SCRIPTA ISLANDICA

ISLÄNDSKA SÄLLSKAPETS

ÅRSBOK 72/2021

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REDIGERAD AV
LASSE MÅRTENSSON OCH VETURLIÐI ÓSKARSSON

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Innehåll

Of Magical Beings and Where to Find Them
On the Concept of *álfar*
in the Translated *riddarasǫgur*

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1. Introduction

The process of translation attempts to enable the understanding of for-
eign concepts and ideas, something which naturally involves the use of
both words and concepts that are already extant in the receiving culture.
This naturally involves linguistic problems, but more interestingly often
results in the overlapping, alteration and merging of concepts, something
that can have long-term consequences on language and cultural under-
standing. This article aims to explore how the Old Norse mythological
concept of the *álfar* in the Nordic countries (especially Iceland due to its
preserved manuscripts) may have been altered through the influence of the
translation of Old French romances into Norwegian and Icelandic during
the Middle Ages. As will be shown below, the mythological concept
that lies behind the introduction and use of the female variant of *álfar*
(sg. *álfr*) known as *álfkonur* (sg. *álfkona*) in Old Norse literature (and
culture) appears to have been that of the Old French *fée* (pl. *fées*). Indeed,
prior to the translation of foreign (especially Continental) works, some
of which appear to have been initiated by the Norwegian King Hákon
Hákonarson (1204–1263) in the early thirteenth century, the *álfkona* (and
motifs associated with her) seem to have been mostly absent in Old Norse

literature and folk belief (one minor exception is, for example, *Fáfnismál* st. 13).[1]

The present investigation will thus consider those instances in which Old Norse *álfkonur* appear in the corpus of the translated *riddarasǫgur*, exploring the concepts that lie behind them in the respective source material, and noting similarities as well as discrepancies in the said concepts. In so doing, various questions will be posed, such as: What caused the need to introduce the new concept of *álfkonur* when other supernatural female beings (*nornir* and *dísir*, for instance) already existed in Old Norse, especially if the various attributes of the Old French *fées* seem to have warranted a translation using either *dís* or *norn*? How much potential background was there for the development of the concept of the *álfkona* in local folklore and popular beliefs in the Nordic countries in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries? Last but not least, the article will consider how far reaching the influence of translators and their attempts to adapt foreign material to fit local beliefs was and what influence it had on the nature of the translated stories. This last question is of particular interest as it appears that in most cases the respective Old Norse translators seem to have regularly transformed, altered and adapted their material to fit the worldviews of their new Nordic audiences, either on the basis of demands by the commissioner of the translation or because of their personal urge to do so (possibly simply in order to enable or further understanding by the designated audience or because they themselves misunderstood the original concepts).

It needs to be borne in mind that supernatural concepts, especially those of the *fées* and *álfar*, cannot be regarded as having been steady concepts. As will be demonstrated below, they changed over the course of various centuries and of course varied by area. The question of how such conceptual translations resonated in the receiving society at any given time thus naturally presents several problems. These evidently include various conundrums regarding how the sources were understood at the time of translation, the time span involved in the process of writing and translating, and the taxonomy of the supernatural concepts investigated. The sources and the concepts used in them pose similar difficulties, one being that the act of tracing developments in two different cultures over

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[1] Unless otherwise stated, all information regarding Eddic poetry, such as the number of stanzas cited are taken from the two-volume edition titled *Eddukvæði* by Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason published in 2014.

the course of at least two centuries on the basis of translated works can only use extant material which has been randomly preserved, meaning that the available evidence has been conserved by chance. In other words, while the picture one might reach on the basis of comparing the extant Old French and Old Norse literary *corpora* to examine the translation of *fées* to *álfkonur* may be tangible, it is bound to be somewhat speculative. It is also evident that the multi-facetted supernatural concepts involved seem to have been undergoing change between the late 12th and 14th centuries, in both France and in Scandinavia. Because of the difficulty in finding any term in modern English that encompasses the meaning of the original terms,[2] in the following, the concepts involved will be addressed using the indigenous expressions for the said concepts, that is *fée* (sg.) or *fées* (pl.) for the Old French texts and *álfr* (sg.), *álfar* (pl.) as well as *álfkona* (sg.) and *álfkonur* (pl.) for the concept referred to in the Old Norse works. With regard to the overall shared concept involved (in other words an overarching term for the general class of being represented by "*fées* and *álfar*/*álfkonur*"), the English lexeme "fairy-folk" (in quotation marks) will be used here flavorlessly, void of the modern connotations attached to it in the longer, more general introductory and concluding sections. While being another unsatisfactory translation, it nonetheless avoids unnecessary repetition of all of the original terms in each case. Indigenous words and phrases will be given in italicised form to enable them to portray their initial, unspoiled meaning, English translations being provided in brackets.

Before the investigation can be commenced, the etymology of the two main Old Norse and French terms for "fairy-folk" must be addressed, explaining in part how and why certain key characteristics are frequently associated with each of them. The root of the Old Norse *álfr*, Anglo-Saxon *ælf* and Middle High German *alp*, appears to be the Indo-European root **albho-* meaning "white" (Pokorny 1959: 30).[3] This stem has cognates in various languages, for example, the Greek ἀλφός ('white rash'), the Latin *albus* ('white'), the Cymric *elfydd* ('earth, world') as well as the Old High German *albiz* (also *elbiz*), the Anglo-Saxon *aelbitu* (or *ielfetu*) and the Old Norse *elptr*, all of which mean 'swan' (Pokorny 1959: 30).

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[2] Terry Gunnell has shown that the word *álfr* has had different meanings attached to it throughout the ages (2007: 111–130).

[3] Jan de Vries has suggested otherwise, namely that the word may derive from the Sanskrit ऋभु ('*ṛbhu*') denoting divine and very skilled artisans (de Vries 1956: 257, n. 2). With regards to *ælf*, see, for example, Peters 1963: 250–257.

Interestingly, Julius Pokorny suggested the terms *álfr*, *ælf* and *alp* may initially have denoted "whitish mist shapes" (1959: 30). Whatever the case, clear connections exist with the word 'white' – and therefore a suggestion of brightness and/or fairness – an attribute that will prove to be fairly common to both the *álfar*, the *ælfe* and the *fées*, as will be shown in the following.

As Claude Lecouteux has highlighted, the masculine term *elf* (pl. *elfes*) has only existed in the French language since the nineteenth century arising as a loan word from German (Lecouteux 1988: 121–122). The original French term for supernatural (albeit usually female) figures of the "fairy" kind was *fée* (pl. *fées*). The supposed etymology for the word *fée* is more nebulous than that for the Old Norse *álfr*. The first two proposed origins interpret the word as being a derivate of other words or forms. The first idea is that it derives either from the Persian word پری (sg. *pari*, pl. پریان *pariān*; known in Turkish as *peri*), which refers to winged spirits that are well-known for their beauty, or from the second syllable *-pha* of the Latin *nympha*, a word that ultimately derives from the Ancient Greek word νύμφη (*nymphē*; 'bride, nymph') (Williams 1991: 462). The other suggestion is that it derived from other words with similar semantic fields, denoting similar concepts, such as the Old English *fægen* ('joyful, glad') or the Latin *fatuus* ('silly, foolish') (Williams 1991: 462). The most accepted proposal is that the origin of the word *fée* lies in the Latin *fatum* ('things said'), neut. pl. *fata* (Williams 1991: 462; Simek 2001: 225–226). This word *fatum* was apparently misunderstood (or reimagined) by some in the Early Middle Ages, the sg. fem. being used for 'fate, female goddess', and later, the *matronae* (figures of Roman mythology potentially equivalent to the Old Norse *dísir*) (Briggs 1969: 174 and 1978: 37; Williams 1991: 462; Simek 2011a: 220–223). It is this latter etymology which has led Williams to argue that the initial meaning of the word *fairy* was 'fatedness' (since he understood the *matronae* to be goddesses of destiny) (Williams 1991: 472).

The following two sections will consider the medieval perceptions of *fées* and *álfar* as well as that of the culturally connected Anglo-Saxon *ælfe*, examining both their shared features and the unique attributes each of these supernatural concepts were seen as having (at different times) in their respective cultures. Following this, the article will go on to consider the problems involved in translating the Old French *fée* with the Old Norse *álf-kona*, considering the use of these terms in the written evidence, that is in both the translated *riddarasǫgur* and the respective French source material.

1.1 *Fées*

Prior to the emergence of *fée*-like creatures in the written material, it is evident that various other concepts appear to have been circulating in medieval France, some of which bled into, shaped and/or gave rise to the later perception of the *fées*. France naturally had its fair share of pre-Christian mother goddesses and various other local beliefs in supernatural beings that had over time been imbued or transformed by Christianity (Saintyves 1936: 163–170; Walter 1992: 12–16). Indeed, the history of France in the Middle Ages shows many different cultures bringing their culture and (folk) beliefs into the country, making it a fertile breeding ground for a rich inventory of folklore and folk material. In the beginning of the sixth century, various tribes, such as the Franks, Burgundians and Vandals, had ventured into French territories, and these had been followed by Viking raids from the last decade of the eighth century onwards, which concluded with the appointment of Rollo I as Duke of Normandy in 911 (Ferro 2001: 37–40 and 56). All of these naturally introduced a range of new cultural concepts. Additional Muslim influences, propelled by the early Muslim conquests instigated by the prophet Muhammad in the seventh century, became tangible in France in the decade from 720 to 732 (Ferro 2001: 51–52). It was against this tumultuous historical background that the medieval French folk beliefs were taking final shape from the eleventh century onwards.

From the period of the fifth century onward, it is evident that Latin works such as *Etymologiae* by Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636) and *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* by Martianus Capella (active in the fifth century) use words like *fata*, *nympha* or *dryades* to denote various supernatural beings of the "fairy" kind known in southern Europe.[4] In scholar-

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[4] Isidore of Seville, for example, states in Book 8 *De Ecclesia et Sectis* of his *Etymologiae*: "Nymphas deas aquarum putant, dictas a nubibus. … Ipsas autem dicunt et Musas quas et nymphas, nec immerito. Nam atque motus musicen efficit. Nympharum apud gentiles varia sunt vocabula. Nymphas quippe montium Oreades dicunt, silvarum Dryades, fontium Hamadryades, camporum Naides, maris Nereides" (Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum Sive Originum Libri XX 1911: 8.96–97) ("They believe *nymphae* to be the goddesses of the waters, so called after the clouds. … Moreover, they also call *musae* [those] which are *nymphae*, not undeserved. For, also, [their] motion produces music. Among the pagans exist various names for the *nymphae*; since they call *nymphae* of the mountains *oreades*, of the forests *dryades*, of the springs *hamadryades*, of the plains *naides*, of the sea *nereides*." [Unless otherwise stated, all translations in this article are those of the author]). In Book 2 §167 of his work *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, Martianus Capella (fl. c. 410–420) conjures the following image of all kinds of beings living in nature:

ship, such figures are described as *fées marraines* ('Godmother *fées*') to
highlight their origin and to differentiate this type of *fées* from another
incarnation, namely that of the *fées amantes* ('lover *fées*') encountered
in later vernacular literature (see below) (Harf-Lancner 1984: 27–34 and
2003: 25–43).[5] As with the *álfar* and *ælfe* respectively (see below), it
seems clear that the *fées* and their predecessors experienced demonization
under the Christian faith, something that can be seen in, for example,
Sermon XV of the collection of sermons entitled *Super Apocalypsim* by
Geoffrey of Clairvaux (also of Auxerre; c. 1115/1120–after 1188) (see
sections 1.2 and 1.3 below) (Goffredo di Auxerre 1970: 185; Lecouteux
1992: 83; Harf-Lancner 1984: 411–416 and 420–431 and 2003: 175–180,
205–210 and 214–218). While this had an influence on their presentation
– as can be seen in the narratives related to the *Chevalier au cygne* cycle or
the ambivalent development of the figure of Morgan le Fay, for instance –
this did not seem to impede the popularity of the *fées* in popular tradition
(Harf-Lancner 1984: 184–196 and 390–409 and 2003: 59–65 and 175–
203). Indeed, over time, a different image of the *fée* started emerging in
the literature of the aspiring social cast of the knights which drew heavily
on earlier popular folk motifs and traditions. As Harf-Lancner has argued,
it appears to have been this advent of *aventure*-literature in the twelfth
century (represented by, for example, the *lais* of Marie de France and
the *chansons de geste*; see below) that gave rise to the *fées amantes* as
literary entities (Harf-Lancner 1984: 34–42 and 2003: 47–65). It is worth
dwelling on these figures a little longer, for they are the most prominent
"type" of *fées* encountered in the literature considered for this article.

   As has been discussed above, medieval France was a cultural melting
pot in which Roman, Christian, Muslim and pagan cultures had contributed
to a broad variety of different folk beliefs and traditions. In his work La
Fée à la Fontaine et à l'Arbre (1992), Pierre Gallais has proposed the idea
of an essentially literary archetype for the *fées amantes*. Gallais argues
that this trope consists of a specific set of motifs, namely the idea of a

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"… qui habitant siluas nemora … lacus fontes ac fluuios appellanturque Panes Fauni Fones
Satyri Siluani Nymphae Fatui Fatuaque uel Fantuae uel etiam Fanae a quibus fana dicta
quod soleant diuinare"(Martianus Capella 1866: 45) ["… which [i.e. the earth] they inhabit
forests, woods, …, lakes, springs and rivers and they were addressed as Pans, Faunuses,
Fones, *Satyri*, *Silvani*, *Nymphae*, *Fatui*, *Fatua* and even *Fantuae* and also *Fanae* after
which temples [lat. sg. *fanum*, pl. *fana*] are named because they would be used to divine"].
[5] As late as 1881, Paul Sébillot recounts a story collected in Le Gouray, Brittany, that a
group of *fées* called Margots give presents to newly born infants of nobility and predict
their future (Sébillot 1882: 110–111).

solitary, supernatural woman (the *fée*) being encountered by the hero of the narrative by a beautiful fountain or a lone tree (a *locus amoenus*) something which always has consequences (1992: 331; Sébillot 1905: 190–191 and 195–199). He argues that this initial concept of the *fée* and her connection to woodland is the embodiment of a re-invented and perception of nature re-imagined under a Platonian *Demiurg* and made prominent by the troubadours and the *pastourelle* in the twelfth century, an image which was then seized on and developed by other writers in the thirteenth century who gave the *fée* the shape of the mother of all beauty (Gallais 1992: 326–330).[6] As Gallais notes:

> Pour les romancier "symbolistes" du XIIe siècle et du début du XIIIe, comme pour les conteurs populaires, la Fée à la fontaine, emanation de son *locus amoenus*, personification des forces naturelles de vie, unissant le charme de la jeune fille à l'efficacité protectrice de la mère, est une representation pure de l'*anima*. (1992: 332)

> (For the 'symbolist' novelists of the twelfth and early thirteenth century, as for the popular storytellers, the 'Fairy by the Fountain', the emanation of the *locus amoenus*, a personification of natural forces of life uniting the charm of the young girl and the protective efficacy of the mother, is a pure representation of the *anima*.)

One can summarise the most prominent traits of the medieval French *fées* as being that besides their supernaturality and femininity and their connection to trees and water, they are fair and possess magical capabilities (divination, prediction of destiny, and illusions) (Sébillot 1882: 73–74 and 1905: 410–414; Harf-Lancner 2003: 214–218). They tend wounds, and, while they are not described as fighting, they are very capable at textile work – both spinning and weaving – as well as the crafting of weaponry and armour (see, for example, *Élie de Saint-Gilles* discussed below) (Harf-Lancner 2003: 148). Although the above features are not limited to the accounts of *fées amantes*, they are most prominent in these accounts. Another important aspect that needs to be borne in mind in this respect, however, is the potential connection of the earlier *fées marraines*

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[6] A *pastourelle* is a terse narrative that describes a meeting between a knight and a beautiful shepherdess as well as his advances and the outcome thereof from the knight's point of view. The *pastourelle* was very popular in thirteenth-century France and especially in the Provence (Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, s.v. "Pastourelle").

with the idea of changelings, something that can be seen most clearly in the association of the *fées* with childbirth (see above and section 2.2).[7]

The narrative prominence of this type of *fées* can be roughly said to begin in the twelfth century, gradually fading out in the fifteenth century congruently with the fall of the chivalric class and the literature associated with them. It must be borne in mind, however, that these changes did not only affect the conceptualisations of *fées*, who were but one of a variety of other supernatural creatures known in France in the Middle Ages (Harf-Lancner 2003: 239–241).

1.2 *Álfar*: An Enigma of the North

The *álfar* seem to have experienced a more troubled history of development than the French *fées*, going through various stages from their earliest appearances, often under influence from other concepts, some of which appear to have been foreign. At one point, we even find them being separated into two distinct groups of beings (light and dark) by the early Icelandic scholar Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241) under apparent influence from the Old Norse translation of the Christian *Elucidarius* (dated to c. 1200).[8] The *álfar* are nonetheless tangible figures in Old Norse textual accounts between the eleventh to the mid-fifteenth century, going on to take an enduring role in Icelandic folklore, even today.[9]

Mentions of the *álfar* reach as far back as the earliest surviving mytho-

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[7] The literary and folkloristic *fées* have amongst their ranks various famous named figures, such as Mélusine and Morgan le Fay. The figure of Mélusine will be of interest in the discussion of the connection of *fées* and *álfkonur* as progenitors of lineages (see section 2.4 below). It is nonetheless worth bearing in mind that the *mélusienne* accounts ('Mélusinian stories') highlight the "positive" aspects of women (such as motherhood, protectiveness, fidelity in marriage), while the *morganienne* stories on the other hand revolve around features that are perceived as more dangerous (such as magic skills, sexual desire, and deviousness) (Sébillot 1882: 117–119; Gallais 1992: 12; Harf-Lancner 2003: 149, 151–155 and 214–418).

[8] See Skáldskaparmál 1998: 41 and 45; and Elucidarius 1992: 8–11. Various research questions have arisen from Snorri's distinction between the *ljós-* ('light'-), *døkk-* ('dark'-) and *svartálfar* ('black *álfar*') in *Skáldskaparmál*, and not least in connection with the description of angles in *Elucidarius* (See, for example, Holtsmark 1964: 37; Gunnell 2007: 127–128; Hall 2007: 23–27; Simek 2013: 335–336 and 2017a: 211–212). Owing to limitations on length, it is impossible to take this question further here.

[9] As has been recently highlighted by Gunnell, the *álfar* appeared to have retained some actuality in Icelandic learned works during the late Middle Ages and the Age of Enlightenment (2018: 191–209). Gunnell has also highlighted traditions regarding *álfar* that are still practised in present-day Iceland (2012: 301–323 and 2014: 338–342).

logical material, the most prominent mentions appearing in the manuscripts of the so-called *Poetic Edda* in the late thirteenth century, in which the *álfar* never appear as protagonists. They nonetheless appear frequently in various re-occurring and frequently used formulaic phrases that show their close connections to the two divine lineages, the *æsir* and *vanir* (Shippey 2005: 177–178; Gunnell 2007: 121–123; Ármann Jakobsson 2015: 216).[10] The Eddic connections between the *álfar* and the *vanir* gods nonetheless appear to have had more gravity than the others. For example, the *vanir* god Freyr is said to receive the world of Álfheimr as *tannfé* (a gift received upon growing or losing one's first tooth) in *Grímnismál* st. 5, and the sun which Freyr seems to be closely connected to is referred to as *álfrǫðull* ('*álf*-wheel') in *Vafþrúðnismál* st. 47 and *Skírnismál* st. 4 (Simek 2017a: 208; Motz 1973/1974: 95). These aforementioned links between gods and the *álfar* in earlier times may also be inferred from the verses the early Icelandic poet Egill Skallagrímsson utters in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* (dated to the first half of the thirteenth century) before he erects a *níðstǫng* against the Norwegian King Eiríkr *blóðøx* and his associate Queen Gunnhildr, calling on a god about whom he uses the (potentially) synonymous terms *landálfr* and *landáss* (Almqvist 1965: 92–93 and 108–109; Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1999: 153–157),[11] suggesting that the words *áss* and the *álfr* were also synonymous (Gunnell 2007: 121; Ármann Jakobsson 2015: 216). Other surviving secular texts from the same period relating to the history of Iceland nonetheless use the term in a different sense, suggesting a development in meaning. The idea of an *álfablót* (a seasonal sacrifice to the *álfar*) is mentioned in st. 5 of the *Austrfararvísur* of the *skáld* Sighvatr Þórðarson (995–1045).[12]

Works such as *Landnámabók* (thought to be composed in the twelfth century) mention beings and concepts such as *landvættir* (referring to both nature spirits and the spirits of the dead) or *bergbúar* ('rock dwellers') and tell of people who were believed to "die into the hills".[13] At first, the

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[10] The formulaic use of *álfar* has been extensively studied, especially with regard to mentions of them in the role of demons and illness-causing entities: see various publications by Rudolf Simek (2011b: 26–47; 2017a: 206–212; 2017b: 140–141).

[11] The reference to *landáss* is in *lausavísa* 28 (A-redaction of *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*; *lv*. 27 in B-redaction; *lv*. 26 in C-redaction) and that to *landálfr* in *lausavísa* 29 (A-redaction; *lv*. 28 in B-redaction; *lv*. 27 in C-redaction). The *níðstǫng* is erected in chapter 57 in the A-redaction of *Egils saga*: (Egils saga 2001: 105–106 and 110).

[12] All references to Skaldic poems are to the versions contained in the Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages database (https://skaldic.abdn.ac.uk/db.php).

[13] It may suffice to refer to two examples given in *Landnámabók*, namely the chapters 68

landvættir appear to have been seen as something quite different to the *álfar*, hinting at the two being quite different concepts, as can be seen in *Egils saga* (Gunnell 2007: 117).[14] However, over time a development seems to have started taking place whereby the word *álfr* was also starting to be used (as now) for beings related to rocks or *hólar* (Gunnell 2007: 118–119). Such a development can be inferred from a description which is preserved in chapter 9 of *Heimslýsing ok helgifræði* contained within the *Hauksbók* manuscript (composed around 1300), describing how women sacrifice food to rocks to please entities referred to as *landvættir* (*Hauksbók* 1896: 167; Shippey 2005: 182–183; Gunnell 2007: 120). In short, the *álfar* were becoming *landvættir*. The best example that high-lights this development is the early thirteenth-century *Kormáks saga*, in which a blood sacrifice to a rock prior to a *hólmgangr* duel is described as an *álfablót* rather than making any reference to *landvættir* (*Vatnsdæla saga*, *Hallfreðar saga*, *Kormáks saga*, *Hrómundar þáttr halta*, *Hrafns þáttr Guðríðarsonar* 1939: 288; Shippey 2005: 183; Gunnell 2007: 118–119; Simek 2013: 329 and 335).

From here onwards, the *álfar* appear to take diverging roads in Christian works, being either classed with other *óvættir* ('fiends, evil entities') as in, for example, *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* (dated to the early fourteenth century), or even made synonymous with angels (Gunnell 2007: 119–120; Simek 2013: 327–328 and 2017a: 206 and 219).[15] The same process of demonization which, as noted above also applied to the *fées*, is effectively highlighted in various medieval lead amulets that have been discussed by Klaus Düwel and Rudolf Simek (Düwel 2001: 237–252; Simek 2013: 326 and 329–335). The lead amulets in question here are dated to a time between the eleventh and twelfth centuries and have been found in an area spanning Jutland, Schleswig and Halberstadt (in the eastern region of Saxony-Anhalt, Germany). The most interesting incision is preserved on a small lead sheet found in a church in Romdrup near Limfjord, Jutland (Denmark) and is dated to shortly before 1200. It features the following

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and 85 (as given in *Sturlubók*, dated to between 1275 and 1280). Chapter S68 mentions how Sel-Þórir and his retine think they would die into Þórisbjörg, whereas chapter S85 (H73) imparts how Þórólfr and his kinsmen believe they would die into Helgafell (Íslendingabók, Landnámabók 1968: 94, 96, 98 and 124–126).

[14] From Egill's curse it becomes apparent, that the *landvættir* he calls upon indwell the landscape rather than living inside mountains, and that they can be subjected to the effects of the *níðstǫng* (Egils saga 2001: 110).

[15] Similar ideas can also be found, for example, in st. 2.1 of the so-called "Buslubæn" curse in *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs* (Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda 1944: 474).

adjuratory formula: "*adiuro uos eluos uel eluas aut demones …*" ("I conjure you, elves [masc.] or elves [fem.] and demons …" [Simek 2017a: 215]) (Düwel 2001: 239; Simek 2017a: 215). What is worth highlighting here is the fact that the formula seems to distinguish between male and female elves which the forms *eluos* ('male elves') and *eluas* ('female elves'). As will be stressed below, however, this is the only mention of female *álfar* in the period alongside *Fáfnismál* (see above). It should be borne in mind that inscriptions such as this may reflect the notion of an omnipresence of demonic or malevolent entities in medieval times (Simek 2013: 321–325 and 328–329; 2017a: 213–219 and 2019: 377–386).

Ultimately, it is likely that the brief outline given above only scratches the mere surface of how the *álfar* might have been perceived in the Nordic countries in the early Middle Ages and how this perception changed over the course of time. One can nonetheless draw some conclusions. As Terry Gunnell has underlined, the obvious multifarious concept of the *álfar* suggests that, like the *fées*, these beings cannot be viewed as having constituted a single concrete group like the *æsir* or *vanir*, for example (Gunnell 2007: 129; Ármann Jakobsson 2015: 216 and 220). They rather appear to represent a broad concept which rejects any attempts to categorise them in simple terms. Their character was evidently both volatile and changeable. The Nordic *álfar* of the Middle Ages are fittingly be summarised in the following statement by Rudolf Simek:

> What must be kept in mind … is that detailed concepts of what an *álfr* actually was and did may have varied widely in time and space over the Germanic area, even after the time of the Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons in the seventh century and up until the High Middle Ages, when the *álfar* were still conjured up, even if to ban them from harming people. (2017a: 219)

It is nonetheless clear that by the time of the translated *riddarasǫgur*, the *álfar* in Iceland were beginning to take on the role that they have maintained since in Iceland, as a kind of nature spirit, albeit one that at this stage was essentially male, and had few connections with magic, childbirth or textile work. As the above quote suggests, similar developments appear to have been taking place in Anglo-Saxon England, both preceding as well as simultaneously to those shifts in the perception of the Nordic *álfar* that have been outlined above. Naturally, both areas have a similar cultural background, meaning that it is also worth briefly investigating the Anglo-Saxon perception the *ælfe* if we wish to understand the overall background of this concept and its potential for change and adaptation.

1.3 The Anglo-Saxon *ælf/ælfe*

The perception of figures associated with the *álfar* (usually referred to as *ælf* (sg.) or *ælfe* (pl.) in Old English) are tangible in various written accounts from Anglo-Saxon England going back to the eighth century. That the perception of the *ælfe* was as multi-facetted in Britain as it was in Scandinavia can be seen in a variety of sources. A good example is found in the early Old English glosses on various Latin works dating to the ninth and tenth centuries which highlight the existence of a broad variety of "types" of *ælfe*,[16] *driades* ('dryads') being described as wood-*ælfenne*, and *musae* ('muses') being described as *landælfe* among others. One naturally needs to bear in mind that like the translated *riddarasǫgur*, these glosses constitute somewhat problematic sources (Hall 2007: 78–79 and 81–83).[17] All the same, a recurring feature of the Anglo-Saxon *ælfe* (like their Scandinavian counterparts) is their brightness or beauty, as can be seen in the use of the Old English poetic term *ælfscinu* which translates as '*ælf*-beautiful' (Shippey 2005: 172; Hall 2007: 88–94). The usage of this word can be substantiated on three different occasions, all of them being connected to the description of females (Hall 2007: 92–94).[18]

Negative connotations like those associated with the *álfar* are also encountered with the *ælfe*, some potentially deriving from their possible association with other, known, antagonistic supernatural beings known in Britain. Indeed, it might be argued that even at this time, the *ælfe* were regarded with more severity in the Anglo-Saxon world than in the Nordic countries, perhaps because of the church which was well established much earlier in Britain (during the sixth to eighth centuries) (Padberg 2009: 74–93). As Alaric Hall, in particular, has shown, in Britain the *ælfe* were frequently interpreted as being the root of physical afflictions. Old English preserves various words for manifold illnesses that are thought to have been caused by *ælfe*, the most prominent of which is *ælfe gescot* ('*ælf*-shot') mentioned at an early point in the well-known late tenth-/

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[16] See, for example, the *Carmen de virginitate* by Aldhelm (c. 639–709) (Aldhelmi Opera 1919: 353).

[17] It may suffice to mention one example here, namely the *Third Cleopatra Glossary* which contains, amongst other texts, *Carmen de virginitate* by Aldhelm which was discussed above. It thus comes to no surprise that Aldhelm's terminology can also be found in the glossary (Gretsch 1999: 132–184 [especially 140–141]).

[18] The word *ælfscinu* appears two times in *Genesis A* (ll. 1827 and 2731) and once in *Judith* (l. 14), (The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 1931: 55 and 81 and 1965: 99).

early eleventh-century text commonly referred to as *Wið fǣrstice* in the collection of texts known as *Lacnunga* (Anglo-Saxon Remedies 2001: 90–95; Hall 2007: 96–118).[19] The idea is that of a stinging pain induced by an outside (supernatural) force by the means of a shot projectile (Cameron 1993: 140–144).[20]

Of particular interest is, as with the Nordic *álfar*, that the Anglo-Saxon *ælfe* almost exclusively seem to point to *male* figures. As has been stated by Hall, it is noteworthy that the glossators of eighth century England used the Latin loanword *nympha* when referring to potentially female *ælfe*. This suggests that there was no vernacular Old English word for a female counterpart to the *ælfe* (Hall 2007: 83). It is only later, under the influence of foreign narratives, that changes start taking place. One of many examples is Laȝamon's description of Queen Argante in his late-twelfth-century *Brut* which points to the late development of the word *alven* (to denote specifically female *ælfe*) (Shippey 2005: 175–176; Hall 2007: 75–76).[21] As Hall remarks:

> The rise of the female denotation to *ælf* appears concurrently …, with the transference to *ælf* to the weak declension. But although this morphological change could have been a factor in creating the conditions for semantic change, it is not a sufficient explanation for it: other innovative early Middle English weak plurals like *cnihten*, *kingen* or *brethren* continued to denote males alone. The arrival of female *elven* in English culture must have involved other factors, linguistic and extra-linguistic. (2007: 88)

As with the Icelandic *álfkonur* (see below), the *elven* should thus be seen as additions that were introduced at a later stage when the concept of the male *ælfe* (and *álfar*) had been established for many centuries. It is tempting to speculate whether this development, like that in Iceland, was prompted by the influence of Anglo-Norman, Breton or generally French literature like that which will be considered in the following section.

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[19] Regarding the dating of Harley MS 585 which contains the *Wið fǣrstice* text, see http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?-ref=Harley_MS_585. The belief that ailments or even death could be caused by elvish projectiles remained popular even in later centuries in the British Isles (Hall 2005: 19-36).

[20] Similar ideas are found in the Nordic countries, as has been pointed out by Reichborn-Kjennerud (1928: 51 and 87–88) and Lauri Honko (1959: 41–48).

[21] In his twelfth-century work entitled *Brut*, Laȝamon describes Queen Argante in l. 28613 as *aluen swiðe sceone* ('an elf most fair') and in l. 28639 as *fairest alre aluen* ('the fairest of all elves') in the Cotton Caligula A.ix. manuscript (Laȝamon's Brut 1847: 144–145).

2. Of Magical Beings and Where to Find Them

2.1 Introduction

As has been stated in the introduction, the aim of this article is to research the changes and alterations in concept that took place as the Old French term *fée* was translated to the Old Norse *álfar* and *álfkona* in the translated *riddarasǫgur*. Since translation usually involves translocation (even if it is as abstract as text or language), it will often involve concepts being moved from one culture to the other. This seems to have been particularly the case in this example since, as has been noted above, the image of female *álfar* is almost totally absent in both textual as well as archaeological evidence in the Nordic countries prior to the arrival of the translated *riddarasǫgur* and their continental motif inventory (see above). There is thus good reason to consider whether that the concept of female *álfar* was introduced into the Old Norse sphere through intercultural interactions between Scandinavia and the Continent in the thirteenth century, at a time when the *fées* had already manifested their position as narrative devices in France (see above).

