, Óláfr has an elaborate allegorical dream

⁷ The two editors refer to *Rauðúlfs þáttur* as “den interpolasjon som finnes i langt de fleste håndskrifter [of the *Great saga of Óláfr Haraldsson*]” (Johnsen and Jón Helgason 1941: 1129).

⁸ Óláfr at first mistakes the building for a church and later learns that there is no church at the farm because a bishop has never come to the farm to consecrate a church. Given that Óláfr travels with his bishop and the bishop celebrates mass in a tent he has erected outside the

that Rauðúlfr subsequently interprets for him. While dream interpretation in Old Norse saga literature usually relies on allegory to make sense of dreams, *Rauðúlfs þáttur* is unusual in that the building itself, in which the dream takes place, is described in such detail that it too invites allegorical interpretation. The text, however, does not present such an interpretation, leaving that matter to its readers. This challenge has been taken up by Árni Einarsson (1997), who has proposed an elaborate interpretation where the dream-house is understood as a representation of the universe as well as the individual human soul. King Óláfr is placed at the very center of this neo-Platonic microcosm/macrocosm framework as a representation of both the sun and Christ. The purpose of the allegory thus seems to be to glorify Óláfr by highlighting his cosmological centrality and holiness.

The question of the relative age of *Rauðúlfs þáttur* and the anecdote in *Óláfs saga* is not the main issue here, but it is of some importance to the question of the development of vernacular narrative literature in the North and the role of allegory in this literature of kings and chieftains that most often encourage literal understanding and surface-reading rather than figurative interpretations. For this reason, a few (inconclusive) notes on the relationship between the two versions will be offered here.

It is well established that *Rauðúlfs þáttur* contains elements inspired by the parodical *chanson de geste* known as *Le pèlerinage de Charlemagne* (ca. 1140) or the Old Norse translation of that tale, *Af Jörsalaferð*, in *Karlamagnús saga* (mid-13th cent.) (Faulkes 1966: 10–11; 30–46). The *þáttur* therefore prompts questions about the incorporation of elements in saga literature that are not drawn from local tradition and about Franco-Norse literary relations. Such relations are evidenced by the Old Norse translations of the French romances and the *lais* of Marie de France which are usually associated with the reign of Hákon Hákonarson (1217–1263); the first such translation is held to have been made in 1226 when Brother Robert translated Thomas of Britain's *Tristan* into Old Norse. However, if the *þáttur* predates *Heimskringla*, it provides evidence of influence from Francophone materials before the reign of Hákon Hákonarson.⁹

Scholarship tends to see *Rauðúlfs þáttur* as the primary version dating it

building, one might expect that the bishop will consecrate the building as a church at the end of the tale, but this does not happen.

⁹ The earliest attested Old Norse text translated from French appears to be the translation of *Un samedi par nuit* which is found in the *Old Norwegian Book of Homilies* under the somewhat confusing title *Visio Pauli*. A recent study of this text by Fardin suggests that *Un samedi par nuit*, or *Desputisun de l'âme et du corps* as she calls it, was translated shortly before or after

around 1200, and *Heimskringla*'s version of the tale is therefore considered an abbreviation of the *þáttr* (Faulkes 1966: 57–68; 2007; Árni Einarsson 1997: 179; Bornholdt and Heyne 2022: 75 fn28). The opposing view is represented by Widding who on stylistic and lexical grounds has argued that the *þáttr* is the younger of the two texts (1968). In this he was followed by Loescher (1981) who drew on art historical parallels to the description of the crucified figure in Óláfr's dream (see below) to argue for a late date.

Readers of *Heimskringla* have noted that the compiler of the text often left out narrative materials from his sources that did not fit his vision of the history of the kings of Norway and streamlined the text by omitting anecdotes and episodes of minor consequence to the overall narrative of the lives and reigns of the kings of Norway. It is conceivable that the dream house and Óláfr's dream fell under this rubric. On the other hand, no elements in *Heimskringla*'s version of the tale suggest that the *Heimskringla* compiler knew of the dream-house and Óláfr's dream. Both elements may therefore have been added at a later point in time, as Widding suggests. The *þáttr*'s revolving dreamhouse, inspired as it is by the *Chanson de geste* about Charlemagne's journey to Jerusalem (whether in French or Old Norse), may be the best candidate for a later addition, given that French epic materials generally do not enter the Old Norse tradition until later.

Óláfr's dream, on the other hand, aligns well with our general knowledge of what saga narratives composed around 1200 could look like, and elements of the episode can be paralleled in *Jömsvíkinga saga* (ed. Þorleifur Hauksson and Marteinn Helgi Sigurðsson 2018: 6–7) and *Sögubrot af fornkonungum* (ed. Bjarni Guðnason 1982: 49–50) which is believed to have been a part of the now-lost *Skjöldunga saga*. One could therefore also argue that the highly unusual elaborate symbolism found in the passage about the dream house points to an early date if one sees it as a stylistically aberrant passage that was pruned away by later saga writers as they began to establish the parameters of the so-called saga style.¹⁰

The most cogent resolution to this issue of relative dating seems to be that the author of *Heimskringla* abbreviated a no longer extant version of the *þáttr* and that the extant *Rauðúlfs þáttr* is a revised and perhaps expanded version of that no longer extant text.

Hákon Hákonarson's accession to the throne by a Norwegian cleric trained in France (2023: 96). The Norwegian Book of Homilies is usually dated 1200–1225.

¹⁰ In that respect, one may point to Haki Antonsson's exploration of symbolism and typological thinking in the writings of the Þingeyrar monks Oddr Snorrason and Gunnlaugr Leifsson (2012), both of whose texts belong to an early phase in the saga writing tradition.

In *Rauðúlfs þáttur*, Rauðúlfr possesses some knowledge of the future, but he is also characterized as a good Christian and denies being a prophet (*spámaðr*). He also seems somewhat ‘out of time’, although the tale does not make a point of this, for he claims to be married to the sister of the Swedish king Hringr Dagsson (who is elsewhere said to be a contemporary of Haraldr hárfagri). When asked by Óláfr how he obtains this otherwise hidden knowledge, he answers: “I perceive some things from the winds [...], some things from the heavenly bodies – the sun, the moon, or the stars – and some things from dreams.”¹¹ After further conversations about these matters, the king asks Rauðúlfr for advice on how he can receive a dream in which that which he is most eager to know will be revealed to him.¹² Rauðúlfr somewhat mysteriously tells the king that he is unable to do that because the king already knows everything, and he continues: “But I do this occasionally [...] when I want to inquire in dreams about the truth of great matters, that I take new sheets and sleep on a new bed or couch, standing in a new place, so that no person has slept in that place, in those sheets or bed or building. And I remember what I dream under such circumstances, and things will mostly turn out as that dream is interpreted to me.”¹³ Óláfr heeds Rauðúlfr’s advice and sleeping in Rauðúlfr’s revolving building that night he has a prophetic dream in which he sees an immense cross upon which hangs a crucified figure. The figure is composed of various materials and is described in detail from head to toe. Rauðúlfr interprets the dream as a dynastic prophecy that characterizes Óláfr’s successors and their reigns.

Readers of the text have long pointed out that Óláfr’s dream resembles Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of four kingdoms in the Biblical Book of Daniel. The Babylonian king dreams of an enormous terrifying statue (*statua una grandis [...] et intuitus eius erat terribilis*, Dn 2:31). The statue is composed of four elements, and Daniel interprets the dream as signifying four consecutive kingdoms/reigns that will eventually be destroyed by the Kingdom of God.