This naturally brings us to the question of which narratives and the translations should be included in the current investigation. Logically, those Old French narratives that have no surviving Old Norse translation (regardless of whether any translation ever existed) are excluded, as are those translated *riddarasǫgur* that do not feature the word *álfkona*/*álfkonur* in their Old Norse rendition. Thus, narratives of this kind are not considered here, with the exception of the Breton *lai Guigemar* which features the only description of a woman as being "beautiful as a *fée*" (Sinaert 1984: 61) which has been transported into the Old Norse corpus of translated *riddarasǫgur*.

The sources upon which the following investigation rests are thus limited to four French works that feature *fées* and their respective Old Norse redactions:[22]

- *Érec et Énide*, surviving in thirteen manuscripts (two of which are fragmentary) and generally dated to c. 1170, and the translation

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[22] Unless otherwise stated, all information regarding the various Old Norse manuscripts, such as their dating and the number of extant manuscripts are taken from the *Ordbog over det Norrøne Prosasprog database* (http://onp.ku.dk/onp/) and from Sif Ríkharðsdóttir and Stefka G. Eriksen (2013: 24–25).

Erex saga dated to the mid-thirteenth century, which is extant in three manuscripts dating from the sixteenth century (*Erec et Enide* 1968: III–VI and XXVIII–XXXII; *Erex saga* 1999: 219–220). The narrative follows the Arthurian knight Érec (Erex) who finds his wife Énide (Evida in Old Norse) during his first adventure and, giving in to love, loses sight of his chivalric duties. He is urged on to a second series of quests by his wife which leads to his reinstatement in rank and glory.

- *Élie de Saint-Gilles*, which survives only in the BnF 25516 manuscript[23] which is dated to the latter two decades of the thirteenth century, and the translation *Elís saga ok Rósamundu* (henceforth *Elís saga*), which has been preserved in over forty manuscripts dating from between the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. The original translation is dated to the first half of the thirteenth century (*Élie* 2013: 9–10; *Elis saga* 1881: VII–XVII). The story tells how Elye (Elís), the son of a Provençal ruler named Julien (Juliens) is reprimanded for being an unpromising knight and leaves his father's court. During his travels, he rescues four Christian knights but gets captured in the process. Elye manages to vanquish the antagonistic king Lubïen de Baubas (Jubien) with the help of the pagan princess Rosamonde (Rósamunda), who promises to be baptised and the two return to France. (The Old French original continues, making Elye the godfather of Rosamonde. While some Icelandic translations break off here, other later renditions have the two marry.)

- *Le mantel mautaillé* (also known as, for example, *Le court mantel*), surviving in six manuscripts and dated to the late twelfth / early thirteenth century, and its close Old Norse translation *Mǫttuls saga*, dated to the mid-thirteenth century, and surviving in six manuscripts (*The Lay of Mantel* 2013: 5 and 7–8; *Mǫttuls saga* 1999: 3–4). The story tells of how a stranger brings a mantle to Arthur's court, offering it in reward to any lady that it fits. However, the mantle has been enchanted, becoming either too long or too short whenever the maiden in question has been unfaithful to her love, something which humiliates almost every woman at court until one finally proves worthy.

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[23] For a description of the manuscript BnF 25516 located in the Bibliothèque national de France, Déparement des Manuscrits (National Library of France, Department of Manuscripts): see (in French) https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc71766w.

- The Breton *lai Guigemar* attributed to Marie de France, surviving in four manuscripts, and dated to the later decades of the twelfth century, and its two translations *Guiamars ljóð* contained within the *Strengleikar* compilation (and preserved in two fragmentary Norwegian manuscripts dated to the thirteenth century) and *Gvímars saga* (extant in the Icelandic Lbs 840, 4to manuscript which is dated to 1737) (*Die Lais der Marie de France* 1925: LX–LXI and LXIV; *The Lais of Marie de France* 2009: 8; *Gvímars saga* 1979: 108–109 and 112–120).[24] This tells how the outstanding knight Guigemar (Gviamar or Gvijmar) gets wounded during a hunt, then finding a fair woman and following her to her realm. He takes his leave after being healed. His love follows him some time later but is captured by the king Mériaduc (Meriadus). Guigemar then vanquishes Mériaduc, takes over his kingdom and rescues his beloved.

The scenes in which the *fées* (*álfkonur* in the translations) appear can be roughly grouped into three groups which will be covered in the following sections which will focus on: 1) craftsmanship; 2) the bestowing of fate and changelings; and 3) beauty.

2.2 *Fées* and *álfkonur* as Exceptional Craftswomen

That both the *fées* and the Icelandic *álfkonur* of later times are seen as being exceptionally skilled in the art of crafting objects, ranging from wonderful clothes and shoes to magical items has been long accepted. It thus comes to no surprise, that the translated *riddarasǫgur* and their respective Continental sources that feature such beings in their narratives after make use of these tropes in order to explain the origin of magical objects. Three of the four narratives that involve *fées* and/or *álfkonur* show them as supernatural artisans who produce either beautiful and exquisite or magical objects (four times a mantle and once a weapon).

No better point of departure for such an investigation can be found in Old French chivalric literature than in the elaborate description of a mantle given in Chrétien de Troyes' *Érec et Énide* ll. 6671–6743 (*Erec et Énide* 1968: 203–205). The description is given as part of the coronation

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[24] Regarding the difficult transmission history and the interdependence of the manuscripts and the possibility of *Gvímars saga* being acutally closer to an original than the extant Norwegian manuscripts (Brügger Budal 2014: 40).

scene of Érec, in which he receives the piece as one of his coronation gifts. The account opens by describing the mantle's origin, namely that it was fashioned by four *fées*, and then continues with an in-depth description of the embroidery with which the mantle was adorned,[25] depicting the four liberal arts (also known as *quadrivium*): geometry, arithmetic, music and astronomy (in that order), each *fée* being responsible for the crafting of one illustration (*Erec et Enide* 1968: 203–205).

Erex saga contains a loose translation of this passage, although interestingly enough, here Evida is granted the mantle instead of Erex. The corresponding passage, which is not as exhaustive as its French counterpart, runs as follows:

> Artús kóngr gaf Erex kórónu af gulli gerva í vígslunni … En Evida gaf hann [that is King Arthur] dýrliga skikkju; þar váru á skr<i>faðar allar höfuðlistir. Hún var öll skínandi ok svá dýr at engi kaupmaðr kunni hana at meta. Hún var ofin níu rastir í jörð niðr af fjórum álfkonum í jarðhúsi, þar er aldri kom dagsljós. (*Erex saga* 1999: 258)

> King Arthur gave Erex a crown of gold at the consecration … But to Evida gave he [that is King Arthur] a precious robe; on it were depicted the liberal arts. It glittered all over and was so precious that no merchant could estimate its value. It was woven by four [*álfkonur*] in an underground dwelling nine leagues under the earth where no daylight ever reached. (*Erex saga* 1999: 259)

A striking point in this translation is that fact that the Old Norse deviates in its depiction of the *álfkonur* working in the darkness below the surface of the earth – an aspect one might associate rather with *dvergar* – something that the Old French does not mention. The translator thus seems to be building on Snorri's idea of the *svartálfar*, rather than *álfar*, who, as noted above, tended to be associated with light.

Another account that features *fées* as craftswomen is the Old French *lais Le mantel mautaillé*, in which another very prominent magically induced mantle serves as the driving force for the narrative. This mantle was also meticulously woven by a *fée* as the following vivid description shows (ll. 193–211):

> Si en a tret fors .I. mantel;
> Onques nus hom ne vit tant bel,

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[25] Ll. 6682–3 describe the origin of the mantle: "Quatre fees l'avoient fet / par grant san et par grant mestrie" (Erec et Enide 1968: 203) ("… It was woven / By four fairies, working / As great and masterful craftsmen" [Erec and Enide 1997: 212; here ll. 6747–9]).

Car une fee l'avoit fet.
Nus hom ne savroit le portret
Ne l'uevre du drap aconter.
Or lesson de l'ovraigne ester,
Si vos dirai une merveille
A qui nule ne s'apareille:
La fee fist el drap une oevre
Qui les fausses dames descuevre.
La dame qui l'ait afublé,
Se ele a de riens meserré
Vers son bon seignor, s'ele l'a,
Li manteaus bien ne li serra.
Et des puceles autresi:
Cele qui vers son bon ami
Avra mespris en nul endroit,
Ja puis ne li serra a droit,
Qu'il ne soit trop lonc ou trop cort. (The Lay of Mantel 2013: 68)

And drew out from it a mantle;
No one has ever seen one so fine,
For a fairy had made it.
No one could describe it.
Or account for the workmanship in the cloth.
Let us now forget the workmanship,
And I shall tell you a marvel
That has no equal:
The fairy incorporated into the cloth a device
That reveals unfaithful ladies.
If the lady who has put it on
Has done wrong in any way
Towards her good husband, if she has one,
The mantle will not fit her properly.
And the same for the maidens:
Any one of them who towards her beloved
Has erred in any respect
Will find that it will never fit her truly,
Without being too long or too short. (The Lay of Mantel 2013: 69)

The corresponding passage in *Mǫttuls saga*, features a close translation of the Old French section and reads as follows:

Þenna [that is the mantle] gerði ein álfkona með svá mörgum ok ótrúanlegum hagleikum at <í> öllum þeim fjölda, er þar váru saman komnir hagra manna ok hygginna, fanz eigi sá er skynja kunni með hverjum hætti klæðit var gert. Þat

var allt gulli ofit með svá fögrum laufadráttum at aldri váru ein önnur þvílík sén, þvíat engi kunni finna enda né upphaf, ok þetta á ofan sem kynligast var, at þeir sem gerast hugðu at, þeir gátu sízt fundit hversu sá hinn undarligi hagleikr var samtengdr. (Mǫttuls saga 1999: 12)

An [*álfkona*] had fashioned it [that is the mantle] with such great and inconceivable skill that in that whole assembly of skilful and intelligent men gathered there, there was no one who could perceive in what manner the garment had been made. It was shot through with gold in a pattern of such beautiful embroidered leaves that never the like was seen, for no one could find either the beginning or the end. What was strangest, moreover, was that those who scrutinized it most closely could least discover how that wondrous piece of workmanship was put together. (Mǫttuls saga 1999: 13)

Mǫttuls saga then goes to great lengths to establish for the audience that the court and especially the ladies in the court understood how the background of the mantle came about and what the spell it was imbued with causes,[26] resulting in no lady being interested in owning it (Mǫttuls saga 1999: 16–17).

In short, both accounts iterate the same qualities – the *fairy*-esque origin of the mantle, the magic spell that was woven into the cloth, its beauty and the outstanding craftsmanship that goes along with it – encapsulated in the same narrative frame that the said mantle is used as a means of compromising the women at King Arthur's court.[27]

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[26] The saga explains the nature of the mantle as follows: "En álfkonan hafði ofit þann galdr á möttullinn at hver sú mær sem spilz hafði af unnasta sínum, þá mundi möttullinn þegar sýna glæp hennar er hún klæddiz honum, svá at hann mundi henni vera ófsíðr eða ofstuttr, með svá ferligum hætti at þannig mundi hann styttaz at hann birti með hverjum hætti hver hafði syndgaz" (Mǫttuls saga 1999: 12) ["The [*álfkona*] had woven a charm into the mantle so that the misdeed of every maiden who had been intimate with her beloved would be revealed at once when she dressed in it: it would become very long or very short in a flagrant manner so as to reveal how she had sinned" (Mǫttuls saga 1999: 13)].

[27] It is interesting to note here, that an indigenous *riddarasaga* from the fourteenth century, *Samsons saga fagra*, mentions a similar mantle of supernatural origin and powers that, according to the saga itself, echo those of the mantle in *Mǫttuls saga* (referred to as *Skikkju saga*). The mantle in *Samsons saga fagra* nonetheless appears to be different from that in *Mǫttuls saga* in numerous aspects: It is said to have been 18 years in the making before it was considered finished by four *álfkonur* below the earth in a *hellir* ("cave"). The four *álfkonur* are here said to be the daughters of the *þurs* Krapi, retainer to King Skrímnir of Jǫtunheimr, and are said to operate a weaving mill. The mantle is described as having various natures. For example, it shows when women break their oaths or are indolent to their tasks and shortens when the respective lady gives herself to an extramarital lover (Samsons saga fagra 1953: 31, 34, 36, 40 and 47). The same mantle also occupies a focal position in *Skikkju rímur* (Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir 2017: 342 and 347).

Interestingly enough, *Elís saga* features an additional description of a mantle or cape, worn by Elís' lover Rósamunda which is not featured in *Élie de Saint-Gille*. The description occurs when Rósamunda is asked to appear before her father King Malkabres of Sobrieborg because his rival King Jubien has demanded that Malkabres not only pay tribute to him but also give him Rósamunda in marriage. Rósamunda dresses herself in her best attire before entering the throne room only to reject Jubien's demand. The description of her garment is the following:

> en mottull sa hinn litli, er hon toc yfir sik, var sendr uestan or hæiðinni undan solar setu, or landi þui, er hæiter Occidens; þriar alfkonur vafu þat klæði þraðum hins bezta gullz með allzconar haglæiki með sua miclum uirkðum, at þer satu yfir IX vetr þessu klæði, fyrr en full ofit væri. þessi mottull var allr ofinn storum fuglum, allr með gulli, oc setr hinum agætostum gimstæinum. (Elis saga 1881: 86)

> (And the small mantle that she pulled over herself was sent westwards from the pagan world below the sunset, from the country which is called Occidens; three *álfkonur* weaved this cloth with threads of the best gold, with sundry skill and with such great carefulness that they set over this cloth for nine winters before it had been completed. This mantle was embroidered with large birds, all with gold, and edged with the most beautiful gemstones.)[28]

In the original, the Old French version only describes the mantle as being the gift of a wealthy emir (clearly foreign origin) to Rosamonde, stating that it took a considerable effort to produce such attire. The account lacks any reference to *fées* in particular (ll. 1693–1700):

> S'est faite la puchele gentement atorner:
> En son dos a vestu .I. hermin engoulé,
> D'une lasnete d'or ot estrais les costés,
> Unes cauches molt riches, solers bien pointurés;
> Un mantel covoitous ot a son col jeté:
> Uns rices amiraus li ot fait presenter,
> .III. ans mist on a faire, ains que fust parovrés,
> Et fu d'un cabetenc tout environ ourlés. (Élie 2013: 214)

> And she had herself nobly attired.
> She put on a collared ermine robe –

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[28] The above cited passage is from *Elís saga* as preserved in the De la Gardie, 4–7 fol. manuscript. It might be noted that variant readings offered in other manuscripts, replacing the amount of *álfkonur* with four (Holm. perg. 7 fol.) or omitting the number entirely (Holm. perg. 6, 4to) and changing the time it took to create the mantle to seven instead of nine years (Holm. perg. 7 fol.) (Elis saga 1881: 86–87).

With a golden cord she had bound the sides –
And wore rich hose and exquisitely-painted slippers.
She put around her neck an envy-inspiring cloak
A gift from a powerful emir.
It was [three] years in the making before it was completed.
Its expensive cloth was embroidered all around. (Elye 2011: 111)

This leaves us with an interesting question: Why add *álfkonur* when the original does not feature *fées* in this specific section? Is the translator simply borrowing the motif from Chrétien de Troyes (or elsewhere) as a means of underlining the wonder of the garment? Is this similar to the oral tradition where formulaic motifs are commonly added to extend a scene (Lord 1981: 130–131 and 138)? Is it a borrowing of motifs from elsewhere since the details are otherwise in the written saga?

The *Élie de Saint-Gille* narrative nonetheless does elsewhere feature *fées* that are skilled in the art of crafting objects. In this particular case, however, it is not a textile that is beautifully woven or has a spell woven into it as in the case of *Le mantel mautaillé* and *Mǫttuls saga*. In this case it is a staff or cudgel which Elie's henchman Galopin is said to go into battle with and is made by four *fées* on an isle in the ocean (ll. 2370–2374):

Quant Galopins le vit, li preus et li senés,
Rosamonde la bele a congiet demandé.
De la tor avala les marberins degrés,
En la bataille entra, coureçous et irés.
En sa main le baston, u tant a richetés,
Que les fees ovrerent en .I. ille de mer. (Élie 2013: 238)[29]

When Galopin saw him [that is Elie in grave danger], the worthy and wise man,
He asked leave of the beautiful Rosamonde.
He ran down the marble steps of the tower,
He entered the battle, angry and sorrowful.
In his hand was the richly decorated staff,
Which fairies had made on an island in the sea. (Elye 2011: 155)

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[29] The motif of crafting *fées* working on an island in the sea seems to also be used employed in the *Continental Version I* (dated to the thirteenth century) of the *Beuve de Hamton* in which the *fées* craft a hauberk (a section is not in the Anglo-Norman version or *Bevers saga*) which runs as follows (ll. 7522–7527): "Vest un hauberk qui molt fist a löer, / Fees le fissent en un ilse de mer, / D'or sont les mailles, d'argent sont li clavel …" (Der festländische Bueve 1911: 248) ("[He] dons a hauberk which many would praise / *fées* crafted it on one island in the sea / The meshworks are made of gold, the rings are made of silver").

It is noteworthy, however, that in this case none of the Old Norse redactions feature a correlating passage. While the idea of Elís fighting certainly exists in the Old Norse translation, the remark with regard to Galopin's cudgel does not.

In a brief excursus it might be added that *Tristrams saga ok Ísǫndar* features an episode in which Tristram receives his utmost stalwart hunting hound from a Polish duke as a reward for ridding the duke's dominions of a *jǫtunn* (with regards to the information presented in this paragraph see *Tristrams saga* 1999: 152–159). The duke is said to have himself received the dog as a token from an *álfkona* from the island of Polin in Álfheimr. The hound is of wondrous colours, has a soft fur and a sweet-sounding bell attached to his collar, all of which makes Tristram forget his sorrows. Unfortunately, due to their fragmentary nature, both the *Tristan* of Béroul (active in the late twelfth century) as well as that of Thomas d'Angleterre (fl. c. 1170–1180) do not preserve this episode. Thus, the significance of this story remains questionable.

Considering the translations of passages in which *fées* appear as craftswomen in the stories noted above from a Scandinavian perspective, one might argue that on the basis of the local tradition it would have been more natural for the translations to show powerful magical women or sorceresses crafting these cloths rather than *álfkonur*. Certainly, the image of women crafting noteworthy clothing is not uncommon in saga literature dating to roughly the same period of the translations (albeit in other sagas than the translated *riddarasǫgur*), be the clothing normal or magically enhanced. For example, *Landnámabók* mentions the two women Hildigunnr Beinisdóttir (S75/H63) and Ljót, mother of Hrolleifr *enn mikli* (S180/H147).[30] While Hildigunnr is said to craft clothing twice, the *kyrtill* ('tunic') of Hrolleifr may be inferred of having been made by Ljót. However, the clothes' feature seems to be that they are impenetrable by iron. Furthermore, one might think of the cloth described in the late 13th-century *Qrvar-Odds saga*,[31] or *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*,[32] where

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[30] All following information with regard to *Landnámabók* is taken from *Íslendingabók, Landnámabók* (1968: 106–107 and 220).

[31] While in Ireland, Oddr raids the underground home of four women, the fairest of which he intends to take hostage. However, the woman offers a magical shirt in exchange for her freedom, the magical qualities of which are manyfold and include the wearer not becoming hungry and sleepy as well as being invulnerable to sword strikes unless he flees (*Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* 1944: 313–314).

[32] Before departing on his last raid, Ragnar is said to be given a shirt by his wife Áslaug.

the clothes are admittedly practical rather than beautiful or intricate. All the same, the changing of the amount of *álfkonur* crafting Rósamunda's mantle from the Old French four to the more local number three, does show a more effective adaptation of foreign ideas to local ones, three (or a multitude of it) being apparently a commonly used number in Old Norse and especially when it comes to powerful women.[33]

Be that as it may, the problematic scene featured in *Élie de Saint-Gille* and dropped in *Elís saga* in which *fées* manufacture a cudgel on an island still remains. As noted above, the *álfar* are not connected to the crafting of weaponry. One might thus be forgiven for assuming that the translator, with a Nordic audience in mind, avoided a direct translation as it did not reflect the culture and worldview of Scandinavian recipients. Granted, such a contemplation only retains validity if the manuscript/manuscripts that served as a template for the saga definitely featured this scene. However, as said, since *Élie de Saint-Gille* only survives in one manuscript, we may most likely never know whether there were other versions of this story which make no mention of such an origin of Galopin's weapon and might have served as a model for the Old Norse translations. All the same, however, it is clear that the introduction of *álfkonur* into the Old Norse literary inventory is new, as is the idea of them living underground – a motif that clearly caught on in both the sagas and folklore (see further below).

2.3 Fate and Stature

The investigation will now turn to consider the textual instances in which *fées* and *álfar* respectively are associated with the bestowing of fate on Galopin in both *Elye de Saint-Gille* and *Elis saga*.

The story tells how during his adventure, Elye encounters four robbers and asks to share their meal, which they agree to. They nonetheless request his steed in payment, something Elye adamantly refuses. In the ensuing brawl he brutally slays two of the robbers while the third flees into the woods. The remaining man falls to his knees begging for mercy. In his

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The shirt is said to make him invulnerable to sword blows (Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda 1944: 132–133; Finnur Jónsson 1973: 257).

[33] Regarding the importance of the triad in connection with powerful women, see, for instance, in *Vǫluspá* st. 20 the three *nornir* or the *þursar meyiar* ('*þurs*-maidens') in st. 8 and the thrice burned and thrice reborn Gullveig in st. 21. See furthermore, for example, Schück 1941: 22–29 and Wagner 1980: 202–208.

appeal for clemency, the thief reveals his identity as Galopin, recounting the fate that has befallen him (ll. 1183–1191). The Old French passage runs as follows:

> A l'ore qui fui nés ceste paine m'avint:
> .IV. fees i ot; quant vint al departir,
> Li une me voloit a son eus detemir,
> Mais les autres nel vaurent endurer ne soufrir,
> Et prïerent a Dieu qui onques ne menti
> Que jamais ne creüsse, tous jors fuisse petis,
> Se n'eüsse de lonc que .III. piés et demi,
> Et s'alaisse plus tost que cheval ne ronchin.
> Certes, et je si fac, por voir le vous plevi. (Élie 2013: 197)

> At the hour I was born, this tragedy befell me:
> Four fairies were present. When it came time to take leave,
> one of them sought to keep me as her servant.
> But the others wouldn't endure or bear it,
> And they prayed to God, who never told a lie,
> That I'd never grow more than three and one half feet in height,
> And that I'd run faster than a warhorse or packhorse.
> Believe me, I swear it's true … (Elye 2011: 77)

In short, in the Old French three *fées* who come to the birth quarrel with a fourth who wishes to take Galopin as an apprentice, prays that God will curse him with restricted growth while granting him equine swiftness. This idea of quarrelling fairies would of course be reflected later in the start of the German folktale *Dornröschen* or *Sleeping Beauty* (ATU 410) collected by the Grimm brothers, in which twelve fairies are invited as guests at the birth of Beauty, while a thirteenth is not invited owing to the lack of cutlery (Grimm and Grimm 1812: 225–229).[34] As in *Elye de Saint-Gille*, the evil fairy curses while the others attempt to mitigate the curse. In *Elís saga*, the correlating passage runs as follows:

> Sem moðir min hafði fœtt mik, þa toku mik i brott um nottina þriar alfkonur or buri þui, sem ec var i lagðr, oc villdi ænn af þæim raða mer oc hava með ser; en hinum firer þotti tuæimr, oc mællti þa huar þæirra til annarrar, at ec skyllda alldre upp vaxa ne mikill verða, en sua mikit laupa skyllda ec, at alldregi skop guð þat kuikuendi, er iammikit ma fara. (Elis saga 1881: 65)

> (After my mother had given birth to me, then three *álfkonur* took me from the

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[34] Charles Perrault collected a French variant of this tale in 1696 called *La Belle au Bois Dormant*, in which the number of fairies is seven (Perrault 2012: 342).

cradle in which I had been laid, and one of them wanted to command me and have me with her; but this displeased the other two, and one said to the other that I should never grow up nor become large, yet should run faster than any other being that God had created.)

While the above passage does not preserve the correlation about Galopin's agility to horses, it otherwise for the main part follows the Old French closely except for the fact that the number of *álfkonur* is once again given as three (the B-redaction, however, keeps four *álfkonur*). Another interesting deviation made in the Old Norse saga away from the Old French source text is that the saga omits the invocation of God's curse by the three *fées*, the mention of God here being transferred to the animals He has created. It is possible that the translators feared this might hint at a connection of the *fees/álfar* to God (and therefore Christianity) which Old Norse beliefs did not reflect.[35]

It is worth bearing in mind the fact that here, once again, new talents are being bestowed on *álfar*: In Old Norse belief, while the role of deciding fate at birth is given to females (often three as in *Vǫluspá* st. 20), it is traditionally in the hands of *nornir*. Also worth noting, is the way in which the Old Norse subtly alters small details. As pointed out above, the Old French describes the *fées* as *being present at* Galopin's birth (the *fées marraines* trope: see above), while in the Old Norse account the *álfkonur steal* Galopin *after* his birth, changing the overall *topos* entirely into one potentially relating to changelings. Nevertheless, as Roger Sherman Loomis pointed out, the Old French section presents a picture that closely resembles the visit of the *nornir* at the birth of Helgi Hundingsbani as described in *Helga kviða Hundingsbana in fyrri* sts 2–3 (Loomis 1959: 108). Be that as it may, as Séamas Mac Philib has pointed out, this theme (ML 5085) is found in both Celtic and Germanic folk narratives (Christiansen 1958: 109–113; Mac Philib 1991: 121). It deals essentially with the abduction of a human child, which is replaced in its

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[35] If we focus on the missing invocation of God in the Old Norse variants, it is worth noting that in the Old Norse world figures such as the *nornir* are the figures most commonly linked to the concept of fate in Old Norse beliefs. *Álfar* seem not to ever have such a function. As an example for the connection of *nornir* and fate, one may quote *Fáfnismál* st. 11 which offers the term *nornar dómr* ('The Judgement of the Norns') as a kenning for death: "'Norna dóm þú munt fyr nesiom hafa / Oc ósvinnz apa; / Í vatni þú drucnar, ef í vindi rœr: / Alt er feigs forað'" ("'The judgement of the norns you'll get in sight of land, / and the fate of a fool; / you'll drown in the water even if you row in a breeze; / all fate is dangerous for the doomed man'" [The Poetic Edda 1996: 159]).

manger by an elven changeling, which can range from an (old) elvish man or child to a simple log of wood. Scholars such as Mac Philib, Susan Schoon Eberly and John Lindow have all suggested that this idea tries to culturally and logically explain why some children may be born deaf, mute or with deformations (Mac Philib 1991: 131).[36]

It seems safer to assume this section in *Elís saga* shows a subtle movement away from the unnatural idea of *álfar* deciding fate to a more local tradition of nature spirits stealing children, an idea that became very popular in more recent times in Iceland. One might even go so far as to suggest that this brief episode in *Elís saga* is one of the earliest (if not the earliest) account of a changeling narrative in the Old Norse record. However, in later Icelandic folktales, it is evident that the idea of changelings came to be associated with the notion of the later *huldufolk/álfar*.[37]

One nonetheless wonders why the translator chose *álfkonur* and not *nornir* if they wanted to follow the original text directly?[38] Was the passage deliberately altered in an attempt to suit Nordic expectations (*nornir* never being closely associated with the fates of the lower classes in Old Norse texts)? This is worth further investigation.

2.4 Beauty and Seduction

It has been stated at the outset that narratives involving to the F302 (Fairy Mistress) motif would not be considered due to the absence of references to the women as *fées* in the French source texts. The exception is *Guigemar*, a Breton *lais* attributed to Marie de France which features the only characterisation of a woman as being as beautiful as a *fée*, which was also rendered into Old Norse in the translation. Two extant Old Norse translations have been preserved: one is *Guiamars ljóð* preserved in the *Strengleikar* compilation, the other being *Gvímars saga* (see above). The

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[36] Regarding the possibility of disabilities influencing folk beliefs in generally and changelings in particular, see Susan Schoon Eberly (1988: 58–77) and John Lindow (2008: 218 and 232).

[37] See, for example, the stories given by Jón Árnason in the section dedicated to stories regarding *álfar*, *huldufólk* and *umskiptingar* ("changelings") (Jón Árnason 1862: 40–45). The earliest surviving mention of the term *huldufólk* can be traced back to around 1500 in *Jarlmanns rímur*, as Haukur Þorgeirsson has pointed out (Haukur Þorgeirsson 2011: 53). And as can be seen from the material presented above, the use of the term *álfar* is older.

[38] It is worth noting that the only connection between *álfar* and *nornir* is made in the earlier-noted *Fáfnismál* st. 13 where Fáfnir describes how some *nornir* are *álfkunngar* (i.e. from the *álfar* lineage).

reason why these works will be considered here is because they are the only instance of a correlation between *álfkonur* and beauty in the corpus of translated *riddarasǫgur*.

The section of interest in *Guigemar* happens after Guigemar and his lover become separated and her ship runs ashore in Brittany with the wreck being subsequently discovered and searched by the local king Mériaduc. He finds Guigemar's lover inside the wreckage and is stunned by her beauty which is akin to that of a *fée* (ll. 699–706):

> Il [that is Mériaduc] descendi par un degré;
> sun chamberlain a apelé.
> Hastivement a la nef vunt;
> par l'eschiele muntent a munt.
> Dedenz unt la dame trovee,
> ki de belté resemble fee.
> Il la saisist par le mantel;
> od lui l'en meine en sun chastel. (Die Lais der Marie de France 1925: 33)

> He [that is Mériaduc] went downstairs
> and called his chamberlain;
> quickly they went to the ship,
> climbed up its ladder;
> inside they found the woman
> who had a [*fée-*]like beauty.
> He took her by the cloak
> and brought her with him to his castle. (The Lais of Marie de France 2009: 49)

The same segment is fairly accurately rendered in *Guiamars ljóð* as follows: "oc gængo [that is Meriadus and a servant] þæir þa baðer skyndelega ovan til skipsens. oc fundu þæir þar æina friða fru sæm alfkona være. oc tok hann þa i skikkioskaut hænnar oc læidde hana með ser i kastalann" (*Strengleikar* 1850: 11–12) ("and then they both went quickly down to the ship and found there a woman as beautiful as an *álfkona* would be. And then he took the skirt of her cloak and led her with him to the castle"). The same holds true for the account given in *Gvímars saga* which is almost identical: "… og geingu þeir [that is Meriadus and a servant] þä skindelega ofan til skipsens og fundu þar svo frijda frü, sem älfkona være, tök hann þä i sckickiu skaut hennar og leidde hana med sier til kastalans …" (*Gvímars saga* 1979: 134) ("… and then they went quickly down to the ship and found there such a beautiful woman as an álfkona would be. Then he took the skirt of her cloak and led her with him to the castle.")

Both accounts thus echo the idea of the Breton *lai* that the beauty of Guigemar's lover is like that of a *fée*. Following the original, both Old Norse translations then go on to explain how Meriandus' court marvels about her beauty, further underlining the implicit attribute the lady's exceptional fairness.

The fact that the Old Norse renditions translate this passage accurately without alterations underlines that the concept caused no problem, since, as noted above, the Scandinavian sphere already attributed *álfar* with beauty.

3. Conclusion

The above investigation has considered the way in which the concept of the magical creative *álfkona* was brought into Old Icelandic in the mid-13th-century as a result of the translation of Continental romantic works which demanded the creation of conceptual terms that had not previously existed in the indigenous cultural vocabulary of the north. Apparently, the use of the word *álfkona* as a translation for *fée* rather than any other term was not seen as being problematic with regard to the local understanding of the *álfar* in Iceland at this time, as they were already beginning to blend with nature spirits. Nonetheless, it did involve the introduction of a female equivalent to a group of figures that were previously largely male like the *dvergar* if we trust the evidence of the Eddic poems and *Snorra Edda*. This motif of a specifically female sex of *álfar* had clearly entered the Scandinavian realm by the thirteenth century. As has been shown, these new figures are intrinsically connected to textile weaving and the crafting of beautiful magical garments. That this motif seems to have occasionally been adapted to local beliefs can be seen from the changing of the numbers of the *álfkonur* in the account of Galopin's fate demonstrated above, a development which is worth further investigation.

There nonetheless appears to have been more wariness with regard to the adoption of the seen attributes of prophecy, cursing and fate associated with *fées*. These were abilities commonly associated with *nornir* rather than *álfar* in the Old Norse worldview and were thus clearly unfitting for the *álfkonur*.

Equally intriguing, however, are other motifs that may well have come from the translated *riddarasǫgur* if they had not come from the folklore

blend of *álfar* and *landvættir*: this was the idea of beings being taken into mountains (also referred to as *bjergtagning* in later folk legends)[39] something that builds on the idea of *álfkonur* working below the surface of the earth in some of the accounts given above, as well as the changeling motif (ML 5058),[40] which would prove to be a very rich idea in folkloric literature. As has been shown above, the Old French version of *Elye de Saint-Gille* has four *fées* arguing about one of them wanting to have Galopin as her servant. While the Old Norse transports this general idea, the motif of the *fées'* argument *at* his birth is changed to the idea of the *álfkonur stealing* him *after* Galopin being born. It nonetheless needs to be borne in mind that unlike later Icelandic folk stories such as the famous "18 barna faðir í Álfheimum" ("The Father of 18 Children in Álfheim") or "Tökum á, tökum á" ("Let's seize it, seize it"), no substitution with a changeling child is made here (Jón Árnason 1862: 42–43 and 43–44 respectively).

Despite the cautiousness with which the translators operated, carefully selecting and/or adapting the motifs of the *fées* to fit the Scandinavian worldview of their audience evidently worked as the tropes that were kept clearly clung on in local tradition. The creating of garments has already been addressed above and it thus may suffice to mention the Icelandic account of "Sýslumannskonan á Bustarfelli", as just one of the numerous folktales which depict *álfkonur* (or *huldukonur*) as having particular weaving or embroidery skills (motif number F271.4.2) (Thompson 1975: 53),[41] this account telling of a beautifully crafted altar cloth which is obtained by the woman from a *huldukona* (Jón Árnason 1862: 13–15).[42] The fact that stories of the "fairy-folk" being skilful tailors has roots elsewhere is nonetheless reflected in the way stories of this kind have certainly lived on in Celtic-speaking areas. In Scotland,

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[39] For information regarding the motif of *bjergtagning*, see, for example, the work by the Danish folklorist Feilberg (1910).

[40] For the changeling in general, see the publication by Christiansen (1958: 109–113). With regard to the motif in France (see above), see, once again, the work by Sébillot (1882: 117–119). For the motif in the British Isles, see, for example, the articles by Katharine M. Briggs (1957: 274-5) and Donald Archie MacDonald (1994/1995: 51–52 [here listed under type numbers F61–66]). For Ireland, see the above-quoted article by Mac Philib (1991). With regard to Sweden, see the monograph by Bengt af Klintberg (2010: 192–197 [here grouped under types K141–169]).

[41] Another narrative that mentions how an altar cloth is donated to a church by an *álfkona* is "Rauðhöfði" (Jón Árnason 1862: 83–84).

[42] Interestingly, Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (The National Museum of Iceland) has an altar cloth on display which is said to be the cloth from the folktale: see http://www.culturehouse.is/-vefleidsogn/inn/room-iii/alfkonudukur-fra-bustarfelli-en.

various narratives describe fairy women working a spinning wheel, giving help with spinning, doing "wool work" or waulking, which have been collected under the Scottish type number F118 "Fairies Help With Clothworking" by MacDonald (1994/1995: 76). In Ireland, meanwhile, similar stories involving the common motif F343.5.1 "Fairy Gives Magic Cloak (And Shirt)" have been noted by Cross (1952: 261). This motif is nonetheless less common in the Nordic countries.

Another connection which seems to have quickly caught on was that of the connections to rocks and underground dwellings, something that can be seen from the earlier-mentioned *Ǫrvar-Odds saga* for instance. This the saga tells of how Oddr finds an underground dwelling place of four women, the most beautiful of which he intends to take hostage. This woman, however, promises him to craft him a shirt, the magical properties of which include the feature that the wearer feels no hunger or cold and is invulnerable to sword blows except when in flight (Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda 1944: 313–14). The parallels to the translated accounts noted above are striking.

Other sagas, such as two fourteenth-century indigenous *riddarasǫgur Hektors saga* and *Vilmundar saga viðutan* play on exactly the same idea. In *Hektors saga*, a knight by the name of Trancival meets an *álfkona* living in a hillock and saves her abducted son. In return, Trancival receives a beautiful armoured horse in reward as well as the promise that he will receive any information he desires from the *álfkona*. The same *álfkona* and her skills are referred to later in the same saga when Ector recalls her divination abilities (Late Medieval Icelandic Romances 1962: 107–110, 124–126, 131 and 170). *Vilmundar saga viðutan*, meanwhile, notes how Vilmundr's future wife Sóley is given to a foster-mother and her daughter who live in a stone to be educated. These women then give the saga protagonists foreknowledge of various events so that they can react accordingly (Late Medieval Icelandic Romances 1964: 153–155, 162, 182–184 and 194–197). There is little question that the foreign concept of the underground weaving and prophesying *álfkonur* had become a literary tradition. Since such works were read out aloud alongside other stories in the so-called *kvöldvökur* ('Evening Wakes') one can understand how the translated foreign material would have impacted upon local oral tradition (*Elís saga* with its more than 40 surviving manuscripts underlines both the popularity and influence of some of these translated works) (Hermann Pálsson 1962: 14–15, 19 and 39–47; Magnús Gíslason 1977: 57–60 and 77–87). While Einar Ól. Sveinsson, in his Um íslenzkar þjóðsögur, sees

the most influence on folk tradition as having arisen from the indigenous *riddarasǫgur* (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1940: 157–158 and 2003: 80), the probability is that one needs to go back even further, considering where the writers of the indigenous sagas got their ideas and concepts from. Certainly, some aspects of the *fées* were dropped or altered by Old Norse translators, as has been highlighted above. Others, however, lived on. This applies particularly to the *álfkonur*, as one can see from their process from the translated and indigenous *riddarasǫgur*. However, their most prominent association of creating beautiful cloths would be taken further in the local tradition. It would not be long before they were not only stealing children (see above), and issuing curses (as in "Álfkonan í Skollholt" or "Álfkonan í Múla") and spinning (for example, "Álfarnir og Helga bóndadóttir" and "Ingibjörg á Svelgsá og álfkonan"), but also entrancing young males (as in, for instance, "Frá Eyjólfi og álfkonu" and "Sagan af Álfa-Árna"), giving birth to children (for example, "Stapa-álfarnir" and "Álfkona í barnsnauð"), washing clothes (for example "Álf-konan og áfaaskurinn") and asking for milk (for instance, "Álfkonan þakkláta" or "Borghildur álfkona"); in short, all the "archetypical" roles one might expect of powerful, supernatural women (Jón Árnason 1862: 7–9, 15–16, 34–37, 82–83, 93–100 and 120–123; Einar Guðmundsson 1981: 26–27).[43]

As noted above, the introduction of *álfkonur* may well hint at changes that were already beginning to take place both in mythological and folk traditions, suggesting that Old Norse mythology and folk belief – in a land that had a multi-cultural background – were seen as being comparatively malleable, ideas coming in and fading out in accordance with needs, new ideas or regional preferences.

Acknowledgements

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[43] With regard to the trope of *álfkonur* giving birth to children, a wide-spread motif which is catalogued under the signature ML 5070 "Midwife To The Fairies" (Almqvist 2008: 273–322; Mac Cárthaigh 1991: 133–143).

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Summary

This paper forms part of a doctoral thesis in Old Nordic Religions at the University of Iceland, which seeks to examine the use of Nordic supernatural concepts (such as *jǫtnar*, *dvergar* and *álfar*) in the Old Nordic translations of Old French, Occitan and Anglo-Norman chivalric and courtly romances and *lais* in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. This present article focuses on the use of the word "álfar" as a translation for the French word "fées", considering not only the narrative purposes involved in the choice of such a word, but the potential influences on Icelandic folk beliefs that might have been caused by such a translation (as these translation were read out alongside more local narratives).

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Preserving Blunders in Eddic Poems
Formula Variation in Numbered Inventories of *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*

FROG

1. Introduction

Eddic[1] poetry exhibits what I have described as an *inclination to non-variation* in its use of phraseology (Frog 2011: 58–72; 2021). In other words, at least narrative poetry seems to have been characterized by ideals of performing formulae and passages 'the same' each time where repetition is salient. When the inclination to non-variation is recognized, formulaic phraseology that seems to vary when 'saying the same thing' raises a flag against the backdrop of the corpus. Non-variation appears as a general ideal, which leads variations that may initially seem incidental to stand out as sites of interest. If such variations are attributable to the person who wrote or dictated the text, they may offer illustrations of the dynamism of the tradition and the operation of creative agency within it.[2] Conversely, a variation may reflect non-ideal phrasing or otherwise reflect processes through which the written text was produced.

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[2] Formula variation in *Grípisspá* points to a valorization of variation in phraseology (e.g. Mellor 1999 [2008]: 122). For present purposes, it is irrelevant whether the poem was composed in writing: it reflects knowledge of the poetic form and language and attitudes toward them. The point here is simply that individuals may engage with a tradition in ways that deviate considerably from social conventions (e.g. Harvilahti 1992b: 95–96).

This is an exploratory study that examines formula variation in connection with the numbered inventory of questions posed by Óðinn to Vafþrúðnir in *Vafþrúðnismál* and the numbered inventory of locations in *Grímnismál*. Several numbered inventories are preserved in the corpus, so variation in these two poems can be considered in relation to other commensurate lists. Whereas a single variation in isolation remains ambiguous, both poems exhibit multiple co-occurring features that appear non-ideal. In *Vafþrúðnismál*, one variation produces a long line that lacks alliteration, and a second seems to forego the repetition of lines opening a question and either the question and answer are only half their usual length or only one rather than two turns of dialogue is presented. In *Grímnismál*, different formulae are used for numbering locations, and this co-occurs with a mix-matching of numbering, identifying the fourth named location as the 'third', along with several additional variations concentrated in the first three stanza-like passages of the list. In each case, variations are assessed in terms of whether they more likely originate from the copying process or from the initial documentation of the respective poem or section of a poem, and what this may suggest about processes in the background.

Like so much in eddic poetry research, the assessments are inevitably interpretations, and thus are considered probabilities of varying degrees of likelihood. Some of these are interdependent, some are reciprocally reinforcing or mutually exclusive, and most are unavoidably contingent on interpretations of some feature of the text being non-ideal. The exploratory nature of this investigation advances into areas where the source materials have not previously been interrogated with the questions considered here. Consequently, more deliberation on alternative explanations and false tracks is required in the main text or in notes than in a study concerned with a more familiar issue where frameworks are established for how to interpret types of evidence or it is possible to lean on findings of earlier studies. After both cases have been examined, discussion turns to the question of why the documented poems would retain lines and passages where something seems to have gone wrong when it was first formulated – i.e. why 'blunders' were not corrected – and what this suggests about how people conceived the written poems, with implications for their use as sources in research.

2. Sources and methodology

2.1 An inclination to non-variation

Oral eddic poems are here approached as socially recognizable 'things' made of language and their reproduction is considered characterized by ideals of non-variation.[3] Oral-Formulaic Theory (OFT) has become a dominant model for approaching how oral poetry varies. 'Classic' OFT – i.e. OFT as formalized by Albert Lord in 1960 – presents a composition-in-performance model for long epic traditions, whereby stories are retold freely in the traditional idiom in each performance. Although this model has been considered for eddic poetry, the corpus does not present evidence to suggest that eddic poems were verbally composed anew in each performance. Eddic poems differ from epic traditions even in other Germanic languages by being much shorter in length, composed in relatively tight sequences of long lines[4] commonly described as 'strophes', and lacking evidence of a formulaic infrastructure suggestive of a composition-in-performance tradition.[5] Passages of poems are quoted, for example in Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*, in ways that imply they were socially recognizable and recognizable as identified with a particular poem as opposed to others, not unlike skaldic poetry. This is consistent with the shorter form of individual poems and their composition in units forming series of verses. In such traditions, groups of verses that are regularly reproduced tend to 'crystallize' in individuals' memories and circulate as verbal units of composition, and whole poems and their parts become rememberable as constituted of these units. This does not mean that the units are invariable, only that they are not being composed on a formula-by-formula and line-by-line basis. Stability in oral transmission

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[3] On oral poems as 'things' made of language, see Frog 2019; concerning eddic poems, see Frog 2021.

[4] Other Old Germanic poetries allow a clause continued from the preceding long line to conclude in the first short line and then an independent clause to begin following the causura to continue onto the next long line. Eddic syntax generally does not allow an independent clause to begin within a long line unless one or both clauses are only a short line in length.

[5] See also Lönnroth 1971; Mellor 1999; Haymes 2003; Thorvaldsen 2006. Gísli Sigurðsson (1998: xx) proposes that poems were composed anew in each performance and then shifted toward a more memorized tradition through impacts of literacy and the Church, but the analogous case of Old English poetry (e.g. Amodio 2004) does not support this view and the formal changes in the poetic system seem to have come centuries earlier.

is, however, not simply an outcome of poetic form: it is rooted in social convention.[6]

Dominant ideals of non-variation in eddic poetry can be observed in both the social stability of phraseology in independent, oral-derived[7] variants of the same passage of text and also in formula repetition within a particular text.[8] Narrowing focus to within a version of a text points to how individuals reproduced those texts. When focus is on formula variation, comparison across versions of poems will present differences between the ways two or more individuals performed them, clouding tendencies of individuals with what can be described as 'dialects' of performance. For example, the preserved poem *Alvíssmál* is particularly interesting with regard to formula variation because the dwarf's thirteen answers to Þórr's questions are consistently comprised of six formulae, each with an open slot completed by a word or phrase specific to the question, and which formula is used is driven by alliteration with the slot-fillers in a-lines and *Vollzeilen* (Acker 1983: ch.3; 1998: ch.3; Thorvaldsen 2006: 116–117; Frog 2011). Within the poem, even superficial variations in the phraseology of repeated formulae generally seem to be avoided, and those that occur are at the particular formula's first use (Frog 2011: 58–72). Two passages of the poem are quoted in *Snorra Edda*: the twelve uses of formulae exhibit seven variations (Frog 2021:§6). Ideals of non-variation are obvious within the poem *Alvíssmál*[9] owing to the number of formula repetitions, whereas if only comparisons between corresponding passages

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[6] Thus, most regions of kalevalaic epic exhibit a high degree of verbal regularity (Frog 2016); in a southern region where epic shifted into a women's singing tradition and converged with other narrative genres in the same meter, it become far more flexibly handled (Harvilahti 1992a), whereas lyric poetry in the same meter remained extremely dynamic even where epic remained more conservative (Timonen 2004). North Russian *bylina*-epics are formally comparable in length and content to eddic narrative poetry and kalevalaic epic but appear quite flexible in performance, characterized by passages that remained verbally regular while their organization and the connecting tissue between them varied (Gil'ferding 1894: 24). Consequently, *bylina*-epics open to analysis through Classic OFT (e.g. Arant 1990) in a way that it is not readily applicable to eddic poems.

[7] On the concept of 'oral-derived' text, see Foley 1990.

[8] I initially argued this with focus on *Alvíssmál* (Frog 2011); for a more recent study, see Frog 2021.

[9] All references to passages within preserved poems are thus made using abbreviations: *Alv* = *Alvíssmál*, *Bdr* = *Baldrs draumar*, *Fm* = *Fáfnismál*, *Gðr I* = *Guðrúnarkviða I*, *Gm* = *Grímnismál*, *Háv* = *Hávamál*, *HH I* = *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, *HH II* = *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, *Hym* = *Hymiskviða*, *Sd* = *Sigrdrífumál*, *Skm* = *Skírnismál*, *Vm* = *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Vsp* = *Vǫluspá*, *Þkv* = *Þrymskviða*; passages are numbered following the Neckel & Kuhn edition (1963), with line numbers following a period when relevant, so *Vm*

in *Snorra Edda* are in focus, the use of formulae appears more flexible. Not all performers necessarily engaged with the tradition according to ideals of non-variation (cf. Harvilahti 1992b: 95–96), and *Alvíssmál* may get closer to ideals of non-variation than some other poems, yet the corpus generally appears characterized by non-variation in repetition as an ideal.

The theory of the inclination to non-variation has been developed especially through the analysis of poems on mythological subjects, with which *Grímnismál* and *Vafþrúðnismál* are grouped. The same principles also seem attributable to poems on heroic subjects, although these generally have less text-internal repetition to assess.[10] The degree of verbal correspondence between independently documented texts of the same poems is a fact of the corpus that generally gets taken for granted in eddic scholarship. Nineteenth-century researchers started off imagining the poems through modern, literary poetry and envisioning the oral transmission of poems through their medieval manuscript transmission. These combined frames of reference provided the initial lens for interpreting the degree of sameness between the Codex Regius' and Hauksbók's *Vǫluspá*s or between *Snorra Edda*'s numerous eddic quotations and independent poems. The variations were often so minimal that they were easily interpreted through that lens – a difference of a word or two within a phrase; the presence, absence or arrangement of verses or groups of verses. The high degree of phraseological sameness even yielded inter-

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40.1–2 indicates the first long line / pair of short lines of the fortieth passage of *Vafþrúðnismál* according to the Neckel & Kuhn edition.

[10] See e.g. repetitions between *HH II* 40 and 41, *Fm* 8 and 20, *Fm* 12 and 14, *Sd* below, and *Gðr I* 5 and 11; see also Lönnroth 1971. Dividing the corpus into mythological and heroic poetry follows the arrangement of the Codex Regius manuscript, which is somewhat arbitrary in that the 'mythological' and 'heroic' poems seem to reflect earlier collections brought together by a copyist (Vésteinn Ólason 2019: 235–242 and works there cited). It may be worth noting that *Grímnismál*, for instance, concerned with a king and his son rather than with events of cosmological scope, would probably not be considered as a mythological poem if it were found preserved as an episode in a longer saga; alternately, the story of Loki's slaying of Otr would likely be considered mythological if it were only preserved as a separate poem independent of the story of Sigurðr. The number and diversity of heroic poems in the Codex Regius manuscript point to a vibrant oral tradition in the background, but the background of the individual poems is unclear. Any generalization about differences in how poems varied should begin with genre categories, which is more likely than subject matter to indicate use in connection to practices. From this perspective, the monologic and dialogic poems in *ljóðaháttr* appear different from the third-person narrative poems in *fornyrðislag* in terms of practice and also idiom (Gunnell 1995: ch. 3–5), and thus more likely to be linked to differences in variation than the grouping of poems in the Codex Regius.

pretations that every eddic text ultimately traces back to a single manu-
script exemplar, and scholars created narratives to account for differences
between sources (e.g. Dronke 1997). Viewed against different forms of
oral poetry, however, the high degree of sameness points to a tradition
that, verbally, was extremely conservative.[11] It suggests that those learn-
ing the poetry aspired to perform it 'the same' as other performers, and the
conception of sameness was understood as directly connected to phraseo-
logical regularity, so that rephrasing verses and reformulating sequences
of verses seems generally to be avoided.[12]

   Evidence of independently-attested poems and poetic passages from
the mythological corpus generally foreground verbal stability, but the
inclination to non-variation did not necessarily apply uniformly to whole
texts, although the crystallization of phraseology into verbally regular
passages tends to center on units that are semantically or functionally
significant.[13] *Snorra Edda* may increase impressions of non-variation by
predominantly quoting passages where verbal crystallization is expected
to be highest, as may the two versions of *Vǫluspá* as a poem made up
almost entirely of such units. Conversely, verses and passages that receive
less semantic weight may be less crystallized or more open to variation
in transmission,[14] like the general comments to Loki opening knowledge
about Frigg in *Snorra Edda*'s quotation from *Lokasenna* (Frog 2021:§6).
Similarly, where repetition is salient within a poem, phraseology appears
more regular, as in introductions to inventories of mythic knowledge dis-
cussed below (cf. also e.g. *Skm* 17–18, *Skm* 39, 41, *Þkv* 26, 28), whereas

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[11] In a comparison of passages from Uzbeck and Karakalpak epics, for example, Karl
Reichl (1985: 631) observes that "[v]ariants are often phonetically/graphemically so close
that they look like reading or aural mistakes."

[12] Parallel passages where verbal correspondences are recognizable but phraseology is
markedly different are also found. In poems on mythological subjects, these include, for
instance, the descriptions of Þórr's eating in *Hym* 15 and *Þkv* 24 and the passages on the
revenge cycle surrounding Baldr in the monologue of *Vsp* 31–34 and the dialogue of *Bdr*
7–11. In the present context, it is relevant to observe that the parallels with marked differ-
ences in phraseology are found in *different* poems rather than being characterized as 'the
same' text. Such passages are also found in the heroic poems, noting that a redactor's
editing of passages considered 'the same' between *HH I* and *HH II* (see Harris 1983 [2008]:
191–202) seems simultaneously to distinguish the poems as 'different'.

[13] Anna-Leena Siikala (1990: 80–86) initially developed the concept of crystallization
based on observations of verbal regularity around semantically central units in legends by
individual tellers, only later extending the concept to the transmission of oral poetry.

[14] This view is complementary to Lars Lönnroth's (1971: 16) observation that phraseology
in *Hjálmar's Death Song* appears more stable where it is specific to the passage of the poem
and more variable where it relies on prefabricated formulaic phraseology.

minor variations may not have been noticeable in common formulae used only occasionally within a poem (Frog 2021:§5). The present study focuses on passages where the inclination to non-variation is predicted as a social ideal for a repeating formula or series of lines.

2.2 Questions of poetic form and the documentation process

Considerations of orality behind eddic poems has increased considerably since the turn in OFT research from emphasis on form to foreground meanings,[15] yet such orality continues to be taken for granted (see also Harris 1983 [2008]: 189). Questions of the relationship between the manuscript texts and oral performance have predominantly focused on variation, whether in the oral tradition behind written texts (e.g. Thorvaldsen 2008) or in the interpretation of the written texts as variations from the oral tradition (e.g. Gísli Sigurðsson 1998). The push to return to the manuscript texts rather than relying on edited editions (e.g. Quinn 2016) has nevertheless remained inclined to interpret textual details through the lens of modern literature, reading all details as reflecting meaningful intention. The transition of poems from oral discourse into writing has generally remained invisible. The written poems have consequently tended to be conflated with accurate transcripts of oral performances (if subsequently mediated through scribal transmission), without consideration of how the documentation process may have impacted the text in either presentation or transcription. Although the particular processes remain unknown, the documentation process requires consideration as a factor when considering text variation.

As Gísli Sigurðsson (1998: xx) has stressed, the speed of transcribing an eddic poem would undoubtedly be far slower than the rate of an oral performance and the resulting text should not be confused with an ethnographic transcript of an oral performance. The documentation of poems can be assumed either to have involved a slow, interruptive and potentially frustrating process of dictation or a slow, reflective transcription from personal knowledge and memory. Dictation inevitably impacts on the

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[15] On this turn, see e.g. Foley & Ramey 2012; Frog & Lamb 2021; the use of OFT with an interest in meanings in variation shows up in eddic poetry research at the International Saga Conference in 1988 (Gísli Sigurðsson 1990; Quinn 1990) and began gaining momentum across the 1990s, reinforced by the rising interest in performance (e.g. Gunnell 1995) and publication of Paul Acker's (1998) important study as well as Gísli Sigurðsson's (1998) introduction to his edition of the poems.

realization of oral poetry, as has been observed and discussed for count-less traditions already since the nineteenth century.[16] The impacts of this process vary by tradition and by the individuals involved, and include both "those skillfully and those ineptly done" (Lord 1960: 149). Dictation may regularize the metrical form by reducing or eliminating the flexibility of a normal performance, or the poetic form may break down entirely, for example because expletive particles relevant to meter but not meaning are omitted, or because the presenter tells what verses would say in paraphrase or simply summarizes content. Transcription from personal knowledge lacks the interactive dimension, and allows the writer to work at his or her own pace with time for deliberation and reflection, potentially resulting in text aligned with the writer's ideals.

Dictation has tended to be imagined as the most probable way for oral poetry to enter writing.[17] This idea is centrally built on modern collection activity, on the backdrop of an ideology that spread with the Enlightenment and Romanticism and that conferred value on traditions that were historically, religiously and/or culturally 'other'. This ideology prompted outsiders with a literate cultural background to interview oral poets or organize poetry's documentation. Throughout most of the twentieth century, orality and literacy were viewed as opposed and exclusive categories. This made it seem natural that oral poetry must be presented by someone who is illiterate and documented by someone who is literate. The polarized view marginalized poetry written by literate people based on personal knowledge of an oral tradition by not considering it authentically 'oral'. However, orality and literacy can be extremely fluid, as seen in traditions ranging from European ballads to improvizational rap battles (see also Foley 2010). In the Middle Ages, texts were commonly written for oral delivery, creating a milieu characterized by aurality (Coleman 1996). Written texts were also open to potentially considerable variation rather than only being slavishly reproduced,[18] and the Old English poet Cynewulf appears as someone fluent in the oral poetic idiom while his runic signatures indicate he was

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[16] For a survey of many such accounts with extensive quotations, see Ready 2015: 13–24.

[17] This impression has been augmented by discussion centering around questions about Homeric poetry, so that comparative emphasis has been on long and variable epic forms (e.g. Lord 1960; Ready 2015).

[18] The interactions of orality and literacy have been extensively explored in Old English poetry: e.g. O'Keeffe 1990; Doane 1994; Amodio 2004; on 'scribal performance' generally, see Ready 2019; in Old Norse poetry, see e.g. Harris 1983 [2008]; on Old Norse text variation by copyists, see also Jansson 1944; Sävborg 2012.

writing them himself. It seems eddic poems began being written down within about a century of the development of vernacular writing. The Old Norse corpus is predominantly prose, but that prose is filled with quotations of different types of poetry stemming from the oral tradition. If quotations of poems in sagas are considered written out from personal knowledge, there is no reason to assume *a priori* that whole eddic poems were transcribed from dictation.

Transcribing the eddic poems indicates that they were valuable and interesting to the people who wrote them, and that they were valued *as poems* rather than only for informational content. Poems on mythological subjects in particular would have to be sufficiently valorized among people who were literate to invest in the time, trouble and expense to document them in spite of their 'pagan' subject matter. The social gap between peasant oral performers and modern literate collectors would be anachronistic for medieval Iceland, as would the ideology of the Enlightenment and Romanticism. There is no reason to believe that a community of medieval Christians would valorize such 'pagan' poems without viewing them as their own traditions to start with, and no reason think that the literate person documenting poems was a social outsider with little or no advanced knowledge of the tradition.[19] Writing the poems down suggests a continuity of the oral traditions in the communities doing the writing. Although the exact purpose of the written poems is unknown, writing them out indicates that they were intended to be used, as does collecting and copying them. The texts were produced by and for literate audiences, although their use most likely had a social dimension, connected with public rather than private reading (see also Coleman 1996). The oral delivery of written poems can be assumed to have followed the conventions of the oral performance tradition, so the writing of eddic poems should be viewed as an extension of the oral tradition rather than divorced from it (Mundal 2010: 166–167), even if the oral tradition may have been transformed or gradually displaced as a historical process (see also Gísli Sigurðsson 1998: xx). How different poems were documented may have

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[19] Romanticism's elevation of non-Christian mythology tends to be seen in terms of heritage and its expression of a 'spirit' of a people, but it is worth noting that this built on ideas of the Enlightenment that saw mythology as inspired and thus as achieving aesthetic ideals and to be valued on those terms while rejecting and condemning beliefs and practices of paganism. Works like *Snorra Edda* and *Heimskringla* seem instead to suggest an environment where traditions linked specifically to vernacular non-Christian mythology were present and valued in society, leading them to be reframed as acceptable in a Christian context rather than rejected.

varied considerably, but, if poems were documented through dictation, the transcriber was likely familiar with the tradition if not competent to perform in it, and had quite probably heard the particular poem before.[20] Rather than today's ideals of transcription, the transcriber's knowledge of the tradition may have affected and even filtered what was written, so that writing the poem may have been a process of co-production (Ready 2015).

Documented eddic poems generally make the metrical form salient. They sometimes have prose insertions and there are scattered lines that are non-ideal, but they do not float in and out of poetic form.[21] The consistent salience of the metrical form makes it possible that the documentation process often or usually resulted in texts closer to certain formal ideals than might be normal in other situations. If eddic poetry was documented through dictation, the situation can be assumed to have been staged – i.e. pre-organized – arranging for one person to present and another person with the materials, place, and perhaps light to transcribe. The situation would almost certainly be different from a customary performance context. If the person dictating was not the organizer of the situation, he may have felt self-conscious or awkward, particularly when the process itself was first being attempted. The shift in mode to dictation or performance of short series of verses in bursts, followed by pauses as they are written down, breaks up the flow of presentation and can cause difficulties for even the most skilled and confident performer.[22] The setting may thus have resulted in less-than-ideal presentations, especially when first getting started, while the presenter's attention may have been more on the unusual situation than on the poetry (e.g. Lord 1960: 126). The different mode of presentation, or regular breaks after short sets of verses, could be particularly disruptive for a presenter who conceived of the text not as simply words and phrases but as performed speech. Comparative evidence suggests that the presenter would gradually become more accustomed to the process and situation, with the consequence that difficulties may be more concentrated at the beginning than at the end of a presentation.

Albert Lord's discussion and examples are widely known as a point of reference when considering dictation (e.g. 1960: 114–115 and ch. 6). He

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[20] Medieval dictation of a poem for transcription is unlikely to be organized without it first having been heard.

[21] The poem *Hárbarðsljóð* might be considered an outlier here, which could reflect differences in its documentation context.

[22] See e.g. the survey of accounts from different traditions, concentrated on oral epic, in Ready 2015: 13–24.

states that that "a dictated text, even when done under the best of circum-stances and by the best of scribes, is never entirely, from the point of view of the line structure, the same as a sung text" (Lord 1960: 127). Although the claim is valid, some of the issues that Lord describes are linked to the type of tradition and are not so prominent in, for example, kalevalaic epic, which was documented extensively through dictation during the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. The South Slavic singers described by Lord traditionally performed with musical accompaniment in a tradition of composition-in-performance, piecing together most passages formula by formula and line by line in a flow of continuous speech. For this type of tradition, removing the features that organize and facilitate that flow can be extremely disruptive (e.g. Lord 1960: 126–127). Eddic poetry diverged from other Germanic poetry not only in poetic form but also in performance practices. The poetry seems not to have been performed with musical accompaniment, nor is it described as 'sung' (Harris 1985: 116–117). Eddic poems on mythological and heroic subjects also do not appear to have been composed *in situ*. Poems were not memorized in the modern sense of actively learning an absolute and invariable exemplar to be ideally reproduced without variation of a single morpheme. Nevertheless, they seem to have been internalized as regularly reproduced verbal texts. This makes for a very different situation for dictation, with the presenter trying to remember lines and passages, whether remembered as whole or as largely prefabricated but completed *in situ*.

The presentation of verses interacts with memory, whether or not with conscious, reflective self-assessment of the ongoing presentation. The role of memory is greater where poems are remembered as texts, rather than composed freely *in situ*, and less-than-ideal verses may be recognized and improved in repetitions. This type of process is reflected in *Alvíssmál*, where formulae only vary on their first use, and a more ideal form on their second use remains consistent thereafter. This does not mean that poems were invariable, but remembering formulae or whole lines and systems of lines plays a significant role in such poetry, and difficulty calling up the customary phrase for a particular passage can cause a presenter to stumble no less than any of us might when, mid-sentence, we find we cannot recall a key word or phrase. *Composing* is here considered an act of formulating potentially unique expressions, whether at the level of a single line or a whole poem, either in the course of presentation or in a situation allowing for deliberation. *Remembering* concerns both words and prefabricated units and frameworks and potentially whole stretches

of text. Composing and remembering are here seen as complementary and interacting in an oral performance: even the most crystallized oral poetry may involve a degree of composition, while even the most variable oral poetry involves a degree of remembering prefabricated units and schemata of the idiom. The performance of oral poetry is commonly characterized by a continuous and regular flow of delivery that will normally prioritize ideal fluency, without pauses, false starts, etc. Not being able to remember a phrase or passage will thus normally lead to composition or simply moving forward, sometimes at the expense of semantic content (or even sense). The pressures of temporal delivery are removed in deliberative transcription from personal knowledge and also potentially from dictation, which might even open into discussion and corrections in the course of presentation. The transcriber might also edit the text in the process of transcription without consultation, or stop to question a verse, perhaps digressing into conversation.[23] The possible factors in the situation are innumerable, but the perspectives outlined here offer a frame of reference for considering the cases below.