¹¹ Sumt marka ek af vindum [...] en sumt af himintunglum – sól eða tungli eða stjörnum – en sumt af draumum (ed. Johnsen and Jón Helgason 1941: 660).

¹² Later in the tale, it is revealed that Óláfr is most eager to know “the outcome of the present unrest and tumult [...] and how the realm will fare henceforth” (hvern enda eiga mundi órói þessi ok nökkur styrjöld [...] eða hvernig fara mundi ríkit heðan af; ed. Johnsen and Jón Helgason 1941: 672).

¹³ En þat geri ek stundum [...] þá er ek vil forvitnask í draumi sannindi stórra hluta, at ek tek ný klæði ok fer ek í nýja sæng eða rekkju, þá er stendr í nýjum stað, svá at engi maðr hafi fyrr sofnað í þeim stað eða klæðum eða sæng eða húsinu. Ok slíkt sem þá dreymir mik marka ek ok mun mjök ganga eptir því sem þá fæ ek ráðit drauminn (ed. Johnsen and Jón Helgason 1941: 660–661).

Below follows a paraphrase of the dream and Daniel's interpretation based on the Latin text of the Book of Daniel in *Vulgata* (ed. Gryson *et al.* 1994):

- The head, which is made of the purest gold, signifies Nebuchadnezzar himself.
- The chest and arms, which are made of silver, signify a kingdom of lower standing emerging after Nebuchadnezzar's.
- The belly and the femur are made of bronze and signify a kingdom that will rule over the entire earth.
- The shins are made of iron and signify a hard kingdom that will destroy all others.
- The toes are of made iron and clay, signifying that the iron kingdom will be weakened by mixed marriages.
- The statue is struck by a stone and crumbles. The wind carries the remains of the statue away, while the stone grows into a large mountain that fills the entire earth. This signifies God's eternal kingdom, which will destroy all previous kingdoms.

This prophecy has had an enormous impact and has given rise to the historiographical concept of *translatio imperii*, which sees a linear succession of empires leading from Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom down to the present and beyond to the Eternal Kingdom of God. Historical exegetical scholarship on the Biblical Book of Daniel sees the prophecy as for the most part a *vaticinium ex eventu* and identifies the four successive kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar's dream as the Neo-Babylonian empire (gold), Media (silver), Persia (bronze), the Greek kingdom of Alexander (iron) and his successors, the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Seleucids in Syria; marriage unions between the two latter dynasties were attempted in 252 and 194/3 BCE (*NOAB* 1253–1254, commentary to *Dn* 2.36–45). Thus, the only event in the prophecy that had not already occurred when it was being “foretold” was the coming of the Kingdom of God. However, the indeterminate character of the prophecy and the sparseness of detail in Daniel's interpretation left some exegetical wiggle room and have resulted in a number of differently configured interpretations.¹⁴ Of particular influence in Papal Europe was Jerome's commentary on the Book of Daniel, which circulated widely and was adopted in *Glossa ordinaria* (Breed 2021: 307). Jerome vacates a position for Rome as the fourth empire, by merging the second and the third empires and by advancing Alexander and the successor kingdoms from the fourth to

¹⁴ See the essays collected in Perrin and Stuckenbruck (2021).

the third position in the list. According to Jerome, the four successive reigns are therefore the Babylonian (gold), the Median and Persian (silver), that of Alexander and his successors (bronze), and, finally, the Roman (iron). Jerome's own present is the time of a fragile mixture of iron and clay. This fragility, Jerome states, is evident in the fact that the Romans rely on the aid of barbarian peoples in their wars among themselves and against foreign nations (ed. Glorie 1964: 794–795). The reign of the Romans would then be followed by the Second Coming of Christ. In this way, Jerome, writing in c. 407, also sees most of the prophecy as having been fulfilled already.¹⁵

In the following paragraphs, a paraphrase of the text's description of the dream figure and Rauðúlfr's interpretation will be provided:

- The crucified figure of Óláfr's dream is described in greater detail than the statue of which Nebuchadnezzar dreamt, and it also receives a more elaborate interpretation. The figure is hanging on a large cross that is green as grass. The cross and the crucified figure signify warfare.
- The head of the cross is made of red gold and signifies Óláfr himself, who is referred to as *høfuðsmaðr* 'chief, headman'. Just as red gold is more valuable than other metals, Óláfr surpasses all other humans. The shape of the head, which is round rather than oblong, signifies that Óláfr's life and reign will be short instead of long.
- The figure's face is encircled by a halo that is rainbow-colored and adorned with images of angels and heavenly glory. The halo is sharp (*hvass*) at the top and bottom, but thicker in the middle. The face signifies that Óláfr has converted many people to the Christian faith through his words and power, as the organs of speech and sight are located on the face. As a reward for his efforts, Óláfr will attain the kingdom of heaven and heavenly glory. The halo signifies Óláfr's life and the magnificence of his reign. Just like a halo has no end, Óláfr's fame will endure. The sharpness of the halo signifies the difficulties that will mark the beginning and end of his life, while the middle part of the halo signifies Óláfr's reign.
- The neck of the figure is made of copper and surrounded by *skoteldr* 'Greek fire'. Just as copper is the hardest metal and the loudest bells are made of it, the reign that follows that of Óláfr will be beautiful and its fame will spread far and wide, just like the ringing of bells. However, Greek fire is a terrible weapon, and copper is brittle, suggesting that

¹⁵ What he could not know was that just a few years later, in 410, Rome would be sacked by Alaric. However, this did not usher in the Kingdom of God.

this reign will be unbearable. There is a smooth area where the metal transitions from the copper of the neck to the material of the shoulders. This signifies that the reign will be short and will not produce any successors in Norway.

- The shoulders, arms, and upper chest are made of bright silver beautifully decorated with the paths of the heavenly bodies, and the arms are stretched out. Just as the heavenly bodies illuminate the air and earth and just as everyone rejoices in the brightness of the sun, so this reign will be exceedingly honorable. Just as the heat and light of the sun are beneficial to the world, this reign will be loved and prosperous for the inhabitants. The stretched-out arms signify that this ruler will extend his reach further than other rulers and subdue other peoples and realms, but also that his reign will be short. The shoulders are furthermore connected to the head by a golden lock of hair. This signifies that Óláfr's honor will be most celebrated in Norway and many other places, and that there will be a connection between the head and shoulders.
- The chest is covered by a shining belt of iron. This "belt of power" (*meingjörð*) signifies that this reign will be supported by powerful chieftains. It shines because many shining swords will be drawn in this reign, but since iron is hard and causes harm to many, this reign will be harsh from beginning to end. However, the belt is decorated with images depicting events from ancient tales (Sigurðr Fáfnisbani, Haraldr hilditǫnn, Haraldr hárfagri). This signifies that this king will perform great deeds comparable to those of the heroes of old.
- The belly is made of gold alloy/pale gold and artfully embellished with vegetal and animal imagery. Because the gold alloy shares a part of its name with gold, yet is not gold, this king will bear Óláfr's name although he is not comparable to Óláfr. Nevertheless, he will adorn the kingdom with his just rule.
- The area from the navel to the genitals (*sköpin*) is made of impure silver. Just as this kind of silver is used as currency in this land but cannot be used abroad, similarly this king will be honored in this land but to a lesser extent abroad. He will follow his fate (*sköpp*) throughout his life. In most parts, this king will be equal to his predecessors, but from below the crutch, the body is split. Likewise, power will be split from now on.
- The thighs (*lær*) are skin-colored. The kingdom will be divided between two brothers who will treat each other fairly (*mannliga* lit. 'manly'). Like the legs (*fótrnir*) supporting up the entire body, these

kings will set good examples for their subjects, and everything will be arranged properly and in accordance with common human nature (*eptir almennilegri mennsku*).