2.3 Methodology

An ideal of non-variation is taken as a dominant ideology in text reproduction, and formula usage that diverges from this ideal is assessed against that backdrop. All else being equal, variation in repeating formulae could reflect a performer's idiosyncratic handling of the poetic system (cf. Harvilahti 1992b: 95–96), impacts of a scribe on the transmission of a text (Frog forthcoming:§7), or problems of memory (as in *Alvíssmál* above) or other interference in the context of the initial transcription of a poem. Focus here is on repetitions within a single version of a text. Multiple uses of a formula or verse sequence within a poem create a context in which variation can be viewed, but a variation among only two or three uses remains ambiguous. The cases taken up below thus examine formulae in lists of a greater number of items in series, providing a larger number for comparison. The repeated use in relatively rapid and periodic succession is also assumed to make non-variation more salient in the documentation of the poem and its manuscript transmission.

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[23] Cf. *Gm* 25.2, where it looks like *Herjafǫðrs* 'of Óðinn' has been added to the end of a b-line as a clarification, and then the word order changes in the line's repetition in *Gm* 26.2 to syntactically integrate *Herjafǫðrs* (cf. Bugge 1867: 80–81).

Interpreting the background of individual variations uses so-called 'close reading', looking with great care and an analytical eye at a text and its features in context, down to minutia of detail. More pragmatically, the case studies below are each of a numbered inventory of knowledge or questions about mythic knowledge, so other examples of similar inventories are first reviewed to establish a frame of reference within the corpus. Variations in each case are correlated with potential relevant indicators of competence, confidence, and fluency in the passage of the text or poem, and also corresponding potential indicators of confusion, tension, or disruption, with the hope of identifying interpretable patterns.

2.4 Sources

The primary materials of this study are the texts of eddic poems as they appear in the Codex Regius (GKS 2365 4to) and AM 748 I a manuscripts, working centrally from the edition of Sophus Bugge (1867) alongside the diplomatic editions of Ludv. F. A. Wimmer and Finnur Jónsson (1891) and Vésteinn Ólason and Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson (2001) of the Codex Regius and of Finnur Jónsson (1896) of AM 748 I a; I have also made use of images of both manuscripts available at handrit.is as well as relevant later manuscripts of which digital images are available. Comparisons with *Snorra Edda* are made with reference to Anthony Faulkes' edition of *Gylfaginning* and the Prologue (Snorri Sturluson 2005), with consideration of Finnur Jónsson's edition (Snorri Sturluson 1931).

3. Ordinal formulae

I use the term *ordinal formula* to refer to a formula that has an open slot,[24] which is regularly completed by ordinal numbers to form a series. Ordinal formulae are used in several eddic poems, where the longer series are particularly linked to inventories of units of mythic knowledge. Such numbered lists are exclusively found in poems in the *ljóðaháttr* meter. Outside of *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, these are inventories of things

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[24] The concept of formulae with slots and slot fillers was introduced into discussions of formulaic language in oral poetry by Paul Acker (1983; 1998).

that can be performed with supernatural effect, found in *Hávamál*, *Sigr-drífumál* and *Grógaldr*.

3.1 *Hávamál* 146–163

The ordinal formula in *Hávamál* is used in a list of eighteen items. The list opens with *Ljóð ek þau kann* 'Songs I know those' (*Háv* 146.1) with *hjálp heitir eitt* 'help one is called' beginning the second half of the stanza; this is followed by the ordinal formula *Þat kann ek {it}* # 'That I know {the}/a # ' (curly brackets indicate an element of a formula that can be omitted; '#' indicates a slot in the formula completed by an ordinal number). This section of *Hávamál* is preceded by the advice to Lodd-Fáfnir, in which there are twenty-one repetitions of the opening verse sequence introducing units of advice; the latter repeating sequence is a long line followed by two *Vollzeilen*, reduced in abbreviation to the first two words by the fifth use (*Háv* 112–137; see also Frog forthcoming:§3). In contrast, the ordinal formula in the following section is written out with no more than normal abbreviation (the abbreviation "k̃." is here only left unexpanded to "kann" so that it is saliently distinguishable from "kaɴ", expanded to "ka*nn*"; I indicate line breaks systematically through all examples):

(1)	Lioþ ec þa*v* ka*nn*		/ er ka*nn*at þioðans kóna		(*Háv* 146.1–2)
	hialp heit*ir*	eit*t*	/ e*nn* þat þe*r* hialpa mv*n*		(*Háv* 146.4–5)
	Þ*at* ka*nn*	ec	ii.	/ er þv*r*fo yta syn*ir*	(*Háv* 147.1–2)
	Þ*at* k̃.	ec.	iii.	/ ef m*er* ve*r*þr þa*r*f micil	(*Háv* 148.1–2)
	Þ*at* k̃.	ec et	iiii.	/ ef m*er* fyrðar b*er*a	(*Háv* 149.1–2)
	Þ*at* k̃.	ec it	v.	/ ef ec se af fári scot*inn*	(*Háv* 150.1–2)
	Þ*at* k̃.	ec et	vi.	/ ef mic s*er*ir þegn	(*Háv* 151.1–2)
	Þ*at* k̃.	ec it	.vii.	/ ef ec se havan loga	(*Háv* 152.1–2)
	Þ*at* k̃.	ec iþ.	viii.	/ er a*v*llo*m* er	(*Háv* 153.1–2)
	Þ*at* k̃.	ec iþ.	ix.	/ ef mic na*v*þr v*m* stendr	(*Háv* 154.1–2)
	Þ*at* k̃.	ec iþ.	x.	/ ef ec se tv*n*riþor	(*Háv* 155.1–2)
	Þ*at* k̃.	ec iþ.	xi.	/ ef ec sc*al* til orrosto	(*Háv* 156.1–2)
	Þ*at* k̃.	ec iþ	xii.	/ ef ec se atre vp*p*i	(*Háv* 157.1–2)
	Þ*at* k̃.	ec iþ	xiii.	/ ef ec sc*al* þelgn vngan	(*Háv* 158.1–2)
	Þ*at* k̃.	ec iþ.	xiiii.	/ ef ec sc*al* fyrða lilþi	(*Háv* 159.1–2)
	Þ*at* k̃.	ec iþ.	xv.	/ e*r* gól þioð reyr*ir*	(*Háv* 160.1–2)
	Þ*at* k̃.	ec iþ.	xvi.	/ ef ec vil ins svi*nn*a mans	(*Háv* 161.1–2)
	Þ*at* ka*nn*	ec iþ.	xvii.	/ at mic mv*n* seint fi*r*raz	(*Háv* 162.1–2)
	Þ*at* k̃.	ec iþ.	xviii.	/ e*r* ec æva ke*nn*ig	(*Háv* 163.1–2)

The first unit or strophe is formally different from those that follow and does not use the ordinal formula. After this, the ordinal formula regularly

completes an a-line followed each time by a different b-line that opens the specific unit of knowledge. The b-line either begins *ef* 'if' followed by a first-person singular pronoun or *er* 'which' in all but the seventeenth item. The number in the ordinal formula regularly carries alliteration (although undesirably in the seventh with the verb); alliteration can be assumed to drive the phraseology of the b-line. The line structure of each unit being introduced is not regular. Although it is most common for long lines and *Vollzeilen* to alternate, both are also found used in series; counting each a-line, b-line and *Vollzeile* separately, the number of verses in each unit varies from three to nine; counting each long line singly, the number of verses varies from two to seven.

   The formula *Þat kann ek {it}* # varies only in the absence of *it* from the second and third uses; *it* is never to be found in combination with *annarr* 'second', which seems to be a convention of language that drives at least a minimum variation in the formula's phraseology.[25] Use of *it* beginning with the fourth rather than the third item could be an incidental variation but it is equally possible that the absence was a less-than-ideal realization or an accident of carrying non-variation from the second to the third use rather than shifting immediately to use with *it*. An omission by the scribe is also possible, although the formula is not subject to extensive abbreviation, so it would have to be attributed to accident. As a variation, the omission of *it* is superficial. Alternation in the orthography of *it* between "et", "it", and "iþ" is lexically incidental from the perspective of oral variation, but the inclination to non-variation may, in this case, also be reflected in the orthography: the form "iþ" becomes regular beginning from the eighth use.

3.2 *Sigrdrífumál* 22–37

The ordinal formula *Þat ræð ek þér {it}* # 'That I advise you {the}/a #' is used in *Sigrdrífumál* eleven times, beginning from the first item. Although the regular alternation of long lines and *Vollzeilen* predominates, *Vollzeilen* are also used in series in *Sd* 25 and *Sd* 35. Outside of these passages, editors treat the text as composed in regular stanzas, yet the number of verses between uses of the ordinal formula vary, with supplementary comments or elaborations given for the third (*Sd* 25), fourth (*Sd* 27), sixth (*Sd* 30), ninth (*Sd* 34) and tenth (*Sd* 36) items in the inventory. Only the

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[25] The variation in the abbreviation of *kann*, changing back from "k̄." to "kaɴ" with the seventeenth item occurs with the first use after beginning to write on the verso of the leaf.

first six uses are preserved in the Codex Regius, at which point is the
lacuna of the missing quire:

(2)   Codex Regius (GKS 2365)

Þat	ręþ	ec	þer	iþ	fyrsta	/ at þv viþ frǫndr þina	(*Sd* 22.1–2)
Þ*at* r.	e.	þer.		a.		/ at þv eiþ ne sv*er*ir	(*Sd* 23.1–2)
Þ*at* r.	e.	þ.		iii		/ at þv þingi a	(*Sd* 24.1–2)
Þ*at* r.	ec.	þer	it.	iiii.		/ ef byr forldǫþa	(*Sd* 26.1–2)
Þ*at* r.	ec.	þer	it	v.		/ þottv fag*r*ar ser	(*Sd* 28.1–2)
Þ*at* r.	ec.	þ.	it	vi.		/ þot*t* me*þ* se*gg*io*m* fari	(*Sd* 29.1–2)

The remainder of the stanzas are preserved only in later paper manuscripts,
where they conclude the poem.[26] The oldest manuscripts with the remaining
stanzas are from the seventeenth century. Bugge identified the oldest as AM
738 4to, copied in 1680, and AM 166 b 8vo, which he dated to the second half
of the seventeenth century (1867: 234), although the relevant leaves were lost
from the latter within a few decades of his edition (Ussing et al. 1894: 429).
Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir (2011a; 2011b) argues that the neglected manu-
script Lbs 1199 4to, not used by Bugge or later editors of the poem, exhibits
features that suggest it may be the closest to the Codex Regius text:

(3)   Lbs 1199

Þad	ræd	eg	þier	hid	İ.	/ ad. þu vid frændur þyna	(*Sd* 22.1–2)
Þad.	r.	e.	þ.		İİ	/ ad þu Eid nie Suorier	(*Sd* 23.1–2)
þad	r.	e*g*	þ.		III.	/ ad þu þingi a	(*Sd* 24.1–2)
Þ.	r.	e.	þ.	iþ	İV·	/ ef byr f*or*dæd	(*Sd* 26.1–2)
þ.	r	e.	þ		V.	/ þottu fagrar sier	(*Sd* 28.1–2)
þ .	r.	e.	þ.		Vİ.	/ þott med seggiu*m* f*ar*:	(*Sd* 29.1–2)
Þ.	R.	e*g*	þ.		VII.	/ Eff þu sakar deiler	(*Sd* 31.1–2)
þ .	r.		þ.		Vİİİ.	/ ad þu skallt v*id* Illu sia	(*Sd* 32.1–2)
Þ.	r.		þ.		İX.	/ ad þu Naam Bi*arge*l	(*Sd* 33.1–2)
Þ.	r.		þ.		X	/ ad þu truer alldre	(*Sd* 35.1–2)
Þ.	r.		þ.		XI.	/ ad þu v*id* illu sęr	(*Sd* 37.1–2)

As in *Hávamál*, alliteration is carried by the number in every use with a
different b-line that opens the specific unit of information; b-lines never-

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[26] In *Vǫlsunga saga*, extended quotation of *Sigrdrífumál* stops with the preceding section of
the poem (i.e. *Sd* 21), although the stanzas of the rest of the poem appear to have been trans-
formed into a series of prose statements of advice (Bugge 1867: 232–234; cf. Finch 1965:
39–40). Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir (2011a: 121) finds that all but one manuscript of the
poem datable to the seventeenth century concludes with the same text. In later manuscripts,
text from *Vǫlsunga saga* became linked to the poem by manuscript redactors. For example,
ÍB 299 4to, rather than copying the opening verses of the incomplete stanza in the Codex
Regius, picks up in the prose advice of *Vǫlsunga saga* following *Sd* 28; the same passage
is included in Lbs 1689 4to, which contains *Sigrdrífumál* through *Sd* 37.

theless predominantly begin the same (*at þú* 'that you', of which *ef þú* 'if you' may be a variation). Abbreviation generally matches the Codex Regius through the fourth use, including the absence of *it* from the third, although Roman numerals are used already beginning from the first. After the fourth use, *it* is omitted without abbreviation, as is *ek* 'I' after the seventh; the reduction of the number of words reflected in an abbreviated text sequence was common (as was variation in which words were represented in abbreviation).

AM 738 4to expands the abbreviations – also adding *it* to the third use – until the fourth item, which is the first on a new page (16r). The switch to Roman numerals seems to have caused some confusion, reflected in "i4" rather than "iv". The abbreviations generally remain uniform, although *it* disappears from the last three uses of the formula:[27]

(4)   AM 738 4to

Þad	ræd	eg	þier	hÿd	fyrsta	/ ad þü vid frændur þÿna	(*Sd* 22.1–2)
Þad	ræd	eg	þier		annad	/ ad þu eid ne sverier	(*Sd* 23.1–2)
þad	ræd	eg	þier	ed	þridia	/ ad þu ey ä þingi	(*Sd* 24.1–2)
Þ	R	e	þ	iþ	i4	/ ef byr fordæda	(*Sd* 26.1–2)
þ	R	e	þ	iþ	v:	/ þöttu fagrar siäer	(*Sd* 28.1–2)
Þ	R	e	þ	iþ	vi	/ þött med seggium fare	(*Sd* 29.1–2)
þ	r	i	þ	iþ	vij	/ ef þu sakardeilir	(*Sd* 31.1–2)
þ	r	i	þ	i:	viij	/ ad þu skallt vid illu sia	(*Sd* 32.1–2)
þ:	r:	e	þ		ix	/ ad þu Naaumm biarlger	(*Sd* 33.1–2)
þ	r	e	þ		x	/ ad þu truer alldzeij	(*Sd* 35.1–2)
þ	r	e	þ		xi	/ ad þu vid illu siaer	(*Sd* 37.1–2)

In the eleventh use, the Roman numeral appears "xii", although the "ii" is probably a sloppy double stroke to mark a thick "i" as "ii" is written "ij" elsewhere in this text.

3.3 *Grógaldr* 6–14

The ordinal formula *Þann gel ek þér {it} #* 'This incant I to you {the}/a #' is used for all nine items presented in *Grógaldr*'s numbered list. Like the lists in *Hávamál* and *Sigrdrífumál*, the b-line formula is different with each use. Each unit in the list is uniformly structured as two pairs of

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[27] In AM 738 4to, the seventh and eighth uses of the formula seem to abbreviate it carelessly, so that the "e" becomes hardly recognizable, as does the "r" in the eighth. Something seems to have impacted the copying process on the ninth use: the abbreviations become clear, yet *it* disappears.

alternating long lines and *Vollzeilen* with the exception of *Gg* 10, which has an additional *Vollzeile*. AM 738 4to's text is presented in (5):

(5) AM 738 4to

Þann gel ek þer		fyrstann	/ þann kueþa fiǫlnytann	(*Gg* 6.1–2)
Þann gel ek þer		annann	/ er þu arna skalt	(*Gg* 7.1–2)
Þann gel ek þer		þryðia	/ ef þer þióðir	(*Gg* 8.1–2)
Þann gel ek þer	inn	fiorþa	/ ef þik filanþr stanþa	(*Gg* 9.1–2)
Þann gel ek þer		fimta	/ ef þer fiotur verþa	(*Gg* 10.1–2)
Þann gel ek þer	inn	Sietta	/ ef þu a sio kemur	(*Gg* 11.1–2)
Þann gel ek þer	inn	siøunþa	/ ef þik sekia kemur	(*Gg* 12.1–2)
Þann gel ek þer	inn	atta	/ ef þik uti nemur	(*Gg* 13.1–2)
Þann gel ek þer		Nijunþa	/ ef þu vyþ þann naddgøfgna	(*Gg* 14.1–2)

Bugge's edition presents *inn* regularly for all uses of the formula except the second, and all b-lines after the first as beginning *ef* 'if' followed by a second-person singular pronoun. Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason (2014: 189) identify the oldest manuscript as Stockh. papp. 8vo nr. 15 (not used by Bugge); their edition also presents *inn* with the third question (2014: 438).

3.4 Overview of ordinal formulae in *Hávamál*, *Sigrdrífumál*, and *Grógaldr*

Ordinal formulae reviewed in this section remain formally very uniform. *Hávamál* exhibits a different formula with the first item in the series whereas *Sigrdrífumál* and *Grógaldr* both use the ordinal formula also for the first item. The only formal variation is the presence or absence of the article *it*/*inn*, a variation that seems to be required for *annarr* 'second', which may impact its variability in repetition generally; absences of the article later in the series nevertheless appear likely attributable to manuscript abbreviation simply rendering it invisible. The formula is combined with a different b-line in each use and alliteration is consistently carried by the number. All three lists exhibit preferred ways of beginning the b-lines.

4. Alternating b-lines in *Vafþrúðnismál*

In *Vafþrúðnismál*, the ordinal formula *Segðu þat {it} #* 'Say you this {the} #' is used to open a series of twelve questions. Unlike ordinal formulae above, the b-line does not begin the unique unit of knowledge, nor is

the b-line different for each use of the formula. Sets of questions in *Vaf-þrúðnismál* are linked through the repetition of an opening long line and *Vollzeile*, producing what can be described as *macro-parallelism* (Urban 1986: 26–29) through which paired questions and answers become perceivable as parts of parallel groups.

4.1 Indications of ideals of non-variation

The repeating verse sequences opening questions are subject to extended abbreviation with suspension. The abbreviation strategy may conceal some variation, but it simultaneously indicates a perceived sameness of the verse sequence. In the first such sequence, Vafþrúðnir's questions to Óðinn open with the common formula *Segðu {mér} {þat} X* 'Say you {to me} {this} X', in which one or both optional words may appear. In the first use, the pronoun *mér* 'to me' is used, switching immediately to *þat* 'this' in repetitions ("?" represents a *punctus elevatus*, used to indicate omitted words):

(6) Segþv   <u>mer</u> gagn raþr   / a*l*lz þv agólfi | vill   // þins v*m* freista f*r*ama   (*Vm* 11.1–3)
   Segdv   <u>þat</u>   gagnraþ*r*?   (*Vm* 13.1–3)
   S egðv <u>þ.</u>   g?   (*Vm* 15.1–3)
   Segþv   <u>þ.</u>   g.   / a? | (*Vm* 17.1–3)

Say <u>to me</u> / <u>this</u> Gagnráðr / as you on the floor want // yours (*um*) to try your fame?

The number of repetitions is relatively few, but the regularity of the last three uses continues into the ordinal formula *Segðu þat {it} #* in the following series of questions. The *Segðu {mér} {þat} X* is a widely attested formula, used in the repeating series of questions in *Alvíssmál* and *Fjölsvinnsmál* and also more widely (see Kellogg 1988: *s.v.* 'segja'). Use with *Segðu mér X* or *Segðu mér þat X* are the most common forms whereas *Segðu þat X* seems rare outside of *Vafþrúðnismál*; examples of variation within a poem are normally expansions after the first use and never otherwise alternation between short forms with only *mér* or *þat* (Frog 2021:§5). *Segðu mér þat X* appears held as generally ideal in the corpus. *Mér* in the first use in (6) is most likely a less-ideal realization on the formula's first use, following which the presenter finds a preferred form on the first repetition and sticks with it.

Non-variation also characterizes the opening verse sequence of the questions following the numbered inventory:[28]

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[28] Bugge (1867: 72) adds "vm" before "reynda regin" based on the expletive particle *of*

(7) Fjolþ ec   for / fiolþ ec   freistaþac // f. ec relynda regin   (*Vm* 44.1–3)
    Fiolþ ec. f.   / f.   e.   f?   (*Vm* 46.1–3)
    Fiolþ ec   f.   / f.   (*Vm* 48.1–3)
    Fiolþ ec   f.   / f?   (*Vm* 50.1–3)
    Fiolþ ec. f?   (*Vm* 52.1–3)
    F iolþ ec   for / f?   (*Vm* 54.1–3)

    Much I travelled / much I tried // much I tested the gods

These examples suggest that the presenter of the poem subscribed to ideals of non-variation. The opening variation in the first series of questions suggests that he did not always come up with an ideal form of a verse on the first use of a formula.

4.2 The ordinal formula within the recurrent verse sequence

The sequence of questions forming a numbered inventory is separated from the preceding text, beginning on a new line with a large capital. The rubric "capitulum" 'chapter' has been added in red ink in a space at the end of the line. Within the poem, this division marks the transition from the first parts of the poem, including the giant's questions, to Óðinn's questions, which dominate the rest of the poem until its conclusion.[29]

For the first ten questions, the ordinal formula is integrated into an opening address of the giant that is a long line and *Vollzeile* in length, and the question is formulated in a following long line and *Vollzeile*. The answer then follows in two pairs of alternating long lines and *Vollzeilen*. The structure of both questions and answers is generally regular, although there are two answers that are only a single long line and *Vollzeile* (*Vm* 27, 31) and one that includes an additional long line (*Vm* 38).[30] With the eleventh and twelfth cycles of the inventory, variations appear in the macro-parallel structure. The eleventh question is formulated as a single

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found in AM 748 I a; it is possible that the same could be a variation concealed by abbreviation here.

[29] This rubric is also found following *Rm* 25 and following the concuding verses of *Guðrúnarkviða* II (and cf. also Bugge 1867: ii–iii, 396), making it seem unlikely to antedate bringing together the mythological and heroic collections into a single manuscript.

[30] The additional long line stands out because it is an independent clause juxtaposed between a long line and *Vollzeile* that form a coherent clause, leading it to be interpreted as an interpolation (e.g. Gering 1927: 173). The line is also formally unusual. Its short lines are end-rhymed, which in *ljóðaháttr* (outside of lists of names) is otherwise only found in combination with parallelism (in short lines or *Vollzeilen* in *Skm* 28.3–4; in *Vollzeilen* in *Háv* 134.11–12), and the rhyme is on heavy disyllables, which is unusual for a b-line's cadence (found in *Vafþrúðnismál* in *Vm* 2.5, 3.5 and 33.2).

long line and *Vollzeile* (*Vm* 40) as is the answer (*Vm* 41) or these together form a question without an answer. The twelfth question is formed through variation of the repeating opening lines and the answer repeats the following long line while both have an extra *Vollzeile* or long line (*Vm* 42, 43). The ordinal formula *Segðu þat {it} #* is regular, with *it* appearing in all instances except with *annarr*, and all questions open with a variation of the long line and *Vollzeile* except for the eleventh:[31]

(8) S egðv þat iþ eína / ef þitt oþi dvgir   // oc þv vafþrvðnir vitir. (*Vm* 20.1–3)
    Segðv þat.   ii.   / e. þ.   ẹ. d.   // oc þ.   v? | (*Vm* 22.1–3)
    Segðv þat. iþ iii.   / allz þic svinnan |qveþa // oc þ.   v.   v.   (*Vm* 24.1–3)
    Segðv þat. iþ iiii. | / a.   þ. f?   (*Vm* 26.1–3)
    S egðv þat. iþ v.   / a.   þ. f?   (*Vm* 28.1–3)
    Segðv þat. it. vi.   / a. | þ. s.   q.   (*Vm* 30.1–3)
    S egðv þat. iþ vii. / a.   þ. s.   q.   (*Vm* 32.1–3)
    Segðv þat. iþ viii. / a.   þ. f?   (*Vm* 34.1–3)
    Segðv þat. iþ ix.   / a | þ. s.   q.   // e?   (*Vm* 36.1–3)
    S egðv þat. iþ. x.   / a.   þu tiva rácc   // aʼll vafðrvðnir vitir   (*Vm* 38.1–3)
    Segðv þat. et. xi.   / hvar ytar tvnom i   // haʒggvaz hverian dag.   (*Vm* 40.1–3)
    Segl|þv þat. iþ xii. / hvi þu tiva rácc   // áʼll vafðrvðnir vitir   (*Vm* 42.1–3)

4.3 The b-line formula and lack of alliteration in the eighth question

The ordinal formula's use in a repeating line sequence appears to be an outcome of adapting it to the question and answer dialogue. As in other ordinal lists, the b-line varies in relation to the number in the question, although the number does not always exhibit alliteration. Three formulae with variations are used in the b-line. These formulae, including variation in the formula *allz þik svinnan*/*fróðan kveða* 'as you are said to be clever/ wise', relate to alliteration with the numbers, as shown in Table 1.

Any two ordinal numbers that carry the same alliteration have a different b-line formula, one of which can also be used with the remaining two numbers by alliterating with the verb *segja* to produce a metrically well-formed line. The relationship of b-lines to alliteration suggests a system of alternatives driven by alliteration comparable to that found in

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[31] This is matched in AM 748 I a, where the formula becomes abbreviated to the first letter of each word and Roman numerals are also used for the numbers, while *þat* rather than *it* disappears from the fifth and then the seventh through the last questions (or possibly *þú*; i.e. rather than "þ. þ." appears "þ.", written "þv." in *Vm* 42).

Tab. 1. B-line formulae and ordinal number alliteration (deviations from expectation underlined)

Alliteration	formula	relevant for ordinal numbers	used for
vocalic alliteration	*ef þitt œði dugir*	*annarr*, *átti*, *ellifti*	<u>*einn*</u>, *annarr*
alliteration on /f/	*allz þik fróðan kveða*	*fyrstr*, *fjórði*, *fimti*	*fjórði*, *fimti*, <u>*átti*</u>
alliteration on /s/	*allz þik svinnan kveða*	*sétti*, *sjaundi*	*sétti*, *sjaundi*
alliteration on /t/	*allz/hví þú tíva rǫk*	*tíundi*, *tólfti*	*tíundi*, *tólfti*
other alliteration	*allz þik svinnan kveða*	*þriði*, *níundi*	*þriði*, *níundi*
verse series unused	—	—	<u>*ellifti*</u>

Alvíssmál. When the system is recognized, non-ideal variations come into sharper focus. First:

   a. The b-line of the eighth question does not produce metrical alliteration

The system anticipates use of the b-line for vocalic alliteration, while the formula *allz þik svinnan/fróðan kveða* 'as you are said to be clever/ wise' would produce a metrical alliteration if used with *svinnr* rather than *fróðr*. The variation is unlikely to be the result of scribal error since it is in a series of the formula's *svinnr* variations. A copyist's skip of the eye would require jumping across about eight lines of text (based on the Codex Regius). A misreading of a long s (ſ) as a Carolingian miniscule f is unlikely when the manuscript seems only to have used Insular f (ꝼ);[32] moreover, variations of the formula are abbreviated in different ways in the Codex Regius as "f?" and "s. q.", pointing to a salient distinction between the formula variations in the exemplar.[33] The variation in the eighth question also points away from deliberative transcription from personal knowledge, which would allow the presenter (i.e. writer) to look back at earlier choices, noting that either of the other b-line formulae used up to that point would produce a metrical alliteration. The b-line of the eighth question therefore appears likely to reflect an oral formulation that was transcribed by a second individual. The variation might be accidentally introduced if the a-line and b-line were dictated separately, but dictation

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[32] Carolingian minuscule f is used in only three instances in the Codex Regius, all in corrections (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2019: 365).

[33] AM 748 I a transcribes the first use with the abbreviation "f.", which would match the Codex Regius, followed by regularized abbreviations of "f. k." alongside "s. k." for the following uses (see also Frog forthcoming).

in such short units could easily lead into confusion by interrupting syntax and rhythm, which would likely leave additional traces through the poem. Intuitively, it seems far more likely that dictation would have proceed by utterances that were syntactically or metrically complete.

4.4 The lack of the introductory sequence in the eleventh question

Predictable phraseology is disrupted a second time when vocalic alliteration comes around again:

  b. The eleventh question does not continue with a b-line in Table 1
  c. It is the only of the poem's 22 questions that does not open with a repeating verse series
  d. It is either half the length of the poem's 21 other questions or has no answer
  e. If the second long line and *Vollzeile* is an answer, this is half the length of 19 of the poem's 21 other answers (i.e. all except *Vm* 27 and 31)
  f. The second long line and *Vollzeile* is an answer, the answer does not clearly identify the location 'where' of the question

Transition immediately to the question in the b-line breaks the macro-parallelism that is otherwise regular through the dialogue and thus appears non-ideal.

   Questions in the poem regularly begin with an a-line while the postpositional use of *í* in the final position indicates that *Vm* 40.2 is a b-line, so the phrasing would not result from a copyist accidentally skipping a stretch of text. Moreover, the suspension of abbreviations would lead even the ordinal formula alone to be read as representing the full opening series of verses, as seen in (6) and (7) above. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century copyists interpreted the a-line this way, expanding the verse group, leaving the following b-line and *Vollzeile* without an a-line.[34] Beginning the question in the b-line requires some degree of conscious composition that diverges from all patterns in the poem. The variation cannot be reasonably attributed to a copyist and can with confidence be identified

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[34] For example, reproducing the b-line from the eighth question in AM 738 4to, 55v, ÍB 68 4to, 61r, reproducing the b-line from the tenth question in Lbs 1689 4to, 20r–20v, or following the a-line with "etc" in ÍB 299 4to, 14v. For additional discussion of variations, see Bugge 1867: 71.

with the poem's initial documentation. The variation is extremely unlikely for a deliberative process of writing. Other ordinal inventories present the main unit of information immediately in the b-line with alliteration on the number. Although the variation diverges from other questions in *Vaf-þrúðnismál*, it follows broader conventions of ordinal formula use. It can be understood as a non-ideal expression that was an organic outcome in oral delivery, which would point to a dictation situation. In this case, the variation likely followed an interruption while the preceding verses were transcribed (during which there may also have been distractions).

Either the answer is omitted entirely or the question is unusual in its short duration. Units of mythic knowledge in eddic ordinal inventories may be longer than a pair of alternating long lines and *Vollzeilen* or be elaborated by an additional verse group but they are almost never shorter.[35] Dialogic poetry in *ljóðaháttr* in particular is generally characterized by giving a turn of speech not less than a pair of alternating long lines and *Vollzeilen*, so *Vm* 27, 31 and 41 look short on the backdrop of the corpus as well as of the poem.[36] *Snorra Edda* reproduces the question and a full-length answer for *Vm* 31 (Snorri Sturluson 2005: 10). Although reconstructing verses through *Snorra Edda*'s prose is highly problematic, *Gylfaginning* 19 is devoted to presenting the names and information contained in the lines of *Vm* 27 followed only by a second, commensurate set of names and information (Snorri Sturluson 2005: 21), long suspected to reflect knowledge of additional verses from this passage.[37] As an answer to the eleventh question, a single long line and *Vollzeile* looks non-ideal, particularly when it follows on an anomalously-phrased question.

Together, the question and answer correspond to a passage in *Snorra Edda* commonly considered as the answer to the eleventh question:

(9) Segðu þat it ellipta / hvar ýtar túnum í // hǫggvast hverjan dag	(*Vm* 40.1–3)
allir einherjar / Óðins túnum í // hǫggvast hverjan dag	(Snorri Sturluson 2005: 34)
val þeir kjósa / ok ríða vígi frá // sitja meirr um sáttir saman	(*Vm* 41.4–6)
val þeir kjósa / ok ríða vígi frá // sitja meirr um sáttir saman	(Snorri Sturluson 2005: 34)

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[35] Only in *Háv* 147 and *Vm* 27 and 31, and possibly in *Gm* 5, if counted as two units.

[36] *Vafþrúðnismál*'s passages are quite regular, otherwise only having an extra line in *Vm* 38, 42 and 43, and in the giant's statement that closes the poem, where it appears to be intended for rhetorical effect (*Vm* 55.7–9).

[37] Bugge (1867: 69) even proposed a reconstruction of the lines; cf. Wimmer 1896: 110, also reproduced in Neckel & Kuhn 1963: 49.

'Say you that the eleventh / where men   in the courts // fight every day'
'all the einherjar   / of Óðinn   in the courts // fight every day'

'the slain they choose / and ride from battle // sit then (*um*) reconciled together'
'the slain they choose / and ride from battle // sit then (*um*) reconciled together'

The exemplar of AM 748 I a followed the a-line *Segðu þat it ellipta* immediately with the lines as found in *Snorra Edda*, apparently treating the a-line as a suspension for the whole question. Accepting that beginning the question in the b-line is an oral-derived variation leads the AM 748 I a variant to be seen as a copyist's revision (the reverse being improbable, since the question would otherwise begin in the a-line). Whereas modern editions present the Codex Regius' question with AM 748 I a's answer, not reproducing the question is an indicator that a copyist saw the question *hvar ýtar túnum í* as an adaptation of *Óðins túnum í*. This would suggest that the variation in the Codex Regius had exchanged the name Óðinn, which specifies a location, with a question word along with a poetic word for 'men' that can carry vocalic alliteration for the nominal subject of the a-line. With *Segðu þat it ellipta*, this most likely situation-specific adaptation seems to have made the opening long line and *Vollzeile* a question. Initially, I viewed *Vm* 40.1–3 and 41.4–6 as question and answer. Rethinking it from the perspective of oral poetry, if AM 748 I a accurately reflects that *Vm* 40.2–4 are an adaptation of *Vm* 41.1–3, then I consider it more likely that the presenter elided the conventional beginning of the question with the conventional answer and simply pushed through. I suspect that the elision was simply considered a non-ideal realization – a type of variation – and that the presenter's main concern was that his verses were well-formed and well-ordered, not who spoke which line. Presumably, anyone who knew the poem would recognize what had happened, and recognize both question and answer that were fused together; in that circumstance, asking which lines were spoken by which speaker is not interesting if it is not enacted as a dialogue.[38]

Something has clearly gone awry at the eleventh question, most likely occurring in oral delivery. If this is more or less correct, viewing the eleventh question as simply elided to the answer and the presenter then just pushing onward might seem to suggest dictation in the whole unit

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[38] Marginal speaker notations and manuscript punctuation of this passage will not be discussed here.

of alternating long lines and *Vollzeilen*. However, it could equally be suggested that a short burst of a single long line and *Vollzeile* would make it easier to accidentally elide the ordinal formula directly into the question. This would mean oral delivery in syntactic units, which is also how the Codex Regius but not AM 748 I a is punctuated. The presenter's main concern could still have been to keep the lines well-formed and well-ordered, but, as two utterances separated by perhaps a minute, the transcriber or anyone listening may have interpreted the two parts as question and answer.

The rhythm of dictation has implications for the shortness of *Vm* 27 and 31 (i.e. answers to the fourth and sixth questions). If the units of dictation were a single long line and *Vollzeile* each, these answers would be potential sites where the presenter may have accidentally jumped ahead to the next question. Alternately, if dictation was by the whole turn of each speaker of the poem, then the shortness of *Vm* 27 and 31 would be salient in dictation, making it more likely that these were originally transcribed as complete answers, in which case it seems more probable a copyist accidentally skipped the second half of both in a common exemplar of both the Codex Regius and AM 748 I a. Assessing whether *Vafþrúðnismál* was more likely dictated in syntactic units or turns of dialogue depends on (*a*) whether it is considered more probable that the second half of two answers (not questions) was skipped in oral delivery or accidentally elided by a copyist, and also on (*b*) which seems more probable for the elision of the eleventh question. In either case, the eleventh question, with or without an answer, points to a situation in which even a passage that was clearly non-ideal was written down, presumably more or less as presented.

4.5 Variation in the twelfth question and answer

In this context, the final exchange of the ordinal inventory exhibits variations that require comment:

g. The b-line of the twelfth item varies that of the tenth by changing it into a question

h. The answer in *Vm* 43.1–2 repeats *Vm* 42.4–5 in the question, both followed by a varying *Vollzeile* and an additional line

The variation between the b-lines of the tenth and twelfth questions is of only one word: *allz* 'as' is exchanged for the interrogative *hví* 'how, why'. The twelfth question differs from those preceding it by turning

the repeated statement of Vafþrúðnir's great knowledge into a question about how he knows it rather than as introducing an inquiry about some piece of that knowledge; the second part of the question then repeats the general demand. Vafþrúðnir's reply then differs from answers to previous questions by repeating the second long line of the question, varying the following *Vollzeile*, and, as in the question, following this with an additional line,[39] before proceeding to the answer proper.[40] Although the variations in the twelfth question and answer set these apart from those that preceded them, they appear linked to the change in emphasis of the question and the conclusion of the section of the dialogue. Rather than non-ideal, they seem more likely to be rhetorical and, on the backdrop of conventions of non-variation, exchanging *allz* for *hví* was probably quite marked. Introducing an interrogative at the beginning of the b-line in the twelfth question seems likely to have been part of the tradition or at the very least an established strategy of the particular presenter of the poem, creating the possibility that anticipating this may also have been a factor influencing the eleventh question's jump to an interrogative in the b-line.

4.6 A cardinal number in the ordinal formula and vocalic alliteration

The eighth and eleventh questions both appear as non-ideal formulations that seem to have been produced *in situ*. Both anticipate use of the b-line suited for vocalic alliteration. Use of such a b-line in the first two questions and then 'forgetting' it in the course of performance seems unlikely and contravenes the more general pattern. It thus raises the question of whether the formula *ef þitt œði dugir* 'if your knowledge suffices' was considered non-ideal by the presenter so that it was not used again.

The first use of this b-line may be linked to a non-ideal variation:

i. The ordinal formula's first use has the cardinal *einn* rather than the ordinal *fyrstr*[41]

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[39] The additional line in the question is a *Vollzeile*; that in the answer may be a long line or *Vollzeile* depending on how one scans it (scanned as a long line until Neckel).

[40] A similar type of repetition between question and answer systematically structures the first group of four questions, with variations especially in a-lines while the *Vollzeilen* are regular (*Vm* 11–18). In the final series of six questions, the complete *Vollzeile* is once repeated between question and answer (*Vm* 50–51) and the concluding phrase twice (*Vm* 46–47, 54–55). Repetition of the long line is specific to *Vm* 42–43.

[41] The leaf preserved with *Vafþrúðnismál* in AM 748 I a begins with the b-line formula *ef*

Ordinal formulae are not otherwise used with cardinal numbers, although only *Sigrdrífumál* and *Grógaldr* use such formulae with the first item in a series (*Sd* 22.1, *Gg* 6.1). If *fyrstr* had been used in *Vafþrúðnismál*, the b-line *allz þik fróðan kveða* would presumably have accompanied it for alliteration. The data is too thin to determine whether *fyrstr* or *einn* was established in the presenter's dialect of the tradition, though it is possible that *einn* was non-ideal.

Use of *einn* drives vocalic alliteration for use of *ef þitt œði dugir*, which is metrically well-formed, and this is repeated, predictably, with *annarr*. Thereafter follow five uses of the *allz þik svinnan/fróðan kveða* formula before requiring vocalic alliteration for *átti*. Following two uses of *allz þik svinnan kveða* carrying alliteration with *sétti* and *sjaundi*, the b-line formula is varied for *átti* to *allz þik fróðan kveða*. A third use of the preceding b-line would have achieved metrical alliteration, but this option may have been less noticeable if alliteration with the number was in focus. This otherwise peculiar choice points to an attempt to find a different b-line formula. The b-line formula shifts to *allz þú tíva rǫk* with the tenth question, and the eleventh diverges completely from the a repeating verse sequence when vocalic alliteration is needed again. Rather than these non-ideal solutions being accidental moments of confusion (which can, of course, occur), they seem more likely to reflect the same problem of difficulty coming up with the appropriate b-line for vocalic alliteration. The *ef þitt œði dugir* deviates from all subsequent b-line formulae, which begin *allz þú/þik*, and preferred openings of the b-line seem characteristic of other ordinal formulae above. In the eighth question, insofar as 'forgetting' the b-line *ef þitt œði dugir*, already used twice, is unlikely, varying the formula from the preceding question probably reflects a preference for another line beginning *allz þú/þik*.

The repeated b-line opening *allz þú/þik* builds up to the variation of *alls* for *hví* in the last question. After five repetitions of *allz þik*, the divergence of *ef þitt œði dugir* from the pattern would be salient, as it would not have been in the first questions. This hypothesis remains conjectural, but clear difficulties later in the inventory correlate with vocalic alliteration, with the implication that *ef þitt œði dugir* was not, at that point, considered suitable. If this is correct, it looks like the presenter did not recall the conventional formula and formulated a solution for vocalic alliteration *in situ* already with *einn*. *Œði þér dugi* 'may your knowledge suffice for you' is used

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þitt œði dugir, from which use of *einn* can be assumed.

early in the poem (*Vm* 4.4) and may have been adapted here to generate the b-line. Such an adaptation would point to competence and flexibility in the presenter's handling of the poetic idiom, although the solution was abandoned after the repeating b-line opening *alls þú/þik* was initiated.

4.7 A perspective on variation in *Vafþrúðnismál*

Variation is an organic part of all oral poetry. In that respect, the variations considered here can be considered normal. The interest in these non-ideal solutions are as indications of problems that in turn may offer insights into the initial documentation of the poem. For whatever reason, the presenter seems to have had difficulty where a b-line for vocalic alliteration is predicted. Other features of the poem suggest the presenter's competence in the poetic idiom. We might interpret what happened in the eleventh question as a mistake, yet the elision of the ordinal formula with the b-line to form a question both indicates the ability to find a solution and seems connected with internalized knowledge of the poetry. *Vm* 5 may also be mentioned here as "the only purely narrative *ljóðaháttr* strophe in existence" (Gunnell 1995: 277), presenting third person narration in verse where all other *ljóðaháttr* poems would have prose (see also Gunnell 1995: 185–203). *Ljóðaháttr* is characteristically used for direct speech (Quinn 1992) and Terry Gunnell (1995: ch.3) has argued convincingly that poems in *ljóðaháttr* appear to have been used in a monologic and dialogic performance genre. The written text of *Vafþrúðnismál* is neither accompanied by nor includes any prose. If Gunnell is correct, the anomaly of *Vm* 5 could be explained as the presenter of the poem remaining in the poetic idiom for the third person exposition where presenters of other *ljóðaháttr* poems would shift into prose. Rather than belonging to the oral tradition of *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Vm* 5 would then be a by-product of the documentation process that would reflect the individual's fluency in the idiom.

'What happened' in the background of documenting the text is unclear, but the variations appear to derive from oral delivery, documented by a second person. What is most striking about the presenter's difficulties with b-lines for vocalic alliteration is that the solutions seem to decline rather than improve. They start off with a metrically well-formed b-line in the first two questions, followed rather surprisingly by varying a second formula so that it does *not* alliterate in the eighth question, and then the repeating opening verse sequence collapses entirely in the eleventh. Rather than deeply meditated solutions, the non-ideal verses and passages look

like spontaneous choices in the flow of ongoing performance. Estimating that the pause might be something like a minute for transcribing a half strophe or two minutes for a full strophe, it looks like this presenter, at least, may not have been deeply concerned about 'what comes next' during the interims of presentation as the transcriber was catching up. He may simply have been sitting there, waiting, perhaps attentive, watching his counterpart work, perhaps others present, observing, offered scattered moments of distraction, or perhaps he was simply... bored.

The progression of b-lines solutions for vocalic alliteration does not reflect especial concern. Instead, it could be symptomatic of growing disinterest or even annoyance with the documentation process itself. Such a possibility might seem novel and moderately amusing yet incidental, but it warrants consideration because it could also impact on the presentation of the poem. Scholarship tends to take the eddic poems for granted; textual issues come into focus where these are somehow disruptive or seem anomalous, but the impacts of the performance situation may also be at other levels. For example, the exchange of the twelfth question and answer points to a rhetorical climax, following which some sort of change is expected, such as Vafþrúðnir asking another series of questions. Instead, Óðinn simply continues his interrogation. If the presenter was growing impatient, annoyed or had simply lost interest, he may also have hastened the presentation to its conclusion. Such a possibility is impossible to determine with only one preserved variant of the poem, but it is important to consider that a performance might also be non-ideal at other levels than only lines or question and answer, and that the presenter of a poem might enthusiastically try to find ways to elaborate a poem and display his ability, or equally decide to keep it short or wrap up abruptly.

5. Difficulties starting and alternative ordinal formulae in *Grímnismál*

The numbered list of otherworld locations in *Grímnismál* presents a complex case. The ordinal inventory exhibits a formal regularity in which each unit is composed in a pair of alternating long lines and *Vollzeilen*, although the structure of passages is not uniform throughout the poem. The internal organization of the first three passages varies from those that follow. Like the ordinal inventory in *Hávamál* above (1), the opening

long line and *Vollzeile* present a general introduction to the list followed by the first item in the second long line. The second passage then presents a different location in each half. All other ordinal inventories begin numbering from the first item, although *Hávamál* and *Vafþrúðnismál* use a cardinal number, without and with the ordinal formula, respectively. None of the first three locations in *Grímnismál* are numbered. An ordinal formula first appears at the beginning of the third passage, where the fourth location is numbered the 'third' (*Gm* 6).[42] The numbering of locations proceeds regularly thereafter, yet the formula changes for the next three locations and then changes again for the following four. Units in the inventory become formally regular from the fifth/'fourth' location (*Gm* 7), but, following the sixth/'fifth' (*Gm* 8), the list contains two additional stanza-like units (*Gm* 9–10). The structure of all the ordinal formulae is the same, with two open slots: the second receives the ordinal number while the first is filled by the common noun *bær* 'settlement' and by a place name in all uses thereafter. The name or noun in the first slot always carries alliteration rather than the number. Items are here presented in four groups by their ordinal formulae or lack thereof:

(9)	i.	Land *er* heilact			/ *er* ec li*g*gia se	(*Gm* 4.1–2)
		e*nn* iþrvðheimi			/ s*c*al þó*rr* ve*r*a	(*Gm* 4.4–5)
		Ýdalir	heita		/ þar e*r* vllr hef*ir*	(*Gm* 5.1–2)
		alfhei*m* | freý*r*			/ gáfo i arðaga	(*Gm* 5.4–5)
	ii.	Bǫr	er sa	i*nn*	þriði | / *er* blið regin	(*Gm* 6.1–2)
		valascialf	heit*ir*		/ *er* vęlti s*ér*	(*Gm* 6.4–5)
	iii.	Sa*c*q*v*a beccr	heit*ir*	e*nn*	iiii. / *enn* þar svalar knego	(*Gm* 7.1–2)
		Glaðs heimr	heit*ir*	e*nn*	v. / þars en gvll biarta	(*Gm* 8.1–2)
		Þrym hei*m*r	heit*ir*	e*nn*	vi. / *er* þiazi | bío	(*Gm* 11.1–2)
	iv.	Breiða [blik]	ero	ín	sivndo / *enn* þar baldr hefir	(*Gm* 12.1–2)
		H im*in*biorg	ero	en	atto / *enn* þar hei*m*dall	(*Gm* 13.1–2)
		Folcvangr	e*r*	i*nn*	nivndi / *enn* þar freyia rę*þ*r	(*Gm* 14.1–2)
		Glitn*ir*	e*r*	i*nn*	x. / h*ann* e*r* gv*l*li | stvddr	(*Gm* 15.1–2)
		Nóa tvn	ero	en	xi. / e*nn* þar niorþr | hef*ir*	(*Gm* 16.1–2)

In *Gm* 5.1 and *Gm* 6.4–5, *Ýdalir heita* and *Válaskjálf heitir* exhibit an *X heit-ir/-a* formula, a formula type of which a multitude of examples is found in the corpus (see Kellogg 1988: *s.v.* 'heita'), including in (1) above

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[42] The incongruity between the number of locations and the numbering in the list is found in both manuscripts of the poem and has long been recognized. See e.g. Gering 1927: 189.

and elsewhere in *Grímnismál*.[43] The *X heit-ir/-a inn #* formula is related to this but considered as a distinct type.

The examples of ordinal formulae in *Grímnismál* are:

(10) i.   — —   (*Gm* 4.1, 4.4, 5.1)
    ii. *X   er sá   inn   #* 'X is that   the #' # = 3rd   (*Gm* 6.1)
    iii. *X   heit-ir/-a inn   #* 'X is called the #' # = 4th–6th (*Gm* 7.1, 8.1, 11.1)
    iv. *X   er(u)   in(n) #* 'X is/are   the #' # = 7th–11th (*Gm* 12.1, 13.1, 14.1, 15.1,
                                                    16.1)

In contrast to *X heit-ir/-a* formulae, *X er(u) Y*, where X is a noun in the nominative case, underlying ordinal formulae ii and iv, is only found in *Grímnismál* once outside of the ordinal inventory (*Gm* 33.1: *Hirtir ero oc fiórir* 'Harts there are also four').[44] When the construction is not common, formula ii looks like a variation of formula iv on its first use or both as variations of a *X er/-u {sá} inn #* formula.

Even before considering the text in any detail, a number of features stand out as potentially irregular:

    a. Three locations are named in the inventory before numbering begins (*Gm* 4–5)
    b. The second and third locations are each presented in half the verses of other units, apparently forming a single unit together (*Gm* 5)
    c. Numbering begins by labelling the fourth location as the 'third' (*Gm* 6)
    d. The first ordinal formula is not completed with a place name (*Gm* 6)
    e. The structure of units only becomes regular from the fifth/'fourth' item (before *Gm* 7)
    f. The first ordinal formula varies lexically from its subsequent uses (*Gm* 6)
    g. A second, equivalent ordinal formula is then used for a series of three items (*Gm* 7–11)
    h. The first ordinal formula is resumed for the last five items (*Gm* 12–16)

The presenter could of course handle the poetic system more freely than most performers (cf. Harvilahti 1992: 95–96), but then the irregularities would be expected to occur more or less uniformly through the inventory.

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[43] *X heit-ir/-a* in *Gm* 22.1, 38.1; *X heitir enn* in an unnumbered inventory in *Gm* 28.1; *X heitir* ANIMAL in *Gm* 25.1, 26.1, 32.1, 39.1.
[44] A similar construction is found with the noun in a dative (*Gm* 9.4), others are found with an adjective in the first position and also *þá er X*.

Irregularities a–f are concentrated in *Gm* 4–6 and labelling the fourth location as the 'third' looks fairly clearly non-ideal, while the only irregularities in *Gm* 7–16 are, oddly enough, g–h – the alternation of the ordinal formula – and the insertion of *Gm* 9–10, which appears irregular under scrutiny. Put simply, it looks like the presenter got off to a rough start but generally aimed at non-variation.

5.1 Fourth = 'third'?

Within *Grímnismál*'s ordinal inventory, each unit appears to be conventionally presented through a pair of alternating long lines and *Vollzeilen*. This view is supported by comparison with other ordinal inventories, predicted by macro-parallelism as structuring the inventory, and consistent with evidence that non-ideal irregularities are concentrated in *Gm* 4–6, after which items in the inventory are formally regular. The presentation of two locations in *Gm* 5 points to a difficulty that resulted in one formal unit of conventional length. The mix-matching in the numbering of the fourth location as the 'third' in *Gm* 6 can be directly connected with this, as counting by formal units rather than named locations, then also pointing to *Gm* 5 as non-ideal. In *Grímnismál*'s ordinal formula, the place name systematically carries alliteration with the b-line. In principle, the long line for any location could be used with any numeral. Thus, *Álfheimr* could have been the third conventional place in the inventory and the collapse of two locations into *Gm* 5 resulted in numbering being off by one for the remainder of the list. Alternately, the numbering may have held priority, in which case the mnemonic significance of the numbering may have been to include all of the items in the list (i.e. counting up to eleven; cf. *Sigrdrífumál*) while their order could have varied considerably in the oral tradition.[45] In either case, if two locations that would customarily be

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[45] Gísli Sigurðsson (e.g. 2014) has revealed likely connections of some Old Norse mythology to observable phenomena visible in the sky. *Snorra Edda* identifies locations mentioned in *Grímnismál* as in the sky (Snorri Sturluson 2005: 23–24), creating the possibility that the ordinal inventory was linked to visible phenomena like constellations. Even then, there is nothing to suggest that the numerical order of the locations is linked, for instance, to an Old Norse zodiac. The locations are not presented as having spatial relations to one another in any source, although *Þrymheimr* is identified with *Jǫtunheimar* (Snorri Sturluson 1998: 2; and not in the sky in Snorri Sturluson 2005: 23–24), making a position between the dwellings of Óðinn and Baldr seem doubtful. When other ordinal inventories seem simply to organize mythic knowledge numerically, *Grímnismál* may do the same.

presented separately have been collapsed into a single passage, this has implications for the documentation context.

Like the difficulties with the eleventh question in *Vafþrúðnismál* above, collapsing two formal units into one makes a background in oral delivery probable. Accepting that each location would be presented in a commensurate formal unit, the truncated presentation of *Ýdalir* points to difficulty in remembering the remainder of the passage, leading the presenter to push forward and complete it with a second location *in situ*. The priority of *Gm* 5 as a formal unit then seems to have limited *Álfheimr*'s presentation to a single long line and *Vollzeile*. Deliberative writing would have allowed an ordinal number to be added to the *X heit-ir/-a* formula used with *Ýdalir*, for instance above the line, and seems generally less probable for the mixed numbering; it also would have allowed time to formulate complete units. Either deliberative writing or oral delivery in bursts of a single long line and *Vollzeile* would presumably allow the passage on *Ýdalir* to remain half its conventional length without also limiting the passage on *Álfheimr*. The formal structure of units as constituted of an alternating pair of long lines and *Vollzeilen* is regular for the entire passage and apparently conforms the presentation of two locations to this structure, suggesting that it was salient for the presenter. The most probable scenario is that the passage results from dictation in bursts of formal units, and the presentation of formal units was given priority over both interruption and, it is implied, the presentation of a full passage on *Álfheimr*.

At a glance, the long line with *Álfheimr* does not appear compatible for use with an ordinal formula because of Freyr's name in the a-line. In the inventory, gods' names otherwise only appear in the same long line with the place name when these alliterate, so Freyr's name would presumably not appear with *Álfheimr* and an ordinal formula. Gods' names otherwise appear in the second a-line in four out of the eleven other passages, always in the nominative case (*Óðinn ok Saga* in *Gm* 7.4, *Hroptr* in *Gm* 8.4, *Skaði* in *Gm* 11.4, *Forseti* in *Gm* 15.4). Freyr's name fills the place in the a-line where an ordinal formula could otherwise appear. Without his name, the lines would not specify to whom *Álfheimr* was given by the gods, which, if the lines are otherwise conventional, would presumably become clear in the second half of the passage. Completing the a-line with Freyr's name rather than an *X heit-ir/-a* or *X er/-u Y* formula may be semantically driven so that 'to whom' is specified. The possibility that Freyr was customarily named in the following a-line might then be related

to the Codex Regius' scribe writing "freýr" in the nominative case and then adding a dot under the "r" as a correction mark that the letter should be ignored. If it is correct that the long line would customarily be used with an ordinal formula, the variation with Freyr's name would be an *in situ* solution for conforming information in a full group of verses to the formal unit of *Gm* 5 – a solution that points to the presenter's competence in collapsing information from a longer passage into a single long line and *Vollzeile*.

5.2 Elaboration between *Gm* 8 and *Gm* 11?

Following the sixth/'fifth' location, *Glaðsheimr*, where *Valhǫll* is said to be (*Gm* 8), two passages present supplementary information about *Valhǫll* (*Gm* 9–10). Elaboration of items in an ordinal inventory through extension was observed in *Hávamál* and by following a unit with one additional stanza-like unit in *Sigrdrífumál*. *Gm* 9–10 forms a longer elaboration, which may be incidental, yet each passage begins with the same long line and *Vollzeile*, so the number of lines adding information corresponds to what would be one unit in *Sigrdrífumál*. The initial repetition creates macro-parallelism that links *Gm* 9 and 10 to one another while setting them apart from what precedes and follows them. The macro-parallelism gives the impression that they belong to a different list or poetic passage. An elaboration of an ordinal inventory would seem more likely to present the lines of information together as a single unit without a repeated introduction that does not add information and interrupts the macro-parallelism of the list.

  In a tradition of poetry relying heavily on remembering passages, a performer may follow the tradition's networks of associations and jump from reciting one poem to what is customarily another. A similar case is found in the pair of questions and answers in *Fáfnismál* 12–15, where the questions are set apart from the rest of the dialogue by a repeating opening that looks like a variation of that in *Vafþrúðnismál* (*Segðu mér {þat} Fáfnir / allz þik fróðan kveða // ok vel mart vita* 'Say to me {that} Fáfnir / as you are said to be wise // and indeed much know'). The questions are also distinguished by asking for general information about *nornir* and then about a location of *ragna rǫk*, which is characteristic of questions in *Vafþrúðnismál* but beyond the scope of the rest of *Fáfnismál*'s dialogue.[46] *Gm* 9–10 elaborate about *Valhǫll*, mentioned in *Gm* 8, whereas

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[46] Earlier scholars interpreted these questions as an interpolation while more recent scholars

Fáfnismál's question about *nornir* follows a mention of *nornir* in *Fm* 11. Whether accidental, intentional or socially established, these look like transpositions of passages customary for one type of use into another.

If *Grímnismál*'s documentation is considered to result from dictation, the concentration of non-ideal features at the beginning of the text tip the probability toward *Gm* 9–10 not being a conventional part of the ordinal inventory. The digression might be linked to anticipating later descriptions in the poem and it is unclear whether the passages were conventional to *Grímnismál* or a different poem, but their appearance between *Gm* 8 and 11, interrupting one sequence of macro-parallelism with another, seems more likely than not to have been non-ideal.

5.3 Comparison with quotations in *Snorra Edda*

Turning to the use of ordinal formulae, five of the items in *Grímnismál*'s inventory are quoted in *Snorra Edda* (Snorri Sturluson 2005: 23–24, 26):

(11)   Codex Regius   *Snorra Edda*

iii.	Þrym hei*m*r	heit*ir*	e*nn*	vi.	*Þrymheimr*	*heitir*	(*Gm* 11.1–2)
iv.	Breiða [blik]	ero	ín	sivndo	*Breiðablik*	*heita*	(*Gm* 12.1–2)
	Him*in*biorg	ero	en	atto	*Himinbjǫrg*	*heita*	(*Gm* 13.1–2)
	Folcvangr	er	i*nn*	nivndi	*Fólkvangr*	*heitir*	(*Gm* 14.1–2)
	Glitn*ir*	er	i*nn*	x.	*Glitnir*	*heitir salr*	(*Gm* 15.1–2)

The items in *Grímnismál* use both formula types iii and iv whereas the quotations in *Snorra Edda* appear to conform to a principle of non-variation, exclusively using the *X heit-ir/-a* formula, with a variation *X heitir salr* with Glitnir. *Snorra Edda*'s quotations may be conscious variations of an *X heit-ir/-a {inn #}* ordinal formula, since the ordinal number would be out of context when the passages are quoted individually. The possibility that the inventory may have been known without ordinal numbering cannot be excluded. Nevertheless, non-variation of the formula in *Snorra Edda* is more noteworthy because the quotations are presented with a variety of information between them, including passages from another poem (see Snorri Sturluson 2005: 23–26). The quotations highlight that the variation in the preserved poem *Grímnismál* is probably exceptional.

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interpret them as sensical and meaningful in the poem (*KLE* V: 429), whereas I would say the two views are focusing on different concerns.

Tab. 2. Possible alliterations between ordinal numbers and place names in the inventory

Alliteration	ordinal number	used for
vocalic alliteration	*(einn), annarr, átti, ellifti*	*Álfheimr, Ýdalir*
alliteration on /f/	*fyrstr, fjórði, fimti*	*Folkvangr*
alliteration on /n/	*níundi*	*Nóatún*
alliteration on /s/	*sétti, sjaundi*	*Søkkvabekkr*
alliteration on /t/	*tíundi, [tólfti]*	—
alliteration on /þ/	*þriði*	*Þrúðheimr, Þrymheimr*
no alliteration possible	—	*Breiðablik, Glaðsheimr, Glitnir, Himinbjǫrg, Válaskjálf*

5.4 An avoidance of alliteration?

When alliteration with the ordinal number shapes or determines the b-line in all other ordinal inventories, it becomes noticeable that the number never alliterates with a place name in *Grímnismál*. As seen in Table 2, the list could have been organized with alliteration also carried by the number in six of twelve potential uses of the formula.

If an ordinal formula were used in *Gm* 5, either *Ýdalir* or *Álfheimr* would alliterate with *annarr* and be the only instance of alliteration with a number in the sequence. If the presenter felt that, ideally, alliteration with the number should be systematically avoided and had named the wrong location, this might have led him to consciously omit *annarr* from an *X heit-ir/-a inn* # formula or to exchange an *X er/-u inn* # formula for a simple *X heit-ir/-a* formula. It is also possible that *annarr* was unintentionally omitted, in which case it is also accidental that other numbers in the list do not carry alliteration. However, when alliteration seems to drive choices between formulae and phrases elsewhere, potentially even affecting which cardinal direction is named in some lines (Lönnroth 2002: 17), it seems improbable that the first use of the ordinal formula would be with alliteration without doing so again thereafter.

The lack of numbering for the first three locations presents a third possibility that the presenter was having difficulty and only realized that the locations should be counted at some point between naming *Ýdalir* and the beginning of *Gm* 6, thus using a simple *X heit-ir/-a* in *Gm* 5. Forgetting to number the first locations seems the most likely explanation when *Gm* 6 appears both to misnumber the location and also to deviate in structure

by naming the location in the second rather than the first long line. If it is not accidental that numbers never carry alliteration in this ordinal inventory, it would suggest that alliteration would also be avoided with *annarr*, making *Ýdalir* non-ideal as the second location. In this case, the order of locations in the inventory would deviate from how the presenter would customarily organize them in a performance.

5.5 Alternating ordinal formulae

Particularly exceptional in the passage is that the ordinal formula used in *Gm* 6 is exchanged for an alternative that is used without variation for the following three locations and then a form of the initial formula is resumed without variation for the rest of the list. Changing from a less ideal to a more ideal phrase is found in examples through the corpus, but this variation appears anomalous because it alternates between formulae rather than simply varying phraseology and because it is not completely random but rather appears regular for stretches of text. The initial switch from *X er/-u {sá} inn #* in *Gm* 6.1 to *X heit-ir/-a inn #* in *Gm* 7.1 might be considered linked to the use of a simple *X heit-ir/-a* in *Gm* 6.4. However, the initial use of *X er/-u {sá} inn #* is between two simple *X heit-ir/-a* formulae in *Gm* 5.1 and 6.4. This makes it much less likely that the formula in *Gm* 6.4 affected the choice of formula in *Gm* 7.1 and does not account for the change back only in *Gm* 12.1, 16 lines later (counting by long lines). If the change back had coincided with the end of the digression in *Gm* 9–10, it might look like the presenter corrected himself to a more ideal formula following a disruption. The peculiarity is greater when the first alternation coincides with units attaining a more ideal structure that is maintained through the rest of the section, and then changing again in the stretch of passages that otherwise does not exhibit non-ideal features.

A feature of orthography could perhaps present a clue to something happening in the background of documenting the text. The *X er/-u {sá} inn #* formula appears with the ordinal number being written out (*Gm* 6), switches to Roman numerals with the change to the *X heit-ir/-a inn #* formula (*Gm* 7, 8, 11), and then resumes writing out numerals when changing back to the *X er/-u {sá} inn #* (*Gm* 12, 13, 14), until using Roman numerals for the last two items in the list (*Gm* 15, 16). Writing out ordinal numbers in a series, especially the first and second, and then switching to Roman numerals is common and the Codex Regius generally makes this switch near the beginning of an ordinal inventory; if there were only one

change at the end of the list, it would not be surprising. Changing from Roman numerals to writing out numbers is exceptional, and doubly so when they seem to alternate here. Co-variation between how numbers are written and alternative ordinal formulae makes this still more striking. The copy of *Grímnismál* in AM 748 I a exhibits some slight differences in the transcription and text, but these appear most likely to have been introduced by a copyist.[47] The Codex Regius is unambiguously the more reliable manuscript and remained close enough to its exemplars for the writing habits in earlier texts to be distinguishable (see also Vésteinn Ólason 2019: 235–242 and works there cited). *If* co-variation between use of Roman numerals and the ordinal formula is not accidental, *then* it points to some sort of a change between *Gm* 6 and *Gm* 7 and then a second change between *Gm* 11 and *Gm* 12. Insofar as it seems unlikely for a copyist to exchange one ordinal formula for another across only a short section of text, this variation in orthography would be rooted in the original documentation of the poem.