- The shins are made of wood. As the saying goes: “that matter goes on wooden feet [is in a bad state]“, so this reign will be hard and dreadful to live in. It will be divided between relatives and will ultimately come to an evil end.
- The feet/insteps are made of wood and crossed in an unnatural position, perforated with an iron nail. This indicates that brothers will turn against each other, raising spears in conflict.
- The toes are interlocked. Just as children make rams with their fingers,¹⁶ so the offspring of previous kings will suppress each other for a long time.

As Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Óláfr’s dream, and the interpretation given by Rauðúlfr, is clearly a *vaticinium ex eventu*. However, rather than Daniel’s relatively indeterminate outline of reigns of successive dynasties/peoples, Rauðúlfr provides so many clues to the identities of the individual kings following Óláfr’s reign that anyone familiar with the broad outline of the history of the Norwegian kings as related in the kings’ sagas would be able to identify the kings referred to in the dream with relative ease:

Head:	Óláfr Haraldsson
Neck:	Sveinn Alfifuson
Shoulders:	Magnús góði
Belt:	Haraldr harðráði
Belly:	Óláfr kyrri
Abdomen:	Magnús berfóttr
Thighs:	Sigurðr Jórsalafari and Eysteinn Magnússon
Feet:	Period of dynastic strife (‘Borgerkrigstiden’)

The tale does not look beyond the period of dynastic strife to the reigns of Sverrir Sigurðarson or Hákon Hákonarson. While it is tempting to take this as a hint to the date of the text, it cannot be considered conclusive evidence as other explanations could be provided as well. The most evident explanation

¹⁶ *Gera brúta með fingrum sér*. This is apparently a reference to a children’s game (see Faulkes 2011: 41).

is that the lower part of the human body is split into two parts that are not united again. The anatomy of the human body has thus determined the presentation and duration of history given in the text. One could argue that if the author had wished to do so, he could have continued by describing the destruction of the figure, as in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and its replacement by something altogether different. However, this would break with the entire concept of the dream and the general ideology of succession that also characterized the reigns of Sverrir and his successors, who saw themselves as heirs to Óláfr Haraldsson. One may also compare with Theodoricus's ending to his *De antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* where he states that he considers it unfitting to record for posterity all the atrocities and abominations that took place after the death of Sigurðr Jórsalafari.¹⁷ Therefore, the period of dynastic strife is a fitting point on which to end the prophesy.

Rauðúlfs þáttr adapts its model by providing much greater detail. Although it is presented in a somewhat disorganized manner, this allows the audience to unmistakably identify the kings whose reigns are alluded to. The tale also expands its model by increasing the number of reigns from four to eight (although the eighth represents is an era rather than the rule of a single king). The text achieves this by breaking down the body into smaller parts and including additional details such as the lock of golden hair that connects Óláfr Haraldsson to his son Magnús góði and the somewhat unusually placed belt signifying Haraldr harðráði. The linkings between the elements of the dream figure and their interpretations are established through analogies, sayings, puns, and other means. Perhaps the most notable of these is homonymy between *sköpin* (n.pl.def.) 'genitals' and *sköpp* (n.pl.) 'fate' which is used in the characterization of Magnús berföttr's reign.

The description of the reign of the copper neck (Sveinn Alfíuson) is somewhat paradoxical. On one hand, it emphasizes the harshness of Sveinn's rule by comparing it to Greek fire and the brittleness of copper.¹⁸ This characterization aligns with the general portrayal of Sveinn in the kings' sagas, which emphasize the severity of his new laws (e.g. *Hkr* II: 398–401). On

¹⁷ Nos quoque hujus schedulæ hic finem facimus, indignum valde judicantes memoriæ posterorum tradere scelera, homicidia, perjuria, parricidia, sanctorum locorum contaminationes, Dei contemptum, non minus religiosorum deprædationes, quam totius plebis, mulierum captivationes et ceteras abominationes, quas longum est enumerare. (cp. 34, ed. Storm 1880: 67).

¹⁸ Þar lék útan um skoteldr, þat er it grimmasta herskaparfóri, hræðiligt ok óstaðfestligt. Koparr er harðr ok stökk. Þat ríki mun vera ok óþolligt (ed. Johnsen and Jón Helgason 1941: 674).

the other hand, the text also characterizes Sveinn's reign in analogy with (church) bells, stating: "But the neck of the figure seemed to you to be made of copper. That is the hardest metal and the bells that are made of this sound loudest. The reign that follows yours [i.e. Óláfr's] will be beautiful and will be known to everyone's ears, just as the sound of great bells."¹⁹ This representation is noteworthy in that it does not match the general characterization of Sveinn and his reign in saga literature. One may wonder if this characterization was influenced by another factor. One possibility is that the author was inspired by Jerome's commentary on the Book of Daniel, which describes the third (bronze) reign in Nebuchadnezzar's dream as follows: "it is properly said to be of copper – for that is the most resonant of all metals and rings out brightly, and its sound is spread far and wide – so that it not only shows the fame and might of the reign, but also the eloquence of the Greek tongue."²⁰ As mentioned earlier, Jerome's commentary would have been known through the *Glossa ordinaria*.

However, the most striking feature of Óláfr's dream and its interpretation is its grimness and Óláfr's reaction to Rauðúlfr's interpretation. While Nebuchadnezzar's dream presented a general devolution from Nebuchadnezzar's golden reign to the leaden reign mixed with clay, it ultimately ends on an optimistic note, theologically speaking, as it foretells the coming of an empire of a different nature than the earthly empires; one that will extend over everything. Óláfr's dream, on the other hand, not only foretells his own painful death but also presages the fragmentation and destruction of the (earthly) kingdom he has worked to conquer and convert to Christianity. The cross, on which the dream figure hangs, is not a Christian symbol of victory and salvation but a grim portent of discord, unrest, and ultimately death. While the endlessness of the halo signifies Óláfr's eternal glory, its sharp edges indicate the painful and distressing beginning and end of his earthly life. From Óláfr's reign onwards, everything gradually deteriorates, although there are intermittent points of light. The interpretation ends with the image of the twisted feet pierced by an iron nail signifying the

¹⁹ En halsinn á líkneskinu syndisk þér ór kopar gert. Þat er inn harðasti malmr ok þar af eru klukkur gervar er mest hljóð fylgir. Þat ríki er næst kemr eptir þik mun vera fagrt ok birtask fyrir hvers manns eyrum, svá sem hljóð stórra klukkna (ed. Johnsen and Jón Helgason 1941: 674).