This is a big 'if' that is conditional on both the co-variation being non-random, and continuity in the different ways of writing out the numbers through earlier copying of the poem. That such continuity in copying is possible finds some support in *Alvíssmál*, in the writing of the dwarf's thirteen answers, each naming six ways something is called by different types of being. In the course of the dialogue, abbreviations develop for formulaic use of *jǫtnar* and *álfar*. *Alv* 24 shifts from these abbreviations to writing out the words in full, an indicator that 'something changed' in a process of writing or copying the poem. The 13 answers contain 78 terms or expressions for calling different things. Only two of these are found in multiple answers, both in repetitions of a line, and one repetition of each is in *Alv* 24 (*Alv* 24.3 = 26.3, *Alv* 24.5 = 32.5). Since non-repetition is otherwise the norm, repetition appears non-ideal, and the co-occurrence of both repetitions in connection with one passage makes it more likely that the problem was concentrated there rather than occurring independently in *Alv* 26 and 32. This view is supported by co-occurrence in *Alv* 24 of

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[47] AM 748 I a is filled with regularizing spellings, minor variations and transparent copying errors (Finnur Jónsson 1896: iii–vii) whereas the Codex Regius seems generally to follow its exemplar more closely. In AM 748 I a, the numbers are all written out until the last three formulae (rather than only the last two), and, in the second use of the *X heit-ir/-a inn #* formula, *er* 'is' is written in the place of *heitir* so that it looks like a type iv ordinal formula. The shift to Roman numerals late in the sequence in both manuscripts hints at a late shift also in a common exemplar.

abbreviations being reset, pointing to an interruption or disruption at that point in the poem. The wording in *Alv* 24 is most likely attributable to the initial documentation of the poem, so whatever happened affected the person writing out the poem or both the oral presenter and transcriber (Frog 2011: 53). Observing this correlation between non-ideal lines and changes in abbreviation is dependent on accurately copying abbreviation or its lack from the exemplar. The case of *Alvíssmál* makes this possible for *Grímnismál* as well. That the scribe of the Codex Regius reproduced the numbers as found in the exemplar is increased by the contrast with other ordinal inventories where Roman numerals dominate.

Variation in orthography can only be attributed to a person writing out or copying the text, not to an oral presenter. Change in how numbers are written looks like a change in writing habits or practice followed by a change back. A single transcriber might transition from writing out numbers to use of Roman numerals, but switching back and forth is unlikely, and still less likely to co-vary with the change in formula. It is possible that a shorthand strategy might be reset following a break or interruption, as in *Alvíssmál*, but then the switch back to Roman numerals would likely occur at least as rapidly as earlier in transcription. Instead, it initially occurs immediately following the first number and later only after writing out three numbers (i.e. *Gm* 12–14). Alternately, the change to and from shorthand could reflect a change in the person writing out the poem. That a medieval text may be copied by multiple hands is a commonplace, although it would not be expected for such a short stretch of text. However, if *Grímnismál* was written down from dictation, the situation would be different from working with a written text, because stopping by either the presenter or transcriber would interrupt the other. If the person presenting the poem was an authority or should otherwise not be interrupted any more than necessary for the transcription, a change in the transcriber for a shorter period is possible. In sagas in Hauksbók (Jansson 1944) and in the Codex Upsaliensis' *Snorra Edda* (Sävborg 2012), different copyists have been shown to take considerably different attitudes to the exactitude with which they reproduce or rephrase and manipulate their exemplar. If the changes between writing numbers reflect different transcribers, the alternation in the ordinal formula from *Gm* 6.1 to *Gm* 7.1, and back again from *Gm* 11.1 to *Gm* 12.1 would correlate with a change between two people transcribing the poem, the second of whom wrote out the ordinal formula differently. In this case, one of the transcribers either consciously edited the ordinal formula to that of a preferred dialect, wrote it out as seemed

natural without considering it to be 'different', or, if the dictation was in bursts of short passages, was more concerned with remembering and transcribing semantically-significant phrases and recalled the opening phrase of the passage through his own dialect. If the co-variation between writing numbers and the ordinal formula is not accidental – a big 'if' – it points to a relationship between the transcription and the alternation between ordinal formulae. This relationship seems most easily explained by a change between two people transcribing the text, in which case the alternation between formulae would point to an aspect of co-production in the written text (e.g. Ready 2015: 27) that would probably otherwise remain invisible.

If there was a second transcriber, the regularity of structural units makes it look like these were the units of dictation, in which case any such transition is most likely between those units. The second writer would then have been responsible for only *Gm* 7–11, which is just twenty long lines and *Vollzeilen*, thirty short lines and *Vollzeilen*, or 107 words in Bugge's edition. Basically, it looks like someone stepped in and took over the work of the first scribe for maybe ten minutes, or a bit longer, although the amount of time depends on the copying process. Odd as this might at first seem, it looks like the second transcriber stepped in while the first ran off to take a pee. The passage is embedded not just within the poem but linked to only a few strophes within the ordinal inventory. If it does indeed reflect a change in the transcriber, it suggests a situation in which it was undesirable to interrupt the process of writing, even if only for a relatively short break. The shift in orthography would thus imply a situation where one person dictated and another transcribed while others were present and able to trade roles with the transcriber – and the person dictating should not be interrupted. This interpretation remains an extremely conjectural possibility (how could it not?), but it accounts for the exceptional alternation between ordinal formulae in the Codex Regius' text.

5.6 A perspective on variation in *Grímnismál*

A concentration of features at the beginning of *Grímnismál*'s numbered inventory point to the performer having difficulty at the beginning of the list so that it was not realized in an ideal way. Some scholars may be sceptical that naming two locations in *Gm* 5 is non-ideal, but there is a concentration of features in this part of the text that stand out against other ordinal inventories and against the corpus more broadly, and these features have cumulative implications. The regular structure of items after *Gm* 6

suggests that the concentration of such features at the beginning was non-ideal, since they would otherwise be more evenly distributed through the inventory (cf. *Grípisspá*). I began this investigation with the expectation that the obvious irregularities like mis-numbering at the beginning of the inventory were directly related to the exceptional alternation between ordinal formulae. The lack of numbering at the beginning of the list does indeed appear connected with the presenter, but the alternation between formulae begins as the units of the inventory become regular, and they instead seem to correlate with a corresponding variation in how numbers are written. The features of the text suggest a process of dictation, with the presenter probably reciting by formal units of a pair of alternating long lines and *Vollzeilen*. The alternation between ordinal formulae is very exceptional and difficult to account for, leading to the hypothesis that there was a change in the person transcribing dictation from *Gm* 7 to 11, after which the first transcriber resumed. It remains possible that the alternation of formulae reflects an aberrant type of variation on the part of the performer. The two-scribe hypothesis is only preferable on the condition that co-variation of the writing of numbers and alternation of ordinal formulae is not random.

6. Implications for the documentation of eddic poems

The eddic corpus is so firmly established as a frame of reference in the scholarship that the poems in their preserved forms get taken for granted. The discussions of the numbered inventories in both *Grímnismál* and *Vafþrúðnismál* point to documentation situations in which the poems were presented orally by one person while another wrote them down. In both inventories, potential indicators point to presentation in short bursts of lines. In *Grímnismál*, *Gm* 5 suggests presentation in regular pairs of alternating long lines and *Vollzeile*. It is more difficult to assess *Vafþrúðnismál*. Indicators that the Codex Regius' exemplar was extremely close to the first transcription of at least *Alvíssmál* and *Grímnismál*, even in details of abbreviation, may increase the probability that the omission of the second half of *Vm* 27 and 31 have occurred in dictation. The omission only of the second half of more than one answer in short succession within the ordinal inventory might also tip the scales in that direction, although these are answers to the fourth and sixth questions, before problems begin with numbers that would carry alliteration. Whatever the case, if the dictation of *ljóðaháttr* poetry was commonly in regular formal units, it might make

the verse groups in the written poems look more regular than they might have been in other contexts. The irregularities in both examples further suggest that, when the presenter had difficulty remembering something or mixed something up, he simply pushed through the passage, producing solutions *in situ*, as would be likely for a customary oral performance. The irregularities in these examples suggest that the presenters did not pause to deliberate between lines or correct what was said. The curious case of alternating formulae in *Grímnismál* presents the possibility that a transcriber might write down equivalents of what was said, perhaps like writing out what someone says in their dialect in one's own. The co-production entailed in transcription from dictation nevertheless allowed non-ideal verses and passages to enter into writing, which is itself interesting.

With all of these examples, and also with the numerous instances of minor variations on a formula's first use elsewhere, the key question that easily goes unasked is: *Why are they there for us to see them?* In other words: *Why were non-ideal dictated lines and passages not revised?* The text resulting from dictation seems to have gone unedited: no one seems to have gone through it and adjusted details where these might be amiss. The texts do not give the impression of having first been written out on a wax tablet to then be read by, or read out to, the presenter and 'corrected'. Both the two-scribe hypothesis for formula alternation in *Grímnismál* and the associated example from *Alvíssmál* would point to transcription directly onto vellum. There are clear cases of so-called scribal performance, in which a copyist uses knowledge of the poetry and poetic system in order to revise an oral-derived poetic text, as in the case of the Helgi poems discussed by Joseph Harris (1983 [2008]: 191–202) or the revision of the eleventh question in AM 748 I a's *Vafþrúðnismál*. Nevertheless, the ordinal inventories reviewed above seem to suggest that the norm was simply to write out the poems more or less as they were spoken – blunders, unique solutions and all – and then subsequent copyists reproduced them that way. Focus here has been on sites in the texts where non-ideal variations are apparent owing to the number of examples in a repeating series with which they can be compared. When the lines and whole passages are for the most part technically well formed, it raises a question of how many other sites there may be in the corpus where passages are non-ideal, but there is no frame of comparison to identify it. This raises methodological issues for text analysis of poems, if the verses, phraseology or even organization of a poem may be non-ideal. However,

just because poetry is oral does not make every variation equally good, and it is reasonable to infer that at least some of the variations discussed above were transparently considered as 'not how it should be' if not simply 'wrong' or 'bad' even by the presenter. Scholarship today tends to view a written text as 'the' poem, and yet, if *Vafþrúðnismál*'s elision of question and answer or *Grímnismál*'s elision of two locations into a single passage was 'not how it should be', it raises the question of what people imagined the thing being written down to be.

Transcribing a dictated text as the poem without indication of an interest or need to edit or revise even passages where something has obviously gone wrong suggests an understanding of what the eddic poems are as things made of language. Although the articulation of a line or passage might be better or worse, whatever was dictated appears to have been conceived as capturing 'the poem' in writing. This might be compared to early nineteenth-century collectors of oral kalevalaic poetry, who simply wrote down whatever was dictated or sung in one go and were satisfied that they had gotten that person's variant. They sought to collect as many variants *from different people* as they could manage, because they tended to imagine individuals' variants as imperfect while enabling reconstruction of an ideal text through comparison.[48] The writing of at least these eddic poems seems to reflect a similar idea of the poem being captured in one go, but without the corresponding way of looking at variations as things to be polished out and corrected in order to present a poem in its most ideal form. The lack of any editing or correction suggests an idea of 'the poem' as whatever is orally presented from beginning to end. The performance principle of simply pushing through, formulating solutions *in situ* rather than stopping to find a more ideal solution, seems to have extended to the written text. The result is '*Grímnismál*', or '*Vafþrúðnismál*', or whatever else has been performed – i.e. the variant is 'the poem' (cf. Lord 1960: 21, 28; see also Foley 2002: 11–21). An oral performance is commonly assessed and discussed by those who hear it, and is also connected to the authority and skill of the performer. The lack of editing and revision even of problematic lines and passages suggests that there was not, at least when these poems were written, an idea that the delivered text should or even could be improved.

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[48] Only toward the end of the nineteenth century is a collection technique developed of getting performers to both sing and dictate the same poem, leading to a composite that is more complete and ideal (Saarinen 1994: 180).

This leads to the question of how the manuscript text itself was understood, materially objectified and separated from the person. Where oral and written traditions are interwoven, performance will often be in focus as an activity, without concern for whether it is based on personal knowledge and competence or recited from a script. In his work with Rotenese ritual poets (who were also mostly literate), James J. Fox (p.c.) found it common that the poets, listening to recordings made of their performances, would refer to and discuss these as though it were a third person. Rather than the ideal or even necessarily particularly good representations of particular oral poems, several if not many of the texts in the eddic corpus may be quite close to whatever was produced in a single, clumsy dictation situation. Instead of being polished, it is necessary to consider that these text scripts may, at least initially, have each been seen as 'a' performance of the particular poem – not 'my', 'your', 'his' or 'her' performance, but as 'a' performance, which might equally be discussed and criticized. Returning to the production and copying of the poems in order to be used, if the written texts were 'performances' with lines and passages that are less than ideal, it raises the question of whether the written poem was imagined as something that people should recite verbatim, or if it was more of a guide.

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Summary

The rise of interest in the orality of eddic poetry has tended to view the preserved corpus *as* oral poems without considering their transition into writing and its potential implications. The present article is an exploratory study of variation in the ordinal inventories of questions and knowledge in *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*. Variation in formula usage might reflect individual creativity and a dynamic handling of the poetic system. The two cases in focus, however, show a correlation between the variations and indicators that the expressions or their organization were not ideal. In both cases, indicators in the poem's text suggest that it is a product of oral presentation transcribed by a second individual. A detailed examination of formulae in *Vafþrúðnismál* point to difficulties where a b-line for vocalic alliteration is expected, for which the solutions seem to get worse rather than better, leading to the possibility that the presenter was bored or disinterested. Several features point to difficulties at the beginning of *Grímnismál*'s inventory, while exceptional variation in formula use leads to a possibility that some variation may be linked to the transcriber rather than the presenter. That blunders of presentation have been preserved in both poems rather than revised, either during the initial documentation or in later copying, reflecting ideas of what these texts are in relation to the tradition.

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The Change *menninir* > *mennurnir*, *mennirnir* in Icelandic

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Introduction and Aim

An important aim for future research within historical linguistics and phi-
lology is to increase the empirical base on which the research is carried
out. Even though a large number of texts in Old Icelandic and Old Swedish
is available in printed editions, individual text witnesses may still contain
linguistic data that is not accounted for in the edition. Linguistic variants,
especially those based in morphology, are often regarded as insignificant
from the perspective of textual criticism (see e.g. Haugen 2013: 103 on
substantial and accidental variation respectively), and they are therefore
often not included in critical editions. A memorable call for publication of
morphological variants was raised by Kjartan Ottosson (2001), under the
title 'Kven sitt språk ser vi i avskrifter? – eller Éloge de la variante gram-
maticale'. In many editions of East Norse texts, such variants are actually
included (see e.g. the editions of the Revelations of St Birgitta; Anders-
son 2014), but in order for this variation to be accounted for, data must be
collected from the variant apparatus. If the research material is collected
from the the main text only, such variants are lost.

A lot of linguistic information is thus still unrecorded and hidden in
the handwritten records of the Middle Ages as well as of later periods.
The present investigation is the result of linguistic data being discovered
that had not been considered in previous research. The change *menninir* >
mennirnir (nom. pl. of *maðr*) in Icelandic will be interpreted in the light
of these data. In the manuscript AM 557 4to (15th century; see further

below), there are occurrences of the form *mennurnir*, which are not accounted for in the descriptions of the change *menninir > mennirnir* in the common handbooks (Noreen 1923 etc.).

Previous Views on the Change *menninir > mennirnir*

In Icelandic during the Middle Ages, the older form of the nom. pl. definite form of *maðr*, *menninir*, is replaced by the form *mennirnir*, which is the form used also in modern Icelandic. In the oldest period, *menninir* also had a parallel form, namely *menner* (although rarely), and the latter form is assumed to be a result of the development of *menn-ner (Noreen 1923: 284). Staffan Fridell (2007: 150) interprets the form *menner/mennir* as originating from *menninir* through haplologic syncope. Haplologic syncope is the loss of a vowel between two identical consonants; a few examples are *Træland < *þrælaland*, *Ones < *Onanes* and *Helland < *Helliland* (Hesselman 1948: 68). Björn K. Þórólfsson (1925: 86) dates the change *menninir > mennirnir* to the 15th century, without specifying the time further. In Oddur Gottskálksson's translation of the New Testament (1540), only the younger form occurs (Jón Helgason 1929: 60). For Norwegian, Didrik Arup Seip (1931: 193) places the same change in the 13th century, i.e. earlier than in Icelandic.

Adolf Noreen (1923: 284) claims that the change from the older form to the younger one was due to the fact that the older definite form was perceived as indefinite (in accordance with *i*-stems in the pl.), and was provided with a new definite article. This explanation makes sense if the point of departure was *menner/mennir*. On the surface, this form resembles an *i*-stem in the pl., and addition of the definite article *-nir* would result in *mennirnir*. On the other hand, it is more difficult to accept this explanation if the form *menninir* is the point of departure. It should be stressed that *menninir* is the form that dominated during the 13th and the 14th centuries, and the explanation given by Noreen can therefore not be said to be very convincing.

The Examples in ONP

What can be said about the change *menninir > mennirnir* on the basis of the data available in the excerpts quoted in ONP? In this collection, there are approximately 25 examples of *maðr* in the nom. pl. definite form. The instances from the 13th century (ca 12 examples) are with one exception rendered *menninir*. The exception is one instance of the form *mennirnir*, found in NKS 235 g 4to (ca 1260–70;[1] the final *-r* is left unrepresented). It is believed that this manuscript has Norwegian provenance (ONP, reg., p. 480). Among the instances from the 14th century, it is also mainly the form *menninir* that is to be found, even though there are exceptions. This is the case both for the beginning of the century (e.g. GKS 2367 4to; ca 1300–50) and the later part of it (e.g. AM 122 a fol; ca 1350–70). In manuscripts from the 16th century, the younger form *mennirnir* is to be found (e.g. AM 510 4to; ca 1550). There are two examples of *mennirnir* in AM 230 fol. (ca 1350–1400), in *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga*. This text has its origin in a Norwegian version of the saga,[2] but the manuscript itself has Icelandic provenance. It has been assumed that the exemplar to *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga* in AM 230 fol. was Norwegian (Rindal 2009: 33–34). Thus, the instances of *mennirnir* in manuscripts older than the 15th century can be expected to be due to Norwegian influence, either directly, because the manuscript is Norwegian (NKS 235 g 4to), or through influence from the exemplar (AM 230 fol.). As can be seen, the examples from the period 1400–50 are very few, and over all they provide very sparse evidence for conclusions regarding the change *menninir > mennirnir*. However, among the excerpts in ONP, the three examples representing the form *mennurnir* are to be found as described in the following section.[3]

The Form *mennurnir*

The three examples representing the form *mennurnir* are all to be found in the manuscript AM 557 4to, sometimes called Skálholtsbók. It is perhaps

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[1] The datings of manuscripts are taken from ONP, reg., unless otherwise is stated.

[2] Of the West Norse manuscripts containing this saga, only the version in Reykjahólabók (Loth 1969: 97–131) has another origin (Haugen & Johansson 2009: 28; Rindal 2009: 32).

[3] These forms were briefly discussed by Mårtensson (2007).

best known for being one of the main manuscripts of Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu and Eiríks saga rauða. This manuscript has been used as the main text in several editions, e.g. by Sven B. F. Jansson (1944; Eiríks saga rauða), Louisa Fredrika Tan-Haverhorst (1939; Dámusta saga), Annette Hasle (1967; Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar), Ólafur Halldórsson (2000; Rǫgnvalds þáttr ok Rauðs) Lasse Mårtensson (2013; Karls þáttr vesæla) and Veturliði Óskarsson (2019; Hróa þáttr heimska). Finnur Jónsson (1916; Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu) does not use this manuscript as the main text, but he discusses it in the introduction. The manuscript also exists in a facsimile edition (Strömbäck 1940). Mårtensson (2011) dates it to 1404–20, and it has probably been produced by two hands.

Two of the examples representing *mennurnir* are in Karls þáttr vesæla, and the remaining one is in Sveinka þáttr Steinarssonar, the tale that concludes the manuscript in its present state. This version of Karls þáttr has previously been edited by Birgerus Thorlacius (1815) and Mårtensson (2013); this version of Sveinka þáttr is still unedited. The examples are the following:

1. "m*enn*vrner" (46v:24; Karls þáttr)
2. "me*nn*vrn*ir*" (47r:2; Karls þáttr)
3. "m*enn*vrn*ir*" (48v:18; Sveinka þáttr)

The fact that there are three examples, all of which render the same word form, makes it unlikely that they are to be interpreted as scribal errors or misinterpretations of the exemplar by the scribe. It should also be noted that examples rendering the forms *menninir* or *mennirnir* are lacking in AM 557 4to; the nom. pl. definite form of *maðr* only occurs in these three instances.

In order to determine how to interpret these examples we must investigate how the scribe rendered unstressed *ur* and *r*. The scribe of the current pages in AM 557 4to definitely used the epenthetic vowel [u] in his pronunciation. On the pages containing Karls þáttr vesæla and Sveinka þáttr Steinarssonar, however, this vowel is never represented (e.g. "madr" 47r:27), and the tendency is the same in the rest of the manuscript (even though there are a few deviating examples, see below). On the other hand, there are many instances of so called reversed spelling, where the original ending *-ur* is rendered with "r" (e.g. "dottr" *dóttur* 45v:2; "favdr" *fǫður* 46v:9; "fodr" *fǫður* 46v:16). The reversed spellings are not used in all cases where *ur* occurs. The pronoun *nǫkkurr/nokkurr* gives an indication of what orthographic principle the scribe has followed. In two-syllable

forms, e.g. masc. sing. (examples 1, 3 and 4) and neut. pl. (example 2), only reversed spellings are used:

1. "sidr nôckr" (4r:12)
2. "nockr rad" (45v:20)
3. "nockr m*adr*" (46r:23)
4. "batr nockr" (48r:1)

Of the three-syllable forms, the following examples are to be found on the pages produced by the same scribe as the one who produced the examples above:

1. "nockvrv" (47v:9)
2. "nockvr*ir*" (47v:10)

Here, as can be seen, *ur* has been represented.[4] To these cases, one example of a represented epenthetic vowel can be added (not in Karls þáttr or Sveinka þáttr, but by the same scribe that has produced these texts):

"b*rv*dvr*in*" (9v:4; Gunnlaugs saga)

These examples show us the orthographic tendency that the scribe seems to have followed. No distinction is made between the original endings *-ur* and *-r*; in some cases, both original [u] and the epenthetic vowel [u] are left without representation ("fodr" and "madr" respectively). On the other hand, in some cases both the epenthetic vowel and original [u] are represented ("b*rv*dvr*in*" and "nockvr*ir*" respectively). The scribe appears to have left the pronounced [u] without representation in the final syllable of a word. On the other hand, if an article follows *-ur* or *-r*, [u] is in most cases represented.[5]

If this rule is applied to the spellings "m*enn*vrner/ me*nn*vrn*ir*/ m*enn*vrn*ir*", it becomes clear that "vr" in this position, i.e. unstressed position but not in the final syllable, is used for the phonological sequence [ur] (originating in either *-ur* or *-r*). The interpretation of these examples

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[4] The forms of this pronoun, the ending of which began on a vowel (e.g. the ones above), were later contracted into two-syllable forms as the [u] was dropped. However, such forms did not become common until the later part of the 15th century (Hreinn Benediktsson 1961–62: 35–36 and Stefán Karlsson 1989: 24; cf. Björn K. Þórólfsson 1925: 49, who puts the date approximately 100 years earlier through a wrong dating of AM 180 b fol.; see Hreinn Benediktsson 1961–62: 35).

[5] It should be stressed that there are exceptions to this rule in AM 557 4to, also by the hand that produced *Karls þáttr* and *Sveinka þáttr*. One example is "kônrn*ar*" (*konurnar*, 10v:17; *Gunnlaugs saga*).

must be that the scribe has perceived this word form as *mennurnir*. It is less likely that the examples are the result of wrongly expanded abbreviations. If spellings representing the word form *mennirnir* had been in the exemplar, with the sequence [ir] in the corresponding position abbreviated, one would have expected the so called *er*-abbreviation or superlinear "i". None of these abbreviations are so similar to the *ur*-abbreviation that a scribe should mix them up, and especially not three times in different passages. Furthermore, the lemma *maðr* is frequent in the everyday language. Statistics for the spoken language of the Middle Ages can of course not be produced, but we can at least conclude that it was very frequent in the written language, with no less than 1288 occurrences in the collection of examples in ONP. The three examples of this spelling are also to be found in uncomplicated contexts, and the scribe cannot have been in any doubt as to what word form that was intended. It is therefore likely that the three examples in AM 557 4to represent genuine forms of the word in question, and that the scribe of this manuscript perceived the nom. pl. definite form of *maðr* as *mennurnir*.

As there are no other examples of this form among the excerpts of ONP, and as it has left no trace in modern Icelandic, it is impossible to make any assumption regarding how widely used it was. It is of course possible that it was confined to one individual, i.e. the scribe of the current pages in AM 557 4to, but is more likely that it was more widely spread. As seen from the excerpts of ONP, the examples of the nom. pl. definite form of *maðr* are very few indeed. What variants existed and where and when they were used cannot be deduced on the basis of the data available in ONP.

Mennirnir and *mennurnir* as Morphological Reinterpretations of *menninir*

Having not only *mennirnir* but also *mennurnir* to account for, another explanation than that given by Noreen (see above) ought to be sought. For instance, we may ask how the forms *mennirnir* and *mennurnir* are related to each other? Is *mennurnir* an until now non-registered step between *menninir* and *mennirnir*? Or is it a parallel form to *mennirnir* (also non-registered), which disappeared as *mennirnir* grew more common? The first explanation, i.e. that it is a middle step between *menninir* and *mennirnir*, appears less likely. According to such an explanation, *mennirnir* would

have originated from *mennurnir*, i.e. *menninir > mennurnir > mennirnir*. Such a development is difficult to explain, at least from a phonological perspective, as there is no reason for the change [u] > [i] in this position. Instead it is more likely that the two forms were parallel, existing for a period at the same time. In the end, *mennirnir* became dominant, whereas *mennurnir* disappeared, and as far as we know leaving no other trace than the three examples above.

The solution proposed here is that both *mennurnir* and *mennirnir* are analogical forms, representing two different morphological reinterpretations of the form *menninir*. The origin of this reinterpretation is that a form *menninir* in the nom. pl. of a masculine word with a definite article is extremely rare. The word *maðr* belongs to the masculine one-syllabic stems, and the only word that is declined in the same way is *nagl* (Noreen 1923: 283–284). A masc. nom. pl. form without any plural ending is thus very uncommon, and a definite form with only *-nir* (*menninir*) has very few parallells.

Arguably, an explanation for the form *mennirnir* is that it constitutes the result of an analogical change from the extremely uncommon form *menninir* to the form of the *i-* and the *u*-stems nom. pl. in the definite form (cf. *gestirnir* and *staðirnir*; *birnirnir* and *kettirnir*). These classes of nouns are frequent, especially the *i*-stems, offering very frequent models. According to this line of argument, the form *mennurnir* also comprises an analogic form, modelled not on the *i*-stems but on the nom. pl. of masculine words with original *-r* in the plural, especially one-syllabic consonant stems of the type *fótr/fœtr*, *fingr/fingr*, *vetr/vetr* (the type to which *maðr* in fact belongs). With an epenthetic vowel and the definite article, the result is *urnir* in the nom. pl. definite form of these words. Probably the form in AM 557 4to is analogical according to this pattern, and this form probably existed parallel to *mennirnir* for a period of time (though it is unclear how common it was) but then disappeared. If the explanation given above is correct, it is not surprising that *mennirnir* became dominant over *mennurnir*, as the *i*-stems provided a much more frequently occurring pattern than the one-syllabic consonant stems. The *i*-stems constitute one of the really large noun classes, whereas the one-syllabic consonant stems are much less numerous. For the masculine one-syllabic consonant stems, Wessén (1958: 69–70) registers only five such nouns, *fótr*, *fingr*, *vetr*, *nagl* and *maðr* (and in addition a few names of peoples), whereas the feminine ones are rather more numerous. See also Haugen (2006: 119–120).

One might ask, though, why the same change did not take place with

the indefinite form, i.e. *menn* > **mennir*? As pointed out above, the lemma *maðr* was very frequent and as a result, fairly resistant to change. The difference between the definite and the indefinite form is that former has an element, the article *-inir*, that triggers the change. The word form *menn* with this article, rendering a word form *menninir*, comes very close to the pattern of *gestirnir* etc., and the addition of an *r*-component is a the minimal change resulting in a more frequent form.

One final remark regarding *mennurnir* should be made. The form *mennr/meðr* in the nom. pl. existed at an early stage (Noreen 1923: 284), and with an epenthetic vowel the result would be *mennurnir*. However, with respect to the chronological distribution of the preserved examples of this form, it is not likely that it is here that the origin of the form in AM 557 4to is to be found, as it appears to be absent during the 13th and the 14th centuries, and then occurs in a few instances in the beginning of the 15th century. Instead, as stated above, it is more probable that it has arisen at a later stage, unrelated to the older form.

To shed additional light on the change under discussion, the Old Swedish counterpart will be presented. The Old Swedish form in the nom. sing. is often rendered *maþer*, the *þ* representing a voiced fricative and the *e* the epenthetic vowel. Of course, as in Old Icelandic, it belongs to the one-syllabic declension, and the plural form without the definite article is *mænn*. With the definite article, the normalized form usually given is *mænninir* (see *maþer* in Schlyter and Söderwall). The form of the definite article in the masc. pl. nom. is given in Noreen (1904: 405) given as *-(e)ne(r)* and in Wessén (1968: 119) *-ni(r)*.

As in Old Icelandic, there are very few words that are declined in the same way as *maþer*; Wessén (1968: 99) mentions only *spander* that constitutes a real correspondent, with the plural form *spænn* (*spän* in Wessén), and Noreen (1904: 327) adds that *finger* occasionally follows this pattern, and perhaps also *ēster* 'estonian'. From the perspective of the form in the nom. pl., however, *finger* differs from *maþer* and *spander* in that it has *-er* in the plural (*finger*), thus resembling the more frequent nom. pl. forms of the masculine words. This makes the plural pattern of *maþer* very uncommon, having only one parallel. In Swedish, the modern form in the pl. in the definite form is *männen*. The form of the article attached to *männ*, *-en*, is the common form of the neutral words.

The development *mænnini(r)* > *mænnin* is explained in Wessén (1968: 81) in terms of the unstressed position of the article. He states that a vowel in an ending in absolute unstressed position ("absolut trycksvag

stavelse") is dropped, and this takes place around 1500. The words that fullfil the criteria for this development are three-syllable word forms with acute accent, and the examples given by Wessén (loc.cit.) are: *fötrine > fötren*, *fädhrine > fädhren*, *nätrina > nättren* and *männine > männen*. Of these, only *männen* has survived in the language until today, at least as an unmarked form. Noreen (1904: 146) mentions the same change ("apokope im absoluten auslaut") and gives the example *bøndren*, but he claims that it has taken place only in certain dialects.

It is of course possible that these forms should be explained phonologically as loss of the final vowel due to the unstressed position. Another explanation, however, is that they actually represent analogical forms. The definite article *-in/-en* is the one used in the neut. pl., e.g. *barnin/barnen*, and as such it is of course very common. The plural form *mænn* shares the feature of the plural forms of the neuter nouns in that it has no ending, and an analogic transfer of the article would therefore not be surprising.

A check in the texts in the Fornsvenska textbanken only yields three-syllable forms of the investigated word form, mainly *mænnene* etc. but also a number of occurrences of *mænnena* (in the nom.). No examples of the two-syllable form, *mænnen* etc., are found, even though there are manuscripts from the 16th century among those used for editions there. One can mention Cod. Ups. C 61 and Cod. Holm. A 1, and also in these, only three-syllable forms are to be found. To judge from this evidence, it appears that the change *mænnene > mænnen* in Swedish is younger than the change *menninir > mennirnir* in Icelandic.

In this perspective, it is possible to assume that both Swedish *männen* and Icelandic *mennirnir* represent analogic forms, where the very uncommon form *menninir/mænnini(r)* have changed to more common patterns. The different prerequisites in the two languages have led to the form *menninir/mænnini(r)* joining different classes. In Old Swedish, there was a common loss of [r] in the plural endings *-ar*, *-ir* etc., especially when the definite article was attached (*hæstane* etc.). This means that a structure *-irnir* was not, as in Icelandic, very common, especially compared to the very common *-in/-en* on all the neuter nouns in the pl. definite form.