²⁰ *Et regnum tertium aliud, aeneum, quod imperabit uniuersae terrae, Alexandrum significat et regnum Macedonum successorumque Alexandri: quod recte aeneum dicitur – inter omnia enim metalla aes uocalius est et retinnit clarius, et sonitus eius longe lateque diffunditur –, ut non solum famam et potentiam regni, sed et eloquentiam graeci sermonis ostenderet* (ed. Glorie 1964: 794).

brutal internecine struggle among Óláfr's descendants. The dream and its interpretation offer no hope that this deplorable state will be overcome and replaced by something utterly different.

One would expect that Óláfr, upon hearing the interpretation of the dream, would be affected in one way or another by its dire message, but that is not the case. Óláfr stoically thanks Rauðúlfr for his interpretation and praises his discernment: "The king bade him have thanks for this and said that he thought no one would be found to be equally discerning as Rauðúlfr, unless his sons followed in his footsteps." After that the king goes, seemingly unaffected, to take his lunch.²¹

Óláfr's dream can be characterized as a dynastic dream presaging the fortunes and reigns of his descendants. As such it belongs to a common type of dreams related in historiography from Antiquity onwards.²² Nebuchadnezzar has one such dream (*Dn* 4), and so does Ragnhildr, the mother of Haraldr hárfagri. In her dream, she takes a thorn from her garment, and it grows into a large tree; one end takes root in the ground and the other almost reaches the sky. The branches spread out widely, spanning the breadth of Norway and beyond. The dream is later interpreted as presaging the glory and reigns of Haraldr and his successors. Similar to Óláfr's dream, the trunk of the tree has a chronological aspect, and three colors (blood-red, bright green, and snow-white) are used to characterize the qualities of different phases in Haraldr's reign (*Hkr* I: 90 and 148). In Old Norse literature, dynastic dreams like these are usually employed to presage the greatness and success of the line founded by the figure at the center of the dream. The most obvious exceptions are Sigurðr Jórslafari's dream of a tree trunk drifting towards Norway and splintering into many pieces (*Msk* II: 146–147) and *Rauðúlfs þáttur* discussed here. Sigurðr's reaction to this ill-boding dream is immediately understandable and relatable; he is silent and dejected (*fámálugr ok ókáttr*, *Msk* II: 146), and everyone at court fears that another of his episodes of *vanstilli* is in the offing.²³ Óláfr, on the other hand, seems strikingly indifferent to the gloomy vision of the future with which he is presented.

In the biblical example, Daniel spells out the more general message of

²¹ Konungur bað hann hafa þökk fyrir ok lézk þat ætla at hans jafningi mundi varla finnask fyrir vitru sakir, nema synir hans stigi honum í spor. Gekk konungur síðan brott ór málstofunni ok til borða (ed. Johnsen and Jón Helgason 1941: 680–681).

²² For a recent study on saga literature that uses the term, see Králová 2017. For a more detailed study and discussion of analogues, see Schach (1971).

²³ *Morkinskinna*, in a series of episodes, implies that Sigurðr is suffering from a mental illness and uses the nouns *vanstilli* 'intemperance' and *stæðleysi* 'unsteadiness' to describe this.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream when he prays for the Lord to reveal the dream and its interpretation to him, saying: "May the name of the Lord be blessed from age to age, for wisdom and power belong to him, and he changes times and ages, and he transfers and erects kingdoms."²⁴ If there is a deeper point to Óláfr's dream, it is that the reins of the Norwegian kingdom in the future will be held by Óláfr's increasingly unworthy successors – no indication is given of what God's larger plan may be.

Rauðúlfs þáttr intends to show how history proceeds linearly from one reign to the next. However, by using the universalizing Danielan prophecy as a model for the local future *Rauðúlfs þáttr* shoehorns an amorphous local past into a mold that only partly fits.

The Body Politic in the Speech against the Bishops

Another, perhaps more obvious, metaphorical use of the human body is to perceive the conventionally functioning body as a representation of order and mutual dependence between a whole and its constituent parts. As was the case with Óláfr's dream-figure, this analogy has ancient roots and can already be found in the Aesopian fable about the Stomach and the Body. In this tale, the hands, mouth, teeth, etc. of the body consider it unfair that they toil while the stomach is idle, so they revolt against it by refusing to feed it. But as the stomach starves, the members also wither (Perry Index 130). As related in Livy's *Ab urbe condita* (2.32, eds. Conway and Walters 1914), it is explicitly applied to the political situation in Rome where the commoners revolt against the governing class. In the text, the fable is used to defend and preserve the prevailing order by underscoring the importance of the belly because it distributes nourishment back to the members.

A common motif is to use the unity of the human body to illustrate the unity of a community. Saxo Grammaticus provides one example of this in his *Gesta Danorum*: The Danish kingdom has been split into five parts as every male member of the royal family has perished. Gyuritha (ON Gyriðr), the sole survivor of the royal family, promises that she will marry the suitor who "has gathered the kingdom of the Danes, which has been torn limb

²⁴ sit nomen domini benedictum a saeculo usque in saeculum quia sapientia et fortitudo eius sunt et ipse mutat tempora et aetates transfert regna atque constituit (*Dn* 2:20–21, ed. Weber et al. 1994: 1345).

from limb, into a single body”.²⁵ A more famous example is provided by Paul the Apostle who uses the unity of the human body to illustrate the unity of the church in I Cor 12:12–31. As in Livy, the point is that each part plays its designated role and that no parts are dispensable: “The eye cannot say to the hand: ‘I don’t need your work’, neither can the head say to the feet: ‘I don’t need you’. Rather it is so that the parts of the body that seem to be lowlier are more necessary ... but you are the body of Christ and members of member.”²⁶ Not everyone can be a prophet, an apostle, or have the power of healing, Paul continues, implying that one should be content that one’s role, however seemingly insignificant, fulfills its function in the great ecclesiastic organism.²⁷

From Paul, the allegory entered the Christian tradition, and it can, for instance, be found in the dialogue *Elucidarius*, which was translated into Old Norse at some point in the 12th. cent.²⁸ In this primer of theology, the disciple asks his master: “How is the Church his [Christ’s] body and the elect his limbs?”²⁹ The master provides a detailed answer to this – here translated from Old Norse:

Master: “As the limbs are attached to the head and controlled by it, so God’s holy Christendom is joined together and united in a single body with him through his incarnation. Furthermore, all the righteous are governed by him in their actions, just as the limbs are governed by the head.

The eyes of this head are the prophets who foresaw events that had not yet come to pass, and the apostles who showed others the right path to the true light.

His ears are the obedient, and the nostrils are the discerning who distinguish good from evil, just as nostrils detect smell.

²⁵ ... [qui] Danorum regnum membratim diuisum in unum corpus redigeret (vii.9.17; ed Friis-Jensen 2015: 510). A few pages later, Saxo reports that Haraldus Hyldekan (ON Haraldr hilditǫnn) “reunites the divided kingdom of Denmark in the shape of its original body (distractumque Danie regnum in pristinum corpus reformat; vii.10.4, ed Friis-Jensen 2015: 514).

²⁶ non potest dicere oculus manui opera tua non indigeo aut iterum caput pedibus non estis mihi necessarii sed multo magis quae videntur membra corporis infirmiora esse necessaria sunt [...] vos autem estis corpus Christi et membra de membro (I Cor 12:21–22, 27; ed. Weber et al. 1994: 1783).

²⁷ Numquid omnes apostoli, numquid omnes prophetae [...] numquid omnes gratiam habent curationum (I Cor 29–30; ed Weber et al. 1994: 1783).