Hreinn Benediktsson (1959: 69–70) draws a line between phonemic and morphemic analogic changes, and he prefers to call the latter type *analogic transformations* (*áhrifsummyndanir*). The process in this type of change is that a certain morpheme is exchanged for another one, usually a frequent morpheme taking the place of a more infrequent one. An example given by Hreinn Benediktsson (loc. cit.) is when the endings

of adjectives in masc. sing. acc. on the *ja-* and the *wa*-stems (-*jan* and -*van* respectively) are exchanged for the corresponding ending of the very frequent *a*-stems (-*an*). This results in the changes *sekjan > sekan* and *glöggvan > glöggan*, which are the results of exchange of morphemes, not phonological processes. This describes well the process that has created the form *mennirnir*, as the change cannot be accounted for in phonological terms. Instead, the form has originated through the form *menninir* being transformed in accordance with a high-frequency morphological structure. Hreinn Benediktsson does not mention this change in his overview over a number of analogical changes in Icelandic, but it must be stressed that it is confined to one specific word. It is not a part of a pattern visible in a great number of words, nor could it be expected to be, as the point of departure, *menninir*, represent a very uncommon structure.

For later Icelandic, a so-called *n*-pronunciation in Icelandic has been identified, which could be of relevance for the change dealt with here if it existed before the emergence of the form *mennirnir*. The *n*-pronunciation consists of a loss of the first *r*-component in the endings -*arnir*, -*irnir* and -*urnir* (Björn Guðfinnsson 1964: 75–76; Kristján Árnason 2005: 409; the same feature is also present in modern spoken Faroese, see Höskuldur Thráinsson et al. 2012: 55). This change leads to -*irnir* being pronounced [inir], i.e. the same as the ending -*inir* in *menninir*. If this pronunciation was of medieval origin, the merger of -*inir* and -*irnir* could have been the result of a change in the direction -*irnir > -inir*, and then, when the pronunciation including the [r], i.e. [irnir], gained ground, it also brought with it *menninir > mennirnir*. However, the time of origin of this pronunciation is not clear, and it seems that it is not to be found in medieval sources. It has primarily been observed in investigations of spoken language (e.g. by Björn Guðfinnsson 1964), and it has rarely left traces in the written language even though there are occurrences from the 18th century (Jón Helgason 1972: 359). Still, the weak evidence for it during the Middle Ages makes this explanation less likely to the origin of *mennirnir*.

Conclusion

The definite form of *maðr* in the nom. pl., *mennirnir*, is the result of a morphological reinterpretation, where the very infrequent and almost isolated form *menninir* formally has joined the very frequent category of

the *i*-stems (and the *u*-stems). Another morphologically reinterpreted form also existed, *mennurnir*, which joined the one-syllable stems of the type *fótr* (*fótur*). As the latter form has not survived into modern Icelandic, and is preserved only in three examples in one single manuscript, it is very difficult to say how widely it was used. As noted above, however, the excerpts in ONP of the word form in question for the whole 15th century are few. It is difficult to follow this change in the written sources of this period. If the variant *mennurnir* was actually used more widely than by just one individual, it is possible that it was used regionally on the north of Iceland (the probable place of provenance for AM 557 4to; Mårtensson 2011). Regarding the time of the change *menninir > mennirnir*, it appears that it occurred during the 15th century. The form *mennurnir* existed during the same century, at least in the beginning of this century, as AM 557 4to was produced at this time.

   As shown above, a similar type of reinterpretation probably took place in Old Swedish, but the result was not the same. Here, the reinterpretation resulted in a form that coincided with the definite form of neuter words in the nom. and the acc. (*barnin/barnen*; *mænnin/mænnen*). This change, however, seems to have taken place at a later stage than the change in Icelandic. Also in the Swedish manuscripts from the late Middle Ages, even in those from the early 16th century, the older form *mænnene* (sometimes *mænnena*) is the one commonly used.

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Abstract

This article discusses a word form that has been unnoticed by previous research, namely *mennurnir*, nom. pl. of *maður* with definite article. In the dictionary excerpts of ONP (Dictionary of Old Norse Prose), there are three examples of this word form, all of which are in the 15th century manuscript AM 557 4to, sometimes called Skálholtsbók. An analysis is made of the scribe's representation of *-ur* and *-r* respectively (these two having run together in his speech). It is clear that he cannot have had any other word form in mind when writing these examples, and furthermore, they were not the result of scribal errors.

There are only few examples of *maður* in nom. pl. with the definite article among the dictionary slips, and it is difficult to get a good picture of the development of the word form at the time in question. The author argues that the form *mennurnir* actually was in use, as it is unlikely with a language feature represented by one person only. The form probably originated as a result of a morphological reinterpretation of the form *menninir*, with the consonantal stems like *vetr* and *fingr* as a pattern.

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Läsning för folket?
Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu i skandinaviska nyöversättningar: Hur? För vem? Varför?

MARTIN RINGMAR

1. Inledning

År 2014 publicerades samtliga islänningasagor i dansk, norsk och svensk nyöversättning. Förlaga var den modernortografiska *Íslendinga sögur* som förlaget Svart á hvítu gav ut i tre band 1987. Denna utgåva hade då redan legat till grund för en engelsk översättning (1997) på förlaget Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, grundat för detta ändamål av Jóhann Sigurðsson från Svart á hvítu. Samme man startade sedan Saga forlag för de skandinaviska utgåvorna, vilka är i fem delar liksom den engelska och i varierande grad återanvänder dess paratexter. Fem år efter utgivandet, i september 2019, ordnades en konferens i Reykjavik som bl.a. skulle summera hur de skandinaviska nyöversättningarna tagits emot, och föreliggande artikel bygger på ett föredrag där.[1]

De skandinaviska utgåvorna är i påkostade band och har omfattande inledande och avslutande förklarande texter: i *Sv* totalt 112 sidor, i *Da* omkring 130 och i *No* cirka 80.[2] Alla tre inleds med en hälsning från

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[1] "De islandske sagaer i en ny udgave på dansk, norsk, svensk og islandsk" (Reykjavik 6–7/9 2019). Saga forlag gav även ut sagorna i original i fembandsformat år 2018, vilket delvis bekostades av Alltinget med anledning av Islands 100 år som suverän nation (https://stundin.is/blogg/thorbergur-thorsson/ny-utgafa-af-islendingasogunum; läst 29/8 2019).

[2] Förkortningarna *Da*, *No* och *Sv* syftar dels på de tre utgåvorna generellt, dels, om sidhänvisning finns, på band I i respektive utgåva; *Is* syftar på förlagan (1987) och *Eng* på

respektive regent, av vilka drottning Margrethe är personligast och bl.a. delger läsarna att "[f]ra en ung alder har sagaerna begejstret mig" (något sådant säger varken Harald eller Carl Gustaf). Totalkostnad för de tre boxarna – i cirka 2000 exemplar var – lär ha varit drygt 15 miljoner svenska kronor (Edlund 2015: 457), något som till stor del bestritts av olika kulturfrämjande institutioner och fonder. Dessutom har Islands regering köpt in hundratals exemplar som skänkts till bibliotek i Norden.[3]

Att förlaget fått kostnaderna täckta av mecenater och att det dessutom är baserat på Island har möjligen haft menlig inverkan på försäljningen utomlands:

> Försäljningsmässigt har den svenska översättningen varit ett fiasko. Saga forlag, det isländska förlag, som står bakom projektet har enbart distribuerat böckerna till Sverige genom försäljning via den egna webbplatsen. […] I Norge och Danmark har försäljningen gått betydligt bättre. Flera av de översättare som arbetade med den svenska utgåvan är mycket missnöjda med att förlaget enbart koncentrerat sig på att få ut verket utan att till synes ha haft några som helst tankar på hur det skulle kunna nå svenska lärare [*sic!*].[4]

Och mycket tyder på att försäljningen gått bättre i grannländerna än i Sverige, inte minst då i Danmark där dessutom ett urval publicerats i två lätthanterligare volymer på Gyldendals 2017–18 (Islændingesagaerne: et udvalg i ny oversættelse).[5] Det har vidare varit tal om att de skandinaviska nyöversättningarna ska bli fritt tillgängliga digitalt, men när tycks ännu oklart.

Till konferensen 2019 hade jag blivit ombedd att jämföra översättningarna av en kortare saga som innehåller poesi, och valet föll på Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu. Så avsikten är här dels att ge en beskrivning av de skandinaviska utgåvorna generellt, dels att jämföra de tre versionerna av

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den engelska utgåvan från 1997. Den svenska utgåvan har utförligt recenserats av Lars-Erik Edlund (2015, 2017).

[3] I Sverige har varje kommunbibliotek fått minst ett av totalt 390 gåvoexemplar (e-brev från Kristinn Jóhannesson 30/9 2019). Saga forlag har dessutom skänkt varje översättare en komplett fembandsbox, även till dem vilka – i likhet med artikelförfattaren – enbart översatt ett par kortare sagor. Rimligtvis har sponsorpengarna bidragit till att möjliggöra denna generositet.

[4] https://www.islandsbloggen.com/2018/01/island-skanker-sverige-islanningasagor.html (läst 29/8 2019).

[5] Den danska utgåvans stora genomslag, försäljningsmässigt och medialt, bekräftades av flera föredrag under konferensen i Reykjavik i september 2019.

Gunnlaugs saga, inbördes och i relation till förlagan, med särskilt fokus på namnskick, ordförråd, tempusbruk och återgivandet av poesin.

1.1 Översättarna av Gunnlaugs saga

Av de tre skandinaviska översättarna av Gunnlaugs saga (GS) var den danske, Rolf Stavnem (f. 1965), den mest erfarne med ett 15-tal översatta böcker från isländska, gammal och ny. Han är en av de centrala översättarna inom *Da* med fem sagor (totalt 367 sidor) och han fungerade dessutom som poesigranskare för hela utgåvan. Den svenske översättaren, Mats Malm (f. 1964), hade enbart tre tidigare översättningar i bagaget – samtliga från fornisländska – men som professor i litteraturvetenskap och numera ledamot i Svenska Akademien besitter han avsevärt kulturellt kapital; han har dessutom kopplingar till *Sv*-redaktörerna via Göteborgs universitet. Förutom GS har han översatt ytterligare två sagor i *Sv* (93 s. totalt). Arnhild Mindrebø (f. 1941) studerade på Island läsåret 1963–64 och arbetade sedan som gymnasielärare i norska och tyska. Trots obetydlig tidigare erfarenhet blev hon uppmanad av sin f.d. elev, *No*-redaktören Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, att översätta för *No* vilket resulterade i sju sagor samt sex tåtar eller kortsagor (totalt 322 s.).

1.2 Generella översättningsstrategier

De skandinaviska nyöversättningarna är kollektiva projekt. I *Da* leddes 14 översättare av en redaktör, medan *Sv*:s tre redaktörer styrde hela 24 översättare, och i Norge arbetade totalt 19 översättare under en redaktör för respektive nynorska och bokmål.[6] Översättarnas insatser varierade naturligtvis, från en enda tåt på några sidor till flera längre sagor; exempelvis står Rolf Stavnem tillsammans med två andra översättare för mer än halva sidantalet i *Da*. Dessutom har i alla tre länderna skönlitterärara författare utan kunskaper i originalspråket fungerat som "kvalificerade läsare" av måltexterna.

Som i alla projekt av det här slaget – man kan jämföra med bibelöversättning – blir slutprodukten i skiftande grad en kompromiss. Den danska redaktören, Annette Lassen, säger sig ha eftersträvat en balans mellan

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[6] Bokmålsredaktören Jon Gunnar Jørgensen (muntligen 6/9 2019) förstod det som att Saga forlag egentligen hade föredragit enbart bokmål, något som dock hade varit ogörligt givet projektets omfattning och tidsramar (av totalt 40 sagor är 23 på nynorska). Det lär f.ö. vara sällsynt att de två skriftspråken samsas inom samma bokpärmar på detta sätt.

översättarens stilvilja och "en nogenlunde homogen og konsekvent gengivelse af originalteksterne" (*Da*: L). Lassen är för övrigt den av redaktörerna som utförligast diskuterar typiska problem vid översättning av isländska sagor. Tydliga skillnader finns här mellan redaktionerna, där framförallt *Sv* skiljer ut sig beträffande namn och historiskt presens, medan alla tre divergerar i diktöversättningarna.

2. Gunnlaugs saga i översättning

Den första översättningen av Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu kom ut 1775 i Köpenhamn i en parallellspråklig praktutgåva på isländska och latin, vilken då var den första publicerade kompletta översättningen av en islänningasaga överhuvudtaget (Lassen 2014: 58f). Sedan dess har den blivit en av de mest spridda sagorna, något som ingen utgivare försummar att påpeka: "Gunnlaug ormstungas saga är – om översättningar till olika språk medräknas – den isländska bok, som blivit tryckt flest gånger" (Alving 1938: VIII). Enligt databasen Þýðingar íslenskra miðaldabókmennta har den översatts till totalt 25 språk, enbart överträffad av Njáls saga med 26.[7] Vad gäller antalet utgåvor och upplagor innehar dock troligen GS fortfarande förstaplatsen, säkert mycket tack vare sitt behändiga format (cirka 30 trycksidor).

Den begränsade längden gör GS lämplig som introduktion till genren islänningasagor, vilket ett stort antal skolutgåvor vittnar om, t.ex. Modersmålslärarnas förenings 1930 (och senare) i översättning av Josua Mjöberg. Troligen har även triangeldramat mellan skalderna Gunnlaug och Hrafn och Helga den fagra förmodats intressera "det nu uppväxande släktet" som därur kunnat hämta "livskraft nog att friska upp sig med" (Bååth 1910: 3). GS har dessutom i många länder kommit ut i original med översatt parallelltext eller med rikliga förklaringar, så t.ex. i England:

> "Gunnlaugssaga" has an interesting theme presented in a prose style which, while not offering any grave linguistic difficulties, is of high literary merit; and for these reasons the saga is well suited to fulfil the purpose of this book, namely, to provide a simple and useful reading-book for English-speaking students of Old Norse. (Small 1935: 5)

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[7] https://sagas.landsbokasafn.is/ (sökningen utförd 31/8 2019).

Det finns många äldre översättningar av GS till de skandinaviska språken, av vilka vissa återutgivits moderniserade, liksom ett flertal bearbetningar för barn och ungdom som i Kata Dalströms Nordiska hjältesagor för ungdom från 1889 eller Erik Hjorth Nielsens Gunløg Ormstunga – en billedsaga från 1994, vilken även översatts till svenska. GS har vidare utgjort grundlag för ett par skandinaviska dramatiseringar liksom för en opera (Gunnlögs saga) skriven 1897 av Preben Nodermann, sedermera domkyrkoorganist i Lund. Operan trycktes i samband med ett konsertant framförande 1927 men väntar ännu på sitt sceniska uruppförande (Bengtsson 1988: 33f).

De svenska översättningarna av GS delas naturligt in i tre perioder: 1856–1872 (3 översättningar), 1930–1962 (3) samt 2014 (1). Under 1800-talet anpassades huvudpersonens namn till Gunlög/Gunnlög men från 1930 heter han Gunnlaug.[8] Att 1900-talsöversättningarna, vilka för övrigt försvenskar namnen, behåller originaldiftongen i titelnamnet kan bero på att kvinnonamnet Gunlög hade vunnit i popularitet efter sekelskiftet 1900. Den danska motsvarigheten (Gunløg) är så gott som okänd som kvinnonamn varför anpassningen av hjältens namn är oproblematisk där. I Norge åter är kvinnonamnet Gunnlaug ungefär lika frekvent som Gunlög i Sverige, men någon differentiering är inte möjlig då norskan behållit diftongen 'au'. På Island är för övrigt mansnamnet Gunnlaugur betydligt vanligare än kvinnonamnet Gunnlaug även om det senare förvisso förekommer.[9]

3. De skandinaviska nyöversättningarna

3.1 Namnformer

Isländska egennamn är notoriskt problematiska vid översättning där "diplomatarisk återgivning av källspråkets form utgör den ena ytterligheten, och den andra innebär att alla namnformer byts ut mot ekvivalenter som finns i målspråket" (Hannesdóttir 1998: 70). T.ex. skulle ett namn

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[8] Två av 1800-talsöversättningarna samt *Sv* skriver binamnet utan 's' (Ormtunga), de övriga Ormstunga.

[9] Uppgifter om antalet bärare av namnet Gunlög (etc.) har hämtats på: https://www.scb.se; https://www.dst.dk; https://www.ssb.no; https://www.hagstofa.is/talnaefni/ibuar/faeddir-og-danir/nofn (sökningarna gjorda 30/8 2019).

som Þuríður rent teoretiskt kunna återges på 33 olika sätt mellan ytter-
punkterna Þuríður och Turid (Ringmar 2011). I regel har namn anpassats
mer i översättningar av fornsagorna än av modern litteratur, vilket bl.a.
kan bero på sagaöversättningarnas sekelgamla tradition (tidigare torde
även tryckttekniska begränsningar ha spelat in). I motsats till *Da/No* bryter
Sv med denna tradition och inför diplomatarisk namnåtergivning, bortsett
från att nominativändelsen oftast utelämnas: förlagans Þuríður blir Þuríð
och Þórður blir Þórð (*Da/No*: Tord) osv. Undantaget är s.k. ija-stammar
där ändelsen kvarstår, exempelvis Þórir (*Da/No*: Tore). Även isländska
ortnamn behandlas på samma sätt (t.ex. Borgarfjörður > Borgarfjörð).
Såvitt bekant har detta system aldrig använts tidigare vid översättning till
svenska av vare sig gammal eller modern isländska.[10]

Saken kompliceras dock av att vissa namn anpassas om de anses äga
hävd på svenska (t.ex. Erik blodyx), vilket ibland leder till inkonsekvenser.
Jarlen som Gunnlaug besöker i Skara heter Sigurð i *Sv* (men Sigurd i *Da/
No*) medan hans norske kollega försvenskas till Erik (*No*: Eirik). Den
norskfödde grönlandskolonisatören skrivs däremot med diftong och
accenttecken i *Sv*: "Eirík den röde". Vidare förekommer namnet Olof i
fyra varianter: Olof Skötkonung heter så i GS men Olaf i Hallfreðs saga
liksom i namnregistret. Olof Trätälja, som figurerar i bl.a. Egils saga,
behåller däremot alltid sitt svenska namn. De norska namnarna heter Olav
och islänningarna Ólaf i *Sv*. (I *Da/No* förekommer enbart formen Olav.)

Enligt redaktörerna står troheten mot originalets namnformer "i överens-
stämmelse med modern översättningspraxis" (*Sv*: xii), ett argument som
dock inte i sig bevisar det nya systemets överlägsenhet. Dessutom handlar
det som sagt beträffande sagaöversättning snarast om ett brott mot praxis,
vilket framgår av en jämförelse mellan svenska översättningar av Njáls
saga (se tab. 1).

Lars Lönnrot följde alltså traditionen med anpassade namn i Njals saga
från 2006, men när texten publicerades i *Sv* 2014 tillämpades dennas
namnåtergivning.

Vad är avsikten bakom traditionsbrottet i *Sv*? Möjligen är de islandi-
serade namnen tänkta att signalera autenticitet och därmed stärka nyöver-

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[10] Däremot tycks *Sv* ha fått en efterföljare i översättningen av Bergsveinn Birgissons
Den svarte vikingen (2019), med den anmärkningsvärda skillnaden att översättaren John
Swedenmark låter kvinnonamnen behålla nominativändelsen, t.ex. Ragnhildur, Sigríður,
Þuríður osv. i motsats till Guðmund, Ingólf etc. Ett möjligt skäl till detta kan vara att
formen Guðmund finns i det isländska paradigmet (i ackusativ) medan kvinnonamnen har
ackusativformen Sigríði etc.

Tab. 1. Några namn i översättningar av Njáls saga.

Översättning	Ásgrímr	Hrútr	Mörðr	Þráinn
A.U. Bååth (1879)	Åsgrim	Rut	Mård	Tråen
Hjalmar Alving (1943)	Asgrim	Hrut	Mård	Traen
Åke Ohlmarks (1964)	Åsgrim	Hrut	Mård	Tråen
Ingegerd Fries (1981)	Asgrim	Hrut	Mård	Traen
Lars Lönnrot (2006)	Åsgrim	Hrut	Mård	Tråen
Lars Lönnrot (2014)	Ásgrím	Hrút	Mörð	Þráin

sättningens auktoritet som trogen återgivning av originalet. Namnformerna understryker vidare att originaltexten är skriven just på isländska, inte på "gammal götiska". (Kanske spelar det in här att *Sv* har en islänning som huvudredaktör?) Uttalet försvåras hursomhelst, eftersom det onekligen blir besvärligare för svenskar att diskutera t.ex. Gunnar på Lidarände om han bor på Hlíðarendi.[11] För att inte tala om Hallfreð vandræðaskáld. Ty även binamnen behåller ofta sin isländska form i *Sv*, i motsats till *Da/No* och äldre svenska översättningar, vilket leder till en viss förlust i begriplighet; jfr t.ex. "Auðun Festargram" i *Sv* med "Ødun Lænkehund" i *Da* eller "Audun bandhund" i Alvings och Ohlmarks' svenska översättningar.

3.2 Historiskt presens

Att ha enhetlig namnåtergivning i hela utgåvan ter sig rimligt, oavsett vilka principer som valts, men det tycks mindre tvingande att som *Sv* nästan helt avstå från historiskt presens (jfr Edlund 2017: 374f). *Da* däremot bevarar tempusbyte "i tillempet form" (LIII), vilket innebär att växling i allmänhet tillåts mellan grafiska meningar men inte inom dem. Historiskt presens undviks för övrigt även i den engelska utgåvan (*Eng*: xv), vilket kanske har påverkat den svenska.[12] De svenska redaktörerna motiverar sitt beslut bl.a. med att förkortningar i handskrifterna kan göra det svårt att avläsa rätt verbform (t.ex. av anföringsverben *mæla* och *segja*):[13]

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[11] Namnformerna motverkar sålunda *Sv*-redaktören Karl G. Johanssons förhoppning om "en svensk text som kan läsas högt" (citat i Edlund 2017: 374). *Sv* innehåller inte heller några uttalsanvisningar, vare sig för modernt eller fornisländskt uttal.

[12] Om (frånvaron av) historiskt presens i engelska sagaöversättningar – och specifikt i GS – se Durrenberger & Durrenberger 1992: 51–57.

[13] Lars Lönnroth (1996: 38) gör en poäng av en tempusväxling i Bolles vredesutbrott mot

Tab. 2. Anföringsverb i GS.

Presens/preteritum	*Is*	*Da*	*No*	*Sv*
segir/*sagði*	91/14	25/112	80/142	7/130
svarar/*svaraði*	66/2	62/7	65/2	2/63
mælir/*mælti*	0/68	–	–	–
S:a presens/preteritum	157/84	87/119	145/144	9/193
S:a	241	206	289	202

> Bruket av historiskt presens i moderna utgåvor av isländska sagatexter bygger således ofta på osäker filologisk grund. På grund av detta har de föreliggande översättningarna mestadels avstått från att markera historiskt presens, men också för texthelhetens skull, då denna tidsform i översatt form lätt kan framstå som stilistiskt mer markerad och regelmässig än i källtexterna. (*Sv*: XIII)[14]

Men det finns mycket annat som står "på osäker filologisk grund" såsom bl.a. interpunktion och kapitel- och styckesindelning. T.ex. delas GS upp i hela 368 stycken i *Is*, vilket i stort sett följs i *Da*/*Sv* medan *No* reducerar dem med mer än hälften (se tabell 3); detta att jämföra med exempelvis utgåvan i serien Íslenzk fornrit där GS indelas i 15 stycken.

I tabell 2 redovisas tempus vid tre anföringsverb, varav framgår hur presens ändrats till preteritum i *Sv*.

Det är vidare värt att nämna att det typiska anföringsverbet vid dikter, *kveða*, används 28 gånger i GS i *Is* (enbart i preteritum, *kvað*) och 26 gånger i *Da* men inte alls i *Sv*. Det förefaller dock osannolikt att verbet *kvæde* skulle "finnas" i högre grad på danska än *kväda* på svenska, utan frånvaron illustrerar snarare *Sv*:s vilja att distansera sig från en äldre svensk sagatradition.

Att *No* har betydligt fler fall av anföringsverb än *Da*/*Sv* beror på att de senare i stort sett helt strukit vad som kan kallas "pleonastisk anföring" (se tabell 3):[15]

Gudrun (Laxdalingarnas saga): "Att detta utbrott är något ovanligt och just därför särdeles omskakande markeras till yttermera visso av att berättaren växlar tempus till historiskt presens ('Då säger Bolle')". Lönnroths analys bygger på en tidigare översättning till svenska, men utifrån *Sv* fungerar inte exemplet – "Då sade Bolli" (*Sv* V: 81) – vad det än sedan står i handskrifterna.

[14] Den sista meningen i citatet är svårtolkad då "markerad" närmast är en motsats till "regelmässig".

[15] All typografisk framhävning i citat är min om inte annat anges.

Jarl *mælti*: "Skúli Þorsteinsson," *segir* hann, "hvað manna er þessi á Íslandi?" (*Is*: 1174)

Jarlen *sa*: "Skule Torsteinsson," *sa* han, "hva slags folk på Island kommer denne mannen fra?" (*No*: 273)

Jarlen *sagde*: "Skule Torstenssøn, hvad slags familie på Island stammer han fra?" (*Da*: 305)

Jarlen *sade*: "Skúli Þorsteinsson, vad är det för människor på Island som han härstammar från?" (*Sv*: 280)

En skillnad mellan *Is* och *No* är emellertid att den förra alltid har två olika verb, vilka dessutom oftast står i olika tempus; den absolut vanligaste kombinationen är *mælti* i preteritum och *segir* i presens som i exemplet ovan. Intrycket av (onödig) upprepning blir sålunda starkare i *No*.

3.3 Ordförråd

Beträffande ordförrådet tycks alla redaktionerna vilja begränsa till ett nöd-vändigt minimum den norröna ordskatt som präglat äldre översättningar (*No* är dock minst restriktiv).[16] T.ex. lyser fränder och fränkor helt med sin frånvaro i de tre GS medan släktingarna är desto talrikare. Målet tycks vara en text som varken ska framstå som modern eller gammaldags: "Det har i sagens natur ikke været en målsætning at lade sagaerne fremstå som *moderne* tekster. […] Arkaiske ord og vendinger er så vidt muligt undveget" (*Da*: L; kursiv i orig.). Beträffande lånord vill dock *Da* vara "sprogligt inkluderende" och tillåta främmande ord med visst burspråk i danska – exempelvis "økonomi" – medan senare lån undviks: "det går tilsyneladende en grænse her, som de fleste oversættere og læsere ikke ønsker overskredet" (*Da*: LII). Engelska lånord är alltså inte okej.

Att policyn skiljer sig åt framgår av GS som på danska har fler latin-baserade lånord än *No*/*Sv*:

blev meget *aggressiv* (*Da*: 298)	svært sint (*No*: 267); brösta upp sig (*Sv*: 283)
Vi *generer* sagesløse folk (*Da*: 307)	går løs på (*No*: 274); trampar på (*Sv*: 291)

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[16] T.ex. översätter Alving ordet *vænleikr* med "vänhet" (på tal om Helga den fagra) men förklarar i en fotnot att det "närmast [torde] betyda vad vi kalla charm", ett ord som i detta sammanhang "förbjuder sig självt" (1938: 268).

Gunløg takker ham for *invitationen* (*Da*: 313)	tilbudet (*No*: 279); erbjudandet (*Sv*: 297)
at han […] ikke kendte til *detaljerne* (*Da*: 313)	men bare uklart (*No*: 279); inte kände till allt (*Sv*: 297)
Torkel […] havde *inviteret* Illuge Sorte (*Da*: 316)	innbød (*No*: 281); bjudit (*Sv*: 299)
på græssletten stod folk i en *cirkel* (*Da*: 321)	ring (*No*: 286); ring (*Sv*: 304)

Detta modernare ordförråd förekommer även i dikterna i *Da*, möjligen som avsiktliga stilkrockar: "nu har jeg *chancen*/ til at vise hvorfor" (vers 4); "sprang på mig *konstant*/ i spyddenes *spektakel*" (vers 22).

Ett tvärt kast mellan register uppstår i *Da*/*No* när det norröna *fylgjor* står intill lånorden "gravid" respektive "personer":

De fugle må være stormænds fylgjer, og din kone er gravid […] (299)

Disse fuglene kan være fylgjene til viktige personer. Kona di er med barn […] (267)

Örnarna och falken måste vara stora mäns fylgjor. Din hustru väntar barn […] (283)

Exemplet illustrerar också karakteristiskt hur det talspråkligare "er med barn" i *No* kontrasterar mot det mer neutrala "väntar barn" i *Sv*.

3.4 Ordantal och meningslängd

Redaktörerna för de olika utgåvorna har beredvilligt gett tillgång till GS digitalt och sålunda har vissa parametrar kunnat undersökas maskinellt, vilket redovisas i tabell 3.

Som tabell 3 visar har ordantalet ökat påfallande i *Da* och *No*, med omkring 9%, medan ökningen på knappt 3% i *Sv* är förväntad vid käll-textnära översättning från isländska (bl.a. därför att obestämd artikel tillkommer). Men *Sv* har å sin sida ökat antalet grafiska meningar avsevärt, vilka då blivit kortare i genomsnitt. Förkortningarna resulterar ibland i en effektfull komprimering, som i följande avsnitt vilket fördelaktigt tål jämförelse med expansionen i *Da*/*No*:

"Hvar komu feður okkrir þess," segir hann, "að minn faðir væri eftirbátur þíns föður, hvar nema alls hvergi? Skal og svo með okkur vera." (1179; 24 ord)

Tab. 3. Några variabler i GS (exklusive poesi och paratext).

	Is	*Da*	*No*	*Sv*
Antal ord	9598	10520	10469	9861
Ökning %	–	9,5	9,0	2,7
Stycken	368	354	127	359
Punkt	590	634	631	713
Kolon[a]	158	161	157	159
Frågetecken	34	34	34	37
Utropstecken	0	10 (!)	0	0
S:a grafiska meningar	782	839	822	909
Ord/grafisk mening	12,3	12,5	12,7	10,8
Inskjuten (pleonastisk) anföring	55	11	55	5
Totalt antal *eg/jeg/jag*	93	112	115	121
Varav initialt (*Eg/Jeg/Jag*)	12	35	27	43

Not
[a] Kolon förekommer nästan uteslutande i anföringskonstruktioner av typen "Gunnlaug sade/svarade:".

"Hvornår er det nogensinde sket for vores fædre, at min far var på slæb hos din far? Det er aldrig nogensinde hændt, og sådan kommer det heller ikke til at blive mellem os." (311; 33 ord)

"Når har det vært slik med fedrene våre", sier han, "at min far diltet etter din far? Aldri har det vært slik, og slik skal det også være med oss." (277; 30 ord)

"När hängde min far i släptåg efter din far? Aldrig. Detsamma skall gälla oss." (295; 14 ord)

Men strategin med fler och förkortade meningar kan även orsaka en viss monotoni i *Sv* när korta huvudsatser staplas på varandra:

Jafnan skemmtu þau Helga sér að tafli og Gunnlaugur. Lagði hvort þeirra góðan þokka til annars bráðlega sem raunir bar á síðan. Þau voru mjög jafnaldrar. (1170)

Helga och Gunnlaug brukade roa sig med brädspel. De fattade snart tycke för varandra. Detta skulle visa sig senare. De var i samma ålder. (285)

Sv har här fyra jämnlånga huvudsatser (5–8 ord) som alla inleds med

subjektet, medan originalet har tre huvudsatser av varierande längd
(9, 13 och 4 ord) av vilka en inleds med ett tidsadverbial, en med tomt
fundament (s.k. narrativ inversion) och bara den sista med subjektet.[17]
Korta meningar hör för övrigt till de stildrag Tage Danielsson överdriver
i sin parodi på isländsk saga (Sigurds saga), som har en genomsnittlig
meningslängd på cirka fem ord.[18] Sigurds saga excellerar även i den för
sagastilen typiska topikaliseringen ("Harald dräpte jag. Pris rönte jag där-
för."), vilken *Sv* snarast underutnyttjar. En genomgång av de två första
kapitlen i GS visar att 50% av huvudsatserna inleds med annat än subjekt
i *Is*, mot 30% i *No* och ungefär 25% i *Da*/*Sv*.

   I *No* tycks ordexpansionen inte minst syfta till att nå ett talspråkligare
tonfall:

   "Þitt fullting vildi eg hafa til kvonbænar við Þorstein Egilsson að biðja Helgu
   dóttur hans." (1180; 15 ord)

   "Jeg ville gjerne ha din hjelp til å dra på frierferd til Torstein Egilsson for å be
   om Helga, datteren hans." (278; 21 ord)

   "Jag vill ha ditt stöd i ett frieri. Jag skall be Þorstein Egilsson om hans dotter
   Helga." (295; 17 ord)

Citatet ovan illustrerar även hur *Sv* typiskt delat en grafisk mening i två
vilka båda inleds med samma subjekt, *jag* (jfr tabell 3).