²⁸ Another example that must have been known in the Old Norse world is found in Pope Anastasius IV’s 1154 letter of foundation for the archdiocese of Nidaros (ed. Vandvik 1959: 52).

²⁹ Quomodo est Ecclesia ejus corpus et electi membra? (ed. Lefèvre 1954: 393). This part of the Old Norse *Elucidarius* is only preserved in AM 675 4to (a part of *Hauksbók*) where the text of this question is slightly garbled: D: Hversu kallask kristnir menn líkamar Guðs en helgir menn liðir hans? (ed. Firchow and Grimstad 1989: 79); “How come Christians are called the bodies of God and saints his limbs?”

But the mucus that flows from the nostrils is the heretics whom the judgments of the wise blow away from the head of Christ like mucus from the nostrils.
 His mouth is the preachers who recount and interpret the holy scriptures.
 His hands are the powerful who fight for Christians against enemies.
 His feet are the workers who support the entire people with their labor.
 The waste leaving the belly is sin and the sinful and unclean who burden the belly of Christendom. Devils seize them in their moment of death like swine leaving the pigsty, but all bodies of Christ are joined by a common bond of love.³⁰

This widespread image of Christendom as a body was put to a different use in the Old Norse so-called *Speech against the bishops*. This text is a highly effective rhetorical piece that argues the case of King Sverrir in his protracted conflict with the Norwegian bishops and the Church at large.³¹ The speech is preserved in a single early 14th cent. Norwegian manuscript (AM 114a 4to), but it is held to have been composed after Pope Innocent III had issued an interdict for the kingdom of Norway in 1198 (Holtmark 1931: 55–59; Gunnes 1971: 342–345) or in the preceding years (Brégaht 2015: 154).³²

The *Speech* is an exceptionally clever rhetorical piece that effectively weaponizes the laws and history of the church against the church itself. The author mobilizes canon law to argue his case against the bishops and includes numerous Latin quotations with translations into the vernacular.³³ The concluding section presents a bravura list of bishops who have led their followers astray and highlights that in these instances secular rulers have taken action to protect the Church from these renegade bishops, such as

Bishop Arius of Alexandria who led everyone into heresy and away from Christendom ... and this heresy would have spread throughout the world if Emperor

³⁰ M: Svá sem liðir eru áfastir hofði ok stýrask af því, svá samtengisk heilug kristni Guðs ok gerisk einn líkamr með honum fyrir holdtekju hans. Auk af honum stýrask allir réttlátir í sinni skipan svá sem liðir af hofði. Þessa hofuðs augu eru spámenn er sá fyrir óorðna hluti ok postolar er þórum [ms. eða aðrir] visuðu rétta götu til hins sanna ljóss. Eyru hans eru hlýðnir menn, en nasar skynsamir menn, þeir er gera gótt frá illu svá sem nasar ilma daun. En horr er út ferr ór nqsum eru villumenn þeir er dómr skynsamra manna hryðr út ór hofði Krist sem horr ór nqsum. Muðr hans eru kennimenn er telja ok skýra helgar ritningar. Hendr hans eru ríkismenn þeir er berjask fyrir kristnum mǫnnum ígegn óvinum. Fótr hans eru verkmennt þeir er upphald veita qllum lýð í sínu erfiði. Saurr farandi ór kviði eru syndir ok syndugir menn ok óhreinar þeir er þyngja kviði kristninnar. Þá grípa djoðlar í dauða svá sem svin í útgang en allir líkamir Krists samtengisk í einu ástarbandi (ed. Firchow and Grimstad 1989: 79–80).

³¹ See Brégaht (2015: 153–171) for a recent discussion of this text.

³² The papal interdict meant that most public celebrations of Christian rites were prohibited. Exceptions were baptism and the last rites for the dying (see Gunnes 1971: 283–290).

³³ The tendentious nature of these translations was documented by Salvesen (1955).

Constantine had not turned against him along with those bishops who wished to protect the true faith. Arius was condemned as a result. There was also Macedonius in Constantinople who led everyone astray until Emperor Theodosius turned against him, and Macedonius was condemned.³⁴

The list goes on, and the implications should be clear: Sverrir is fighting *for* the church rather than against it, while the Norwegian bishops are seditious and lead their flocks astray, or as the *Speech* states: “We have spoken these things so that people may understand and know that heresies have more often come from bishops than kings.”³⁵

This highly effective strategy of subversion is also evident in the opening section of the *Speech*, which presents an unusually elaborate version of the allegory of the Church as a body. As in *Elucidarius*, the head is Christ and the body is the Church. While this bodily imagery is conventional at that point in time, the *Speech* adds an unconventional element. The chest and the heart of this body is the king who “should have solicitude for, deliberate and act on behalf of, embolden and defend the other members.”³⁶ The king is thus not only placed at the center of the body but also at the top of the hierarchy of the Church/Kingdom as the one responsible for its health and wellbeing. This point is also stressed later on in the *Speech*:

Now all of you, learned and unlearned, should know and understand that kings and secular potentates are not appointed against God or the Holy Church. Rather, God himself joins together worldly power and the offices of the Holy Church, and kings have power and protection over the Holy Church ...³⁷

The allegory can be summarized as in Tab. 1.

The *Speech* continues by arguing that the present state of the church, or of the kingdom of Norway – it is somewhat hard to distinguish the two in

³⁴ Arius biskup í Alexandria er sneri öllu folki til villu ok frá kristni ok er hans biskupsdómr allr í dag heiðinn ok myndi þá villa hafa gengit um allan heim ef eigi hefði Konstantínus keisari móti honum snúisk með þeim biskupum er gæta vildu réttrar trúar ok var hann fyrirdómdr. Þá var Macedonius enn í Miklagarði er sneri öllu folki til villu þar til er Theodósíus keisari snerisk í móti ok var hann svá fyrirdómdr (ed. Holtsmark 1931: 19).

³⁵ En vér höfum fyrir því þessa hluti talda at menn skili þat ok viti at optar hefir villa komit af biskupum en af konungum (ed. Holtsmark 1931: 19).

³⁶ Hjarta ok brjóst þessa líkams skyldu vera konungar þeir er bera skyldu áhyggju ok ætlan ok ráðagerð, dirfð ok vörn fyrir öllum öðrum limum (ed. Holtsmark 1931: 1).

³⁷ Nú skulu þér vita allir lærðir ok ólærðir ok skilja at eigi eru konungar skipaðir eða veraldligir höfðingjar gagnstaðligir Guði eða heilagri kirkju, heldr samtengir Guð sjalfr saman veraldar-ríki ok embætti heilagrar kirkju ok eigu konungar vald ok gæzlu heilagrar kirkju [...] (ed. Holtsmark 1931: 7).

Tab. 1. Summary of the allegory in the Speech against the Bishops

Body part	Interpretation	Function
Head	Christ	
Eyes	Bishops	Show everyone the right path and watch over the other members
Nostrils	Archdeacons	smell the sweet scent of righteousness and true faith
Ears	Deacons and provosts	hear and settle difficult issues of the true faith
Tongue and lips	Priests	provide sound teachings and be examples of good conduct
Body	Church	
Heart and chest	King	have solicitude for, deliberate and act on behalf of, embolden and defend the other members
Shoulders and upper back	Earls and great chieftains	carry and lighten the burden that befalls the body
Arms	The landed men	provide unfailing support for shoulders and chest
Hands	Knights, retainers, and other warriors	carry shields and other means of protection before the chest and the other members
Stomach and intestines	Monks and ascetics	eat the food from which the rest of the body should receive nourishment and strength
Legs and feet	Farmers and crowds	support the rest of the body with their labor and work

the text – falls short of this harmonious ideal, for a great disease (*mikill sjúk-leikr*, ed. Holtsmark 1931: 1) has struck the body and the parts fail to fulfill their natural function and even resist their charge.³⁸ For the eyes now squint and go blind, the nostrils only smell stench, the ears go partly deaf and are unable to hear the truth. The mouth and lips stutter and the tongue lisps. By means of this straightforward model, the *Speech* argues that the entire clergy, that is, the head, debilitates the Church/kingdom, represented by the body, which is made up of all the non-ecclesiastical estates.³⁹ The *Speech* is

³⁸ Nú skipta allir limir sinni náttúru, því at hverr limr hafnar þeirri sýslu ok þjónustu er hann skyldi hafa (ed. Holtsmark 1931: 1–2).

³⁹ The only ecclesiastical estate that functions as it is supposed to do (the monks and ascetics), belongs to the body rather than the head. While this could be taken as a reflection of King Sverrir's relationship with the Norwegian monasteries, it seems more likely that this element is taken over from the model of the *Speech* (to be presented below).

careful to place the blame with the Norwegian clergy and excuses the pope for any responsibility arguing that the pope has no way of knowing what goes on in faraway regions, such as Norway, and therefore has to rely on the false information and gossip brought to Rome by the Norwegian clergy.⁴⁰

The most detailed study of the *Speech* is *Kongens ære* by Norwegian historian Erik Gunnes (1971). In an addendum added to his study at the proofing stage, Gunnes states that he had become aware of a close parallel in Latin to the text's use of the allegory of the body politic in a German manuscript from the 12th cent. He also printed excerpts from that text along with a translation and a few comments (1971: 367–371). However, neither Gunnes nor anyone else appears to have pursued this line of inquiry further.⁴¹ Unknown to Gunnes, the text can be found under the title *Sermo de ecclesia* 'a sermon on the church' among Werner of St. Blaise's *Deflorationes SS patrum* (PL 157: 1047–1049).⁴² It has also been printed by Rochais and Binont (1964: 86–88) from an English manuscript (12th cent., Lincoln Cathedral Library 201). Rochais and Binont attributed the text to Bernhard of Clairvaux and it has since been published among his *Sententiae* (III, 118, ed. Leclercq and Rochais 1972: 213–215).

In an appendix, the Latin text (ed. Leclercq and Rochais 1972) is presented alongside the opening of the *Speech*. As one can see, the Old Norse leaves out some of the sections of the Latin text (3, 5, 8, 16, 17, and 20), adds or expands on a few (4, 11, 13, and 14), moves sections 10 and 15 to the end (section 21), but otherwise it follows the Latin element by element. The Old Norse text stands out due to the central position it gives to the king (section 11). In the Latin text, no king is mentioned, and the entire upper part of the torso is identified with the knights who protect the church. Rather than being in charge they are subordinate to the leadership of the head.⁴³

The most well-known medieval elaboration of the metaphor of the body politic is found in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (1159). In this work of political theory, John identifies the king with the head, the senate with the heart, soldiers with the hands and so on. This thoroughly secular body, how-

⁴⁰ En þó at vér hljótim ávit af Rómaborgarbiskupi eða af kardinálum þá megum vér þat ekki páfa kenna, því at ekki veit hann heldr til hvat fram ferr í þessu landi eða í qðru því er honum liggir í fjarska, heldr valda því biskupar várir ok kennimenn, því at þeir bera drósu ok lygi fyrir páfa oss til fjandskapar (ed. Holtsmark 1931: 3).

⁴¹ Gunnes' discovery is mentioned in passing by Brégaint (2015: 159–160) who, following Gunnes, refers to the text as "A German sermon".

⁴² PL's edition is a reprint of a text published in Basel in 1494 (PL 157: 721–722).

⁴³ The heart is conceived as the seat of courage, but not as the center of the Church as in the *Speech*.

ever, is subordinate to the clergy who are the soul. The same basic idea had been expressed a century earlier by Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida who in his *Against the Simoniacs* explained that “just as the soul excels the body and commands it, so the priestly dignity excels and commands the royal, for the heavenly dignity excels and commands the earthly.”⁴⁴ So although *The speech against the Bishops* uses a conventional model as its point of departure, it departs significantly from it and shapes the model to suit its own purpose.

Rauðúlfs þáttur and the *Speech against the Bishops* both draw on a well-established tradition of using bodily imagery to convey messages about the inevitable passing of earthly kingdoms and the organization of society. While Nebuchadnezzar’s dream statue and Daniel’s interpretation of it, as well as the concept of the body politic, were well-attested models of thinking, the two Old Norse texts discussed above employ these models in unique and original ways. The *Speech against the Bishops* uses it to stress his point about the relative position of royal and ecclesiastical power, placing the king at the very top of the local earthly hierarchy, subordinate only to God. The unknown author of this unparalleled Old Norse text likely found inspiration for the opening of the speech in either the text that is published among the writings of Bernhard of Clairvaux as *Sententia* III, 118 or in a closely related, but so far unidentified text. If *Sententia* III, 118 was indeed his source, the fact that it is found in a 12th century English manuscript, kept and probably written at Lincoln Cathedral (Rochais and 1964: 15) is of some significance given King Sverrir’s English connections (see Johnsen 1970) and that he was instrumental in appointing the Englishman Marteinn, his former *birðprestr*, to bishop of Bergen. It is therefore possible, but by no means certain, that Marteinn, whom *Sverris saga* describes as a *forkunnar góðr klerkr* ‘an exceptionally good cleric’ was somehow involved in the creation of the *Speech* (see also Holtsmark 1931: 60–61).⁴⁵

While one cannot help but admire the rhetorical skills on display in the *Speech*, *Rauðúlfs þáttur* is a more enigmatic text that invites questions about the possible intentions of the author as well as the interpretation of the text. While clearly created by a widely read individual (or individuals) who drew on a range of sources, the overall message of the text is difficult to pin down

⁴⁴ Sicut praeminet anima et praecepit [corpori], sic sacerdotalis dignitas regali, utputa caelestis terrestri (ed. Thaner 1891: 225). So also Canning (1996: 86 and 110–112) upon whom this paragraph is based.

⁴⁵ For more general comments on the role in Sverrir’s administration of Marteinn and Ríkharðr svartameistari, another Englishman, see Bregaint (2015: 170).

and align with the general ideology surrounding the figure of St. Óláfr. The suggestions provided above offer a, perhaps unexpectedly, bleak reading of the tale, describing the slow but certain decline of the kingdom of Norway from Óláfr's reign down to the period of civil strife in the second half of the twelfth century. The nadir is reached with the pierced feet of the crucified dream figure representing the internecine strife between rival claimants to the Norwegian throne. While the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream figure concludes on an optimistic note, Rauðúlfr provides no such hope.

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Summary

This article examines how two Old Norse works, *Rauðúlfs þátr* and the *Speech against the Bishops*, use bodily imagery to convey ideas about the transient nature of earthly kingdoms and societal organization. Both texts draw from established models but adapt them uniquely. Inspired by a text attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux, the opening of the *Speech against the Bishops* emphasizes the king's supremacy over ecclesiastical power. *Rauðúlfs þátr* is more complex and enigmatic, and its overall message is ambiguous. The tale seemingly reflects a pessimistic view of Norway's decline from St. Óláfr's reign to the civil unrest of the late 12th century. The text's portrayal of a dream figure with pierced feet symbolizes internal conflicts among Norwegian throne claimants. Nebuchadnezzar's dream with Daniel's interpretation provides the obvious model for Óláfr's dream and Rauðúlfr's interpretation, but while Daniel's interpretation ends on an optimistic note, Rauðúlfr's interpretation offers no such hope.

Keywords: bodily imagery, allegory, interpretation, Óláfr Haraldsson, Sverrir Sigurðsson

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Appendix

Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sententia* III, 118 and the opening of the *Speech against the bishops*

The texts are based on the edition by Leclercq and Rochais (1972: 213–215) and Holtsmark (1931: 1–2), but the orthography of the Old Norse text has been normalized for ease of comprehension. The texts have also been broken down into numbered sections and arranged to facilitate cross-reference and comparison. Translations, provided by the author, are given after the Latin and Old Norse texts.

<i>Sententia</i> III, 118	Opening of <i>The Speech against the Bishops</i>
1 Christus et Ecclesia unum corpus constituunt.	Kristr ok heilug kirkja fullgera einn líkam algörvan, óskaddan með öllum limum.
2 Christus caput, Ecclesia corpus,	Kristr sjalfr er höfuð þessa líkams, kirkja er bolrinn.
3 quia sicut in capite vita et vegetatio totius corporis, ita in Christo vita et sustentamentum Ecclesiae, quae, si velit capiti conformari et ei servire, pro diversitate personarum et officiorum fiet cum eo unum in aeternum.	
4 Huius corpus oculi qui debent membris inferioribus providere sunt episcopi,	Augu þessa líkams skyldu vera biskupar vórir, þeir er oss skyldu vísa á rétta leið ok grandlausa þjóðgötu án allra villustíga ok sjá vel fyrir öllum limum út í frá.
5 qui non solum oculi, sed etiam pastores; et subditi non solum membrorum nomine, sed horum respectu dicuntur oviculae. Multum interest inter pastorem et ovem, praelatum et subditum. Ille regit, iste regitur; ille pascit, iste pascitur. Et sicut pastor praeest ovibus dignitate praelationis vel creationis, quia rationalis erectus est ad caelum, ita episcopi dici debent rationabiles et discreti comparatione subditorum. Hi debent habere canem, funem ad illum scilicet tenendum; baculum ad arcendum lupum; virgam ad regendas oves quae non possunt baculum pati; peram ubi portent panem suum. In Ecclesia Dei sunt praedones	

Sententia III, 118	Opening of <i>The Speech against the Bishops</i>
<p>lupi, contra quos necessarius est canis, id est latratus asperae correctionis et comminatio de supponendo gladio materiali, si non sufficit spiritualis; hic tamen fune tenendus est, ne impetuose discurrat, quia dandae sunt induciae, faciendae sunt vocationes pro modo facti et dignitate personae. Baculo excommunicationis arcendi sunt lupi; sed iterum quod debetur amoris Dei et utilitati proximi et quod est iustitiae, canis impendat amoris vel odio? Utendum est baculo, id est non parcendum est sibiipsi, quia IUSTUS IN PRINCIPIO SERMONIS SUIIPSIUS ACCUSATOR EST. Virga tenerae correctionis regendae sunt oves, id est simplices, ne aberrent. In pera debet habere panem verbi Dei reconditum, ut sit paratus reddere rationem omni poscenti.</p>	
<p>6 Nares sunt archidiaconi, qui sagaci odoratu debent olfacere vitam aliorum et ad episcopum referre.</p>	<p>Nasar þessa líkams skyldu vera erkidjárnar. Þeir skyldu þefja ok ilma allan sötleik réttlætis ok heilagrar trúar.</p>
<p>7 Aures sunt decani qui debent audire iudicia et, secundum quod audierunt, iudicare.</p>	<p>Eyru þessa líkams skyldu vera decani ok prófastar er heyra skyldu ok skilja [ms vilja] sakir ok vandendamál heilagrar kristni.</p>
<p>8 Unde dicitur: QUOD AUDIO IUDICIO, non quod odi, non quod amo.</p>	
<p>9 Os et lingua sunt presbyteri et diacones, predicatorum verbi Dei.</p>	<p>Tunga þessa líkams ok varrar skyldu vera prestar várir, þeir er telja skyldu fyrir oss góðar kenningar ok sjálfir sýna góð dómi í sínum meðferðum.</p>
<p>10 Sic esse deberet, sed modo omnia confusa et posteriorata. Oculi non sunt erecti. Inclinantur ad munera, ad odium, ad amorem. In eis est quod dicitur: TENEBRAE ERANT SUPER FACIEM ABYSSI. In eis est facies Lazarus ligata sudario.⁴⁶ In eis</p>	<p>See 21</p>

⁴⁶ The Speech against the bishops mentions Lazarus and the cloth tied around his face later: ok er þat nú opinbert at klæði ok dauðaband er Guð leysti af andliti Lazari í grófinni, þá er nú bundit um andlit lærifeðra várar (Holtmark 1931: 3) “And it is now clear that the cloth and band of death which God removed from the face of Lazarus in the grave, that is now tied over the face of our teachers.”

<i>Sententia</i> III, 118	Opening of <i>The Speech against the Bishops</i>
<p>sunt somno oculi gravati. In eis est Saulus squamas habens super oculos. Nares amiserunt odoratum, putantes malum bonum, et e converso tuentur quos volunt, gravant quod volunt. Aures pervertunt iudicia. Os et lingua silent.</p>	
11 Pectus,	<p>Hjarta ok brjóst þessa líkams skyldu vera konungar þeir er bera skyldu áhyggju ok ætlan ok ráðagerð, dirfð ok vörn fyrir öllum öðrum limum.</p>
12 dorsum, brachia, manus, Ecclesiae sunt milites. In pectore est cor, in quo est audacia. Hi audacter debent defendere ministros Ecclesiae. Dorsum congruit hominibus portandis, brachia levandis, manus contractandis. Hi debent portare, sustollere, contractare diligenter onera ecclesiastica.	<p>Axlir ok herðar ok hryggr þessa líkams skyldu vera jarlar ok stórhöfðingjar þeir er bera mætti ok létta allan þunga þann er til handa beri.</p>
13	<p>Armleggir þessa líkams skulu vera lendir menn þeir er øruggir stuðlar væri bæði brjósti ok herðum.</p>
14	<p>Handleggir ok hendr þessa líkams skyldu vera riddarar ok hirðmenn ok aðrir hermenn út í frá, þeir sem bera skyldu hlífðarvápn ok varnir fyrir brjósti ok öllum öðrum limum.</p>
15 Sed haec omnia conversa sunt.	<i>See 21</i>
16 O quam iniquae manus, quae crepant et eruunt oculos quos deberent abstergere, obtruncant nares quas deberent emungere, amputant aures quas deberent purgare, claudunt manus cui deberent ministrare! De vita clericorum sunt apud eos litterae in conviviis, discrepationes in triviis.	
17 Venter, qui pro infirmitate vilis habetur, receptaculum est tantum ciborum, nutritorium est corporis, decoquit cibos, porrigit vitales succos superioribus et inferioribus membris.	
18 Monachi et eremitae sunt venter Ecclesiae, quos mundus despicit. Hi iam recipiunt cibum spiritualem vel doctrinae. Hi sunt sustentamentum Ecclesiae, significati per Moysen orantem in monte, per	<p>En kviðr ok innyfli þessa líkams skulu vera munkar ok hreinlífismenn þeir er þá eina fózlu skulu nýta ok bergja er allr líkamr skyldi taka nóring ok styrk af.</p>

Sententia III, 118	Opening of <i>The Speech against the Bishops</i>
<p>Samuelem excubantem in templo, per Eliam morantem in deserto. Hi porrigunt spirituales succos superioribus et inferioribus. His convenit quod dicitur: Humanum genus vivit paucis, quia nisi hi essent, mundus periret vel fulmine vel hiatu terrae.</p>	
<p>19 Pedes, qui totum corpus portant, sunt rustici de quorum labore vivunt omnes praedicti.</p>	<p>En leggir ok fótr þessa líkams skulu vera bóndr ok fjölmenni þeir sem upphaldi bæði með verknaði ok allri atvinnu þeima líkama.</p>
<p>20 Haec est contatenatio Ecclesiae, si capiti suo velit uniri.</p>	
<p>21 See 10 and 15</p>	<p>En því er verr at nú skipta allir limir sinni nattúru, því at hverr limr hafnar þeirri sýslu ok þjónustu er hann skyldi hafa. Augu skelgjask ok óskyggjask, ok er þat sama hreist á fallit á augu biskupa várara er féll af augum postula þá nátt er Guð var tekinn. Sá hinn sami hófgi ok þungi er nú kominn á augu biskupa várara ok sjá þeir nú alla hluti sem í svefnórur er þeir eigi skilja bjartleik né sanna sýn. Nasar þefka nú daun en eigi ilm eða sótaleik. Eyru eru nú lemheyrð ok megu eigi heyra sannindi, né rétta skilning, því at nú verða sannindi hvárki heyrð eða séð, ok blindar nú biskupa vára ok aðra hófðingja þá er kristni skyldi gæta fésinki, óhóf, ágirnð, dramb, ok ranglæti ...</p>

Translation of the Latin text

1 Christ and the church constitute one body. 2 Christ is the head, the church the body, 3 for just as the life and the entire body's power of growth reside in the head, so in Christ one finds the life and sustenance of the Church which, if it wants to agree with the head and serve it, will through the diversity of persons and functions become one with him in eternity. 4 The eyes of this body, which should look after the lower members, are bishops 5 who are not only eyes but also shepherds; and subordinates are not only termed limbs, but little sheep in relation to them. There is a great difference between the shepherd and the sheep, the prelate and the subordinate. One

rules, the other is ruled; one feeds, the other is fed. And just as the shepherd ranks over the sheep by virtue of the dignity of the prelate or creation, – because being rational he stands upright towards heaven – so bishops should be considered rational and discerning in comparison with their subordinates. They should have a dog, a leash to restrain it; a staff to keep wolves away; a twig to govern the sheep who cannot bear the staff; a bag where they can carry their bread. In the Church of God, there are larcenous wolves against whom a dog is necessary – that is the barking of stern rebuke and the threat to bring down the material sword if the spiritual does not suffice; it should, however, be kept on a leash, so that it does not stray impetuously because truces should be given, summons made in accordance with the deed and the rank of the person involved. Wolves should be kept off with the staff of excommunication; but again, does it befall the dog to love or hate that which is owed the love of God and the benefit of the neighbor and what is just? The staff shall be used, that is, one shall not spare oneself, for the JUST ACCUSES HIMSELF IN THE BEGINNING OF THE SPEECH. The sheep, that is the common people, shall be controlled with a twig of mild correction so they do not go astray. In the bag he should keep the bread of the word of God, so that he is ready to give a portion to everyone who asks for it. 6 The nostrils are the archdeacons who, keen-scented, should smell the lives of others and report to the bishops. 7 The ears are the deans who should hear judgments and judge in accordance with what they have heard. 8 Therefore it is said: I JUDGE WHAT I HEAR, not what I hate, not what I favor. 9 The mouth and the tongue are priests and deacons, preachers of the word of God. 10 Thus, it ought to be, but now everything is jumbled and turned around. The eyes are not straight. They are bent by gifts, by hate, by favor. What is said is evident in them: Darkness was over the face of the deep. In them is the face of Lazarus bound with cloth. In them are eyes heavy with sleep. In them is Saul with scales before his eyes. The nostrils have lost their sense of smell, considering evil good, and conversely protecting those they choose, harming those they choose. The ears distort their judgments. The mouth and the tongue are silent. 11 The chest, 12 the back, the arms, the hands are the knights of the church. In the chest is the heart in which courage resides. These should defend the servants of the church bravely. The back corresponds to humans that carry, the arms to those that lift, the hands to those that grasp. These should carry, lift, grasp the ecclesiastical burdens. 15 But this has all been overturned. 16 O how wicked are the hands that burst and dig out the eyes that they ought to dry, cut the nostrils that they ought to wipe, cut off the ears that they ought to cleanse, close the hands with which they ought to serve! Texts about the lives of clerics are matters

of entertainment at their banquets and of disputes at crossroads. 17 The stomach, which is often considered worthless because of its weakness, is so much as a receptacle of food, provides nourishment for the body, digests the food, distributes necessary energy for the upper and the lower members. 18 Monks and hermits, whom the world looks down upon, are the stomach of the church. They take in spiritual food and that of doctrine. They are the underpinning of the church, signified by Moses praying on the mountain, by Samuel sleeping in the temple, by Elijah staying in the desert. They extend spiritual energy for the upper and the lower. It fits them when it is said: The human lives a short while, for if they were not, the world would be destroyed by lightning or earthquake. 19 The feet that carry the entire body are the farmers by whose labor all the aforementioned live. 20 This is how the Church is linked together if it would unite with its head.

Translation of the Old Norse text

1 Christ and the holy church make up one body, complete and undamaged, with all limbs. 2 Christ himself is the head of this body, the church is the trunk. 4 The eyes of this body should be our bishops, those who should show us the right way and the honest high road without any false paths, and furthermore, look well after all the limbs. 6 The nostrils of this body should be the archdeacons. They should smell and sense every sweetness of righteousness and the holy faith. 7 The ears of this body should be the deacons and the provosts who should listen and decide legal cases and the difficulties of the holy Christendom. 9 The tongue and lips of this body should be our priests, those who should give us good instruction and themselves be good examples in their conduct. 11 The heart and chest of this body should be the kings who should have solicitude for, deliberate and act on behalf of, embolden and defend the other members. 12 The shoulders, upper back, and back of this body should be the jarls and great chieftains who might carry and lighten the burden that befalls the body. 13 The upper arms of this body should be the landed men who should provide unfailing support for the chest and the shoulders. 14 The lower arms and hands of this body should be the knights and retainers, and moreover the other warriors, those who should hold shields and protections up before the chest and all the other limbs. 18 But the stomach and intestines of this body should be the monks and ascetics who should only eat and consume food from which the entire body can take nourishment and strength. 19 But the legs and feet of this body should be the farmers and common people who might sustain this body with their work and all their activities.