3.5 Dikterna

Den inflikade poesin med versmåttet *dróttkvætt* hör som bekant till det
mest svåröversatta i sagorna, och det finns olika uppfattningar om vad
i den som bör bevaras. Att bevara "allt" går inte. Samtliga redaktörer
diskuterar problemet:

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[17] Ett antal läsarreaktioner på GS (*Sv*) har samlats in, bl.a. följande från en gymnasielärare
i svenska (64 år): "Stilen är typisk för isländska sagor, korta och okomplicerade meningar,
nästan inga bisatser". Men *Sv* framstår alltså i detta avseende som "isländskare" än
originalet: 10,8 ord per grafisk mening mot 12,3 i *Is*.
[18] Ur Sigurds saga (som blott är 1 sida lång): "En man hette Sigurd. Starkast var han på
Island. […] Harald hette en väldig kämpe. […] I kämpalek möttes Harald och Sigurd. […]
Sigurd spräckte Haralds skalle. Ihjälslagen låg Harald, den väldige kämpen. […] Ont tal
nådde Sigurd. Sigurd trädde in över Gunnars tröskel. 'Ond tunga är mans bane', talade
Sigurd. Sigurd dräpte Gunnar. Ting blev hållet. Sigurd talade: 'Harald dräpte jag. Pris rönte
jag därför. Gunnar dräpte jag. Tvåfalt månde jag nu prisas.'" (Danielsson 1964: 89).

> […] oversætterne [er] blevet opfordret til så vidt muligt at bevare kenninger, allitterationer og antallet af stavelser i de enkelte linjer. (*Da*: LI)

> Vi har valgt å gjengi strofene slik at de blir lett forståelige for en norsk leser. […] Av og til har vi gjengitt enkle kjenninger, men uten å gå særlig langt i å gjenskape skaldens poetiske språk. (*No*: XLI)

> De här föreliggande översättningarna är således att betrakta som ett slags kompromisser, där de innehållsliga och i någon mån de rytmiska elementen givits företräde. (*Sv* V: 420)

Ingen säger sig avse att respektera originaldikternas inrim eller onaturliga ordföljd, vilken senare delvis är en följd av kraven på inrim och allitteration (även om den ökade komplexiteten också kan ha tillskrivits ett värde i sig).[19]

Målsättningen att dikterna ska vara "lett forståelige for en norsk leser" bekräftas av den norska GS, som har kvar färre kenningar än *Da*/*Sv*. Möjligen riskerar dock poesin då att bli lite poänglös eftersom själva sakinnehållet ofta är ganska trivialt. Men *No* har å andra sidan flest regelrätta allitterationer: av totalt 81 radpar i *dróttkvætt* är 17 i stort sett korrekt allittererade i *No*, mot fem var i *Da* och *Sv*, och endast *No* har strofer med komplett allitteration (vers 1 och 9). *No* har dessutom bevarat fler av de i originalet obligatoriska trokéerna i radslut: 149 av 162 (mot 117 i *Da* och 135 i *Sv*).

No utelämnar sålunda oftast kenningarna medan de i *Da* förklaras i en parallell spalt och *Sv* ibland bakar in begriplighet genom explicitering tillsammans med bevarad kenning. I strof 12 exemplifieras de tre strategierna:

[…] så *ølskibets Njørun*	**Du** kan ikke lege	**Du**, *ölkarets Njörun*,
ej kunne forbinde	sårene fra sverdet.	bistod mig inte,
[ølskibs > drikkehorns > Njørun	(281)	(299)
(gudinde) > kvinde] (315)		

I *Sv* står vidare originalet originellt nog i direkt anslutning till diktöversättningarna. Syftet är naturligtvis inte att underlätta förståelsen av dikterna, utan troligen återigen att påminna läsarna om att de faktiskt läser en översättning. Kanske fyller originaldikterna också en dekorativ funktion?

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[19] Åke Ohlmarks är förmodligen ensam om att konsekvent ha såväl inrim som regelrätt allitteration i sina diktöversättningar (ofta dock på bekostnad av trokéerna i radslut). Han går även längst i fantasifulla kenningar varför dikterna ibland blir tämligen obegripliga även för högt kompetenta läsare.

Intrycket att *Sv* är något formellare, och möjligen försiktigare, än *Da*/*No* gäller även dikterna. T.ex. i vers 14 där Gunnlaug förbannar Helgas föräldrar för att de åstadkommit den vackra flicka som vållar honom smärta:

Lad trollen tage bondens mesterværk! (316)	Djevelen dem hente! Jeg dem begge unner også alt det verste. (282)	Må de ila lönas för att ha avlat den blida och dömas hårt för dådet. (300)

(Anslaget i *Da* påminner för övrigt om Ohlmarks' småfräcka version (1963): "Trollen tage den dagens/ trägna drängverk i sängen.")

En intressant skillnad mellan *Sv* å ena sidan och *Da*/*No* å den andra visar sig i strof 20 i GS som är identisk med strof 3 i Kormáks saga.[20] De två sagorna har olika översättare i alla tre redaktionerna och i både *Da* och *No* skiljer sig versionerna åt, här exemplifierat med den senare:[21]

Linpyntet var kvinnen da hun kom imot meg, et blikk hun mot meg kastet, kvast som haukens var det. (GS; *No*: 285)	Så bjart den blinket, månen, i brynene hennes, under skinnende lyse panna, så satt hun haukeblikk i meg. (Kormaks saga; *No*: 144)

I *Sv* däremot är versen identisk i båda sagorna, vilket tyder på en hårdare redaktionell styrning av dikterna.

4. Sammanfattande diskussion

I Norge kom GS ut år 1859 som bilaga till tidskriften Folkevennen ("Oversat fra Gammelnorsk af O. Rygh"), och 1872 kom P. A. Gödeckes svenska översättning i skriftserien "Läsning för folket", utgiven av "Sällskapet för nyttiga kunskapers spridande". Uppenbart har GS m.fl. isländska sagor då ansetts som lämplig läsning för folkets breda lager. Vilket osökt ger anledning att återvända till rubrikens frågor rörande de skandinaviska nyöver-

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[20] Enligt Nordal (1938: XLIII) är Kormákr tvivelsutan diktens upphovsman ("má telja vafalaust, að hún sé eftir Kormák"), men vad detta antagande bygger på framgår inte.

[21] Originalet lyder: "Brámáni skein brúna / brims af ljósum himni / Hristar hörvi glæstrar / haukfránn á mig lauka" (*Is II*: 1188).

sättningarna: "Hur? För vem? Varför?". Som flera forskare betonat (t.ex. Reiß & Vermeer 1991: 96f) är översättning en målstyrd verksamhet, och ett svar på frågan "Hur?" kan antyda för vem en översättning är avsedd. Därför ska här några karakteristiska drag hos de tre utgåvorna/översättningarna rekapituleras, samt – måhända en smula spekulativt – en tänkt målgrupp föreslås.

Da utmärks av omfattande paratexter och är dessutom ensam om att i brödtexten grafiskt markera (med º) de begrepp som tas upp i ordförklaringarna, t.ex. i GS: "væggene i hans ºbod var styrtet sammen" (298). De rikliga förklararingar i parallellspalt vid dikterna förstärker intrycket av pedagogisk ambition. Vidare verkar den danska GS ta ut svängarna mer än *No* och i synnerhet *Sv*, vilket visar sig t.ex. i tillagda utropstecken ("Som talt af den braveste mand!"; 320), viss talspråklighet ("Kongen svarer: Det var skidt."; 307), en liberal låneordspolicy som ibland medför stilkrockar, och dessutom i enstaka arkaismer: "Hvad forestiller I Jer, Herre?" (309).[22] Den tydliga pedagogiska ambitionen för tankarna till den danska folkhögskolerörelsen, för vilken de isländska sagorna som bekant haft en mycket stor betydelse. Och kanske vänder sig *Da* framförallt till det uppväxande släktet?

No har något mindre av förklarande paratexter än *Da*/*Sv*, och dikterna är lättillgängligare. Tonfallet i GS är ofta talspråkligt med många partikelverb ("De kom raskt godt ut af det med hverandre"; 277) och vissa feminina a-former: *bua*, *jula*, *elva*, *sola* etc. (men däremot t.ex. *tiden*, *saken*, *hånden*, *natten*); possessiva pronomen är oftast efterställda (*kona di*, *datteren din*). Vidare förekommer något fler "norrönismer" i *No* än i *Da*/*Sv*: *austmann* (*Sv*: norrman), *grid*, *svienes* (*Da*: svenskerne; *Sv*: svenskarnas). Det är en vanlig uppfattning att de isländska fornsagorna, i högre grad än i Danmark och Sverige, fortfarande utgör en integrerad del av det norska kulturarvet och detta skulle kunna förklara den populärare ansatsen. För folket?

Sv tycks generellt ha förenhetligats mer redaktionellt än *Da*/*No*, t.ex. i tempusbruket och i dikterna. I GS uppvisar *Sv* en stramare och ordknappare stil än de andra två, och genomgående bruk av bl.a. *sade* och *skall* bidrar till en viss formalitet. Ordförrådet är neutralt – såväl latinska som norröna lånord undviks – och meningslängden har förkortats med viss syntaktisk monotoni som följd. Och möjligen är de förkortade

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[22] Pluralformerna *I* och *Jer* (med versal) är översättning av *þér*/*yður* som Gunnlaug använder vid tilltal av en kung eller jarl, vilka i sin tur duar honom. *No* har *De*/*Dem*, medan *Sv* en gång översätter med *ni*/*er* (290) och sedan alltid *du*/*dig*.

meningarna det stilmedel som återstår för att signalera "isländsk saga" efter att *Sv* avhänt sig en äldre traditions arkaismer, tempusbruk och frekventa topikaliseringar? Originalspråkets synlighet i namnformerna och i dikterna tyder eventuellt på en "lärd" målgrupp: För den bildade borgerligheten? (Om någon sådan fortfarande finns?)

Slutligen till frågan "Varför?". Det är en ofta upprepad förhoppning att nyöversättningar ska göra klassiska verk "tillgängliga för nya läsare" och då särskilt för "nya generationer" (jfr Ringmar 2012[23]), en tankefigur som återfinns i de tre regenternas hälsningsord:

> Det er mit håb, at sagaerne i denne nye oversættelse vil nå ud til så mange som muligt, så nye generationer kan få samme glæde af sagaerne, som jeg har haft. (Margrethe II)

> Ved at islendingesagaene nå foreligger samlet i en ny norsk oversettelse, kan flere – og nye generasjoner – få glede av dette verdifulle verket. (Harald V)

> Det är därför glädjande att den [sagalitteraturen] på nytt görs tillgänglig för oss, och då i ny språklig dräkt. (Carl XVI Gustaf)

Men i detta sammanhang förefaller argumentet svagt. De mer kända sagorna, vilka säkert även fortsättningsvis förblir de mest lästa, är lättillgängliga i äldre översättningar på bibliotek, antikvariskt eller online. Att just den senaste översättningen öppnar texterna för nya generationer är i och för sig tänkbart, men i revideringar av de äldre har många eventuella läshinder undanröjts, och dessutom finns det säkert läsare – även yngre – som efterfrågar den fornnordiska atmosfär som norröna lånord tillsammans med konjunktiv- och pluralformer av verben kan tänkas skänka.

I det inledande citatet från Islandsbloggen kritiseras Saga forlag för att *Sv* inte tillräckligt har kunnat nå "svenska lärare". Den freudianska felskrivningen (?) "lärare" är talande, ty ännu för 50–60 år sedan hade t.ex. gymnasielärare i svenska varit en självklar målgrupp för en utgåva av detta slag. Bland deras nutida kolleger är det förmodligen mycket få som ens känner till *Sv*:s existens. Det är alltså lite som tyder på att Edlunds

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[23] Det framhålls inte sällan att en nyöversättning nu "äntligen" ger oss tillgång till ett visst verk, som t.ex. i en recension av Kormaks saga (2008): "Kormaks saga har tidigare översatts till svenska av A. U. Bååth […] och Åke Ohlmarks […]. Båda översättningarna är föråldrade och är snarast att betrakta som romantiserade tolkningar av originalet. Genom [Ingegerd] Fries professionella och moderna översättning blir Kormaks saga här för första gången tillgänglig för en svensk publik" (Haugen 2011: 106–107). Men vad ska man då säga om Kristjan Hallbergs översättning i *Sv* (2014)? Att den "för andra gången" gör Kormaks saga tillgänglig för en svensk publik?

förhoppning om "en stor läsekrets" (2017: 375) för *Sv* skulle ha infriats, även om en framtida nätpublicering kan ändra på den saken.

Att initiativet till nyöversättningsprojekten, liksom en stor del av finansieringen, kommit från Island är talande. Här sågs fornsagorna länge som en nationell skatt och nästintill heliga skrifter. Berömd – eller snarare beryktad – är den lag från 1941, senare förklarad grundlagsstridig, som gav staten äganderätten till all isländsk litteratur från före 1400, och enligt vilken Halldór Laxness m.fl. dömdes för att ha vanhelgat sagorna med sina modernortografiska och "ovärdiga" utgåvor (Helgason 1998: 133–68, 2002; jfr Ringmar 2011).

Så rimligtvis förblir det ur ett isländskt perspektiv viktigt att även nyutgåvor som de skandinaviska får en fysisk utformning som återspeglar islänningasagornas ställning som "de nordiska folkens enda garanterat slitstarka bidrag till den så kallade världslitteraturen" (Henrikson 1981: 15). Inledningsorden med autograf från de tre regenterna i färggrann ornat bidrar till en air av pompa och ståt. Och att de skandinaviska nyöversättningsprojekten samordnats multiplicerar förstås deras genomslag med tre. Det förvånar således inte heller att evenemang kring dem använts för att förgylla Islands ordförandeskap i Nordiska ministerrådet, dels vid ovannämnda konferens i september 2019, dels – och framförallt – i juni 2014 när de tre boxarna släpptes under festliga former i kongresscentret Harpa i Reykjavik. I dubbel bemärkelse tungt vägande litteratur.

Referenser

Primärmaterial

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Is = Íslendinga sögur og þættir I–III. Utg. av B. Halldórsson & al. 1987. Reykjavík: Svart á hvítu.

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Sv = Islänningasagorna I–V. Samtliga släktsagor och fyrtionio tåtar. Utg. av K. Jóhannesson, G. D. Hansson & K. G. Johansson. 2014. Reykjavík: Saga forlag.

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Summary

In 2014 were published translations of the complete *Íslendingasögur* into Danish (*Da*), Norwegian (*No*), and Swedish (*Sw*), each in five volumes with comprehensive paratexts. Involving some 60 translators and editors, this is presumably one of the biggest retranslation projects ever in Scandinavia and it has received substantial financial support in each country, respectively, as well as from Iceland. The initiative emanated with an Icelandic publisher, whose 1987 Icelandic edition of the sagas – with modernized spelling – served as a source text (*Ice*). However, having an Iceland-based publisher may have hampered the access to mainland Scandinavian markets and especially in Sweden sales have reportedly been poor.

Like all translations of sagas, the triplet had to face classical problems like the rendering of proper names, the narrative shifts between past and present tense, and the interspersed Scaldic poetry. As for names, *Sw* abandons the time-honoured tradition of adaptation and maintains their original forms including diacritics, save that the nominative ending -ur is omitted, e.g. Þórður > Þórð (*Da*/*No*: Tord). *Sw* also treads an original path in poetry translation by printing the original Icelandic stanzas in a parallel column. *No*, in contrast, opts for comprehensibility and simplifies most of the poetic *kenningar*, whereas *Da* preserves them accompanied by extensive explanations. Concerning Norse loanwords – once the hallmark of saga translation – all three editions use them restrictively, and *Da* even admits more Latin-based loanwords than has been customary in this genre.

As for the three versions of Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu (GS), *Da* and *No* tend

to verbosity with app. 9% more words than *Ice* (in contrast to +3% in *Sw*), and especially in *No* this serves to enhance a certain colloquial tone. *Sw*, on the other hand, shortens and simplifies sentences by favouring main clauses with subject first, thus at times running the risk of syntactic monotony. It is furthermore suggested here, tentatively, that the differences in the three GS can be explained by different aims (and target groups?): A popular approach in *No*, a pedagogical zeal in *Da*, and a learned leaning in *Sw*.

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Kan fornisländskans *rúnar* betyda 'bokstäver'?

MIKAEL MALES

Det närmast förbehållslösa svaret på frågan i titeln har hittills varit 'ja'. Det mest välkända exemplet på denna betydelse återfinns i den Första grammatiska avhandlingen (ca 1150), där författaren argumenterar för att anpassa och utöka det latinska alfabetet för att uppnå ett mer grafo-fonematiskt precist skriftsystem som lämpar sig för fornisländskan. Han säger då till sin tänkta motpart att *eigi er þat rúnanna kostr þó at þú lesir vel eða ráðir vel at líkindum þar sem rúnarnar vísa óskýrt, heldr er þat þinn kostr* (Hreinn Benediktsson 1972: 214).[1] Enligt hittills existerande översättningar skulle detta betyda: 'det är inte bokstävernas förtjänst, utan snarare din egen, om du läser dem väl eller tolkar dem väl utifrån vad som är sannolikt i fall där bokstäverna ger oklart besked'.[2]

Om översättningen är riktig är detta den enda gång avhandlingens för-fattare använder *rúnar* för att beteckna latinska bokstäver. I det andra fall där han använder ordet betyder det sannolikt 'runor' (*rúnar* [*heita*] *mál-stafir* '[en typ av] bokstäver [heter] runor') (Hreinn Benediktsson 1972: 222). För bokstäver använder han annars alltid *stafir*, *málstafir* eller *bók-stafir*, och då det rör sig om en terminologiskt medveten författare som skriver en avhandling om ortografi vore det uppseendeväckande om han plötsligt bytte beteckning.

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[1] Citat återges med normaliserad ortografi.

[2] Den ende äldre forskare jag har funnit som uppenbarligen förstår *rúnar* här som 'runor' är Björn M. Ólsen, även om han inte ger en översättning av texten (Björn M. Ólsen 1883: 91–92). Också redaktörerna av *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog* tycks förstå passagen så (se nedan).

Om avhandlingens författare istället åsyftar runor skulle detta inte bara vara i enlighet med den stringens för vilken han har blivit så beundrad i modern forskning. Hans kritiska hållning skulle dessutom bli mer begriplig, och detta får sägas vara giltigt även om han måhända syftar på det medeltida, mer exakta runinventariet som var under utveckling vid denna tid, eftersom ristare ytterst sällan konsekvent utnyttjade dess fulla potential, och då vokallängd inte markerades (något som åtminstone författaren menade att latinsk skrift tillät) (om grafofonematisk korrespondens under denna tid, se exempelvis Spurkland 2000: 163–65). För en grammatiker med medvetenhet om ortografi och olika skriftsystem (han anför på korrekt vis grekiska i sin argumentation) torde runorna ha tett sig som mycket inexakta och kunnat fungera som ett utmärkt exempel för att få motparten att inse behovet av ett mer otvetydigt skriftsystem.

Den förste grammatikerns konsekventa bruk av terminologi och runinventariets karaktär stödjer alltså att *rúnar* i den Första grammatiska avhandlingen genomgående skall översättas med ’runor’. Detta medför inte bara en nyöversättning, utan ger oss också ett nytt och samtida vittnesmål till hur runorna uppfattades som skriftsystem; deras inexakta karaktär kunde utan vidare förutsättas vara känd av den tänkte antagonisten i avhandlingen. En äldre uppfattning om att runskrift för praktiskt bruk var så gott som okänd på Island före ca 1200 har redan blivit ifrågasatt, och referensen i den Första grammatiska avhandlingen understryker att denna åsikt bör revideras.[3]

Möjliga belägg på betydelsen ’bokstäver’

Finns det då överhuvud taget belägg för betydelsen ’(latinska) bokstäver’? De tre exempel som finns i *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog*s databas där en sådan betydelse kunde komma på fråga gäller skriftsystem andra än det latinska – såsom grekiska – eller inskriptioner på sten.[4] Endast i

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[3] Se Hagland (1989) och Þórgunnur Snædal (2011).

[4] Så i *Stefáns saga* (inskription på gravsten; det syriska språket har just nämts och tecknen kräver tolkning av en biskop (*en síðan réð Jóan episcopus rúnar*). Det tycks alltså röra sig om främmande skrift ur protagonisternas perspektiv) (de Leeuw van Weenen 1993: 95); *Klements saga* (inskription på gravsten) (Larsson 1885: 73); *Rómverja saga* (*ekki nam ek girðskar rúnar* ’jag lärde mig inte grekisk skrift’) (Meissner 1910: 52) (https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o65646, granskad 21 november 2020).

dessa fall måste betydelsen vara en annan än 'runor' i modern bemärkelse, och ordet synes då betyda antingen 'monumentalskrift för inskription (på sten)' eller 'främmande skrift'. Som beteckning för skrift tycks *rúnar* alltså ha kunnat ha en något vidare betydelse än 'runor', men betydelsen var då snarast 'andra skriftsystem/skrifttyper', nämligen det som inte var vanlig, latinsk bokskrift. Det bör nämnas att jag först genomförde denna undersökning innan *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog*s databas hade försetts med översättningar. Sedan dess har redaktörerna placerat såväl passagen från den Första grammatiska avhandlingen som de exempel som nämnts ovan under betydelsen "rune, skrifttegn, bogstav (andet end latinsk)", helt i enlighet med mina observationer. Den betydelse som översättarna av den Första grammatiska avhandlingen har valt synes sålunda vara just den betydelse som ordet var markerat för att inte ha.[5]

I prosatext finns inget som motsäger denna semantik. Två poetiska passager kräver dock en närmare dryftning. I *Hugsvinnsmál*, en 1200-talsöversättning av lärodikten *Disticha Catonis*, lyder första halvan av strof 12: *Bækr ok rúnir / kenn þú blíðliga / ger þú við góða vel* (Clunies Ross et al. 2007–, 7: 367–68) 'lär vänligt ut / böcker och runor / och gör väl mot de goda'. Här synes skolning i *grammatica* åsyftas, och detta samt kopplingen till böcker gör att det ligger nära till hands att här tolka *rúnir* (en yngre form av *rúnar*) som 'latinsk skrift'.[6] Den omfattande diskussionen av runor i den Tredje grammatiska avhandlingen – i en översättning av Priscianus *Institutiones* – visar dock att ingen motsättning behövde föreligga mellan studiet av runor och *grammatica*. Ett positivt indicium för att det faktiskt är runor som avses i *Hugsvinnsmál* finns i en liknande formulering i Rǫgnvaldr jarls *lausavísa* 1: *týnik trauðla rúnum / tíð's mér bók ok smíðir* (Clunies Ross et al. 2007–, 2: 576–77) 'jag glömmer knappast runor / jag är välbekant med böcker och hantverk'. Rǫgnvaldrs prestation

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[5] En ytterligare logisk möjlighet är att avhandlingens författare använder *rúnar* som ett överordnat begrepp 'skrifttecken' mot *stafir* 'skrifttecken specifika för ett språk'. Att så inte är fallet visas dock av avhandlingens början: *en af því at tungurnar eru [ó]líkar hver annarri* […] *þá þarf ólíka stafi í at hafa* […] (Hreinn Benediktsson 1972: 206) 'men eftersom språken är olika varandra […] är det nödvändingt att ha olika skrifttecken i dem […]' *Stafr* är alltså det överordnade begreppet, och det kan specificeras för de enskilda språken: […] *sem eigi ríta Grikkir látínustǫfum girzkuna ok eigi látínumenn girzkum stǫfum látínu* […] (Hreinn Benediktsson 1972: 206) '[…] liksom greker inte skriver grekiska med latinska bokstäver, eller latinarna latin med grekiska bokstäver […]'. Däremot kan det överordnade *stafr* i norrönt också användas också om runor (se Hreinn Benediktsson 1972: 52–53).

[6] Så tolkas ordet av Finnur Jónsson 1931: 473. Den nya utgåvan översätter dock med 'runes' (Clunies Ross et al. 2007–, 7: 367).

ligger alltså i att han behärskar *både* runor och latinsk skrift, och utifrån denna parallell är det rimligt att anta att detsamma åsyftas i *Hugsvinnsmál*. Däremot är den täta associationen mellan runor och latinsk skrift i sig av intresse. Detta styrker det intryck av bruket av runor som kan beläggas särskilt i norska inskrifter från ca 1200 och framåt; ristarna var ofta även boklärda och hade åtminstone grundläggande kunskaper i latin.[7]

Ett ord som aldrig har tolkats som 'bokstäver', men som likväl kunde föranleda en sådan tolkning, finns i *Sigrdrífumál* 19 (endast belagd i handskriften GKS 2367 4to, ca 1270). Strofen börjar: *Þat eru bókrúnar / þat eru bjargrúnar* […] 'Det är bokrunor / det är räddningsrunor […]'. Det synes sökt att tolka *bókrúnar* som något annat än skrifttecken i en bok, oavsett om det gäller runor eller latinsk skrift (runor ristade på bokträ har föreslagits; Finnur Jónsson 1931: 58). Som Aslak Liestøl för länge sedan konstaterade är det dock uppenbart att det här rör sig om ett skrivarfel; skrivaren har skrivit 'boc*runar*' för 'bot*runar*'. Denna iakttagelse stöds av två runinskrifter. En runkavle från Bergen (N B257) har en besvärjelse som börjar: **rist e͡k : bot:run͡ar : rist : e͡k biabh : run͡ar**, i normaliserad form (med rättning av felristningen **b** för **r**): *ríst ek bótrúnar / ríst ek bjargrúnar* 'jag ristar botrunor / jag ristar räddningsrunor' (Liestøl 1964: 41–46). Efter Liestøls tid har en besläktad svensk inskrift tillkommit. Kopparblecket ÖgNOR2001;32 Skänninge, kv. Abedissan (1000–1100-tal) har texten **luf-unarį…||…k butrunar**, och oavsett hur den saknade texten skall rekonstrueras torde det vara okontroversiellt att här läsa orden *lyfrúnar* 'läkerunor' och *bótrúnar* 'botrunor' (Källström 2007: 356).

c är det tecken man normalt skulle förvänta för /k/ vid denna tid. Det lilla *t* var å andra sidan intill förväxling likt *c* (se illustration i Liestøl 1964: 46). Med stöd i runinskrifterna är det därför möjligt att fastslå att ordet *bókrúnar* är resultatet av en felläsning, snarare än en muntlig variant – det var de två tecknen, inte de två ljuden, som var lätta att blanda samman. Ordet måste rimligtvis ha betytt något även för skrivaren, men vid en tid och på en plats där runor nyligen hade behandlats utförligt i bokform (i den Tredje grammatiska avhandlingen, ca 1250) finns det inget skäl att anta att skrivaren förstod något annat än 'runor i böcker'. Han hade inget skäl att omdefiniera eller ifrågasätta runbegreppet som sådant.

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[7] Se exempelvis Spurkland (2000: 193–96). Kanske blir kopplingen mellan inhemsk och latinsk lärdom ingenstans tydligare än på pinnen N B145, där en strof i *dróttkvætt*, och dessutom diktad med bara *aðalhendingar*, efterföljs av citatet *omnia vincit amor, et nos cedamus amori* 'kärleken övervinner allt, låt även oss ge efter för kärleken' från Vergilius tionde eklog.

Med dessa två exempel ur poesin faller de sista indicierna på den neutrala betydelsen 'bokstäver'. Denna betydelse tycks heller inte vara belagd i fornsvenskan, eller i de två andra forngermanska språk där ordet används om någon form av skrifttecken.[8] I den största fornengelska ordboken, Bosworth-Toller (1898), anges först båda betydelserna – 'a rune, a letter' – men det ges inga översättningar till de enskilda exemplen. De referenser som anförs översätts bäst med 'runor', utom i de fall som troligen felaktigt placerats under denna rubrik, men som snarare borde förstås som 'råd'.[9] Bosworth-Toller hänvisar till Graffs massiva *Althochdeutscher Sprach-schatz* där, som ofta i äldre ordböcker, ordets olika grundbetydelser anges på latin, och läsaren får veta att fornhögtyskans *rúna* kan betyda *litera*, alltså 'bokstav'.[10] Alla Graffs exempel, i likhet med Bosworth-Tollers, stödjer dock en betydelse 'runa', eller möjligen, som i norrönt 'den andra (hemlighetsfulla/magiska/avvikande) skriften'.

Den neutrala betydelsens bakgrund

Graffs *Althochdeutscher Sprachschatz* kan troligen ge en fingervisning om hur den neutrala betydelsen 'bokstav' har hamnat i ordböcker över forngermanska språk. Latinet har aldrig haft ett eget ord för 'runor', något som tydligt visas av att när Venantius Fortunatus (500-tal) på latin ville uttrycka den specifika betydelsen 'runa' var han tvungen att låna in detta ord.[11] Ett gångbart latinskt ord blev det dock aldrig, och i äldre ordböcker och översättningar var den naturliga översättningen därför *litera*. Allteftersom folkspråklig filologi åter blev en folkspråklig verksamhet återfördes de gamla översättningarna och definitionerna från latinet till språk som fortfarande, liksom under medeltiden, hade en distinktion mellan 'bokstäver' och 'runor'. De anförda textställena gjorde det uppenbart att betydelsen 'runor' var central, och ordboksförfattarna angav därför denna, men betydelsen av *litera* förblir likväl 'bokstav', och denna översättning

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[8] Se Söderwall (1884–1918, 2: 269) och Söderwall, Supplement (1953–73, 2: 657).

[9] Så Layamons *Brut*, *Ormulum* och *The Ancren Riwle* (Bosworth & Toller 1898: 804)

[10] Graff (1834–42, 2: 523–25). Schade (1882, 2: 729) definierar *rúna* – i betydelsen 'skrift-tecken' – bara som *altgermanischer Buchstabe*, i enlighet med argumentet i denna artikel. Den stora *Althochdeutsches Wörterbuch*, utg. Grosse (1952–), har ännu inte kommit till *r*.

[11] Carm. vii. 18, 19: *barbara fraxineis pingatur runa tabellis* 'må de barbariska runorna bli målade på tavlor av askträ'.

följde därför med in i ordböcker över medeltida folkspråk. I Bosworth-Tollers fall kan den möjligen vara direkt avhängig av Graff. I fråga om den Första grammatiska avhandlingen har den arnamagnæanska utgåvan varit tongivande, och där översätts *rúnar* med *litterae* och *characteres* (Jón Sigurðsson et al. 1848–80, 2: 17, 23).

Den förste grammatikern och isländska hållningar till runor

Den neutrala betydelsen 'bokstav' har alltså lite med medeltiden och mycket med modern forskningshistoria och latinsk semantik att göra. Denna rättelse ger en säkrare läsning av ett antal textställen och är relevant för flera fornspråk. Etableringen av en riktig läsning av passagen i den Första grammatiska avhandlingen gör det också möjligt att följa en utveckling i attityden till runor hos tre isländska författare (en mer fullständig redogörelse för denna utveckling återfinns i Males 2016). Den förste grammatikern finner runt 1150 detta skriftsystem alltför inexakt som bas för en lärd bokkultur, men kan samtidigt förutsätta så god kännedom hos läsaren om svårigheterna med att tolka runor att han inte närmare behöver förklara vari dessa svårigheter ligger: 'det är inte runornas förtjänst, utan snarare din egen, om du läser dem väl eller tolkar dem väl utifrån vad som är sannolikt i fall där runorna ger oklart besked'. I det följande ger jag ett kort sammandrag av relevanta diskussioner från Males (2016, 2020), för att visa hur en korrekt semantisk analys av passagen i den Första grammatiska avhandlingen öppnar för en förståelse av skiftande attityder gentemot runor bland isländska lärda i perioden ca 1150–1350.

　　Den förste grammatikern var aktiv i en tid då fundamenten för en lärd bokkultur lades. Hans diskussion är främst av pragmatisk karaktär, även om hans ortografiska system förblev outnyttjat. 100 år senare hade den litterära självmedvetenheten vaknat, och historisk särart hade blivit en tillgång i uppbyggnaden av en isländsk och nordisk identitet. Nu var strategin den motsatta. När Óláfr Þórðarson hvítaskáld översatte Priscianus *Institutiones* i den Tredje grammatiska avhandlingen (ca 1250) ersatte han latinska bokstäver med runor. Han jämförde också runor med andra skriftsystem, och hans val är talande: När han vill belysa enskilda drag hos runorna jämför han dem med latinsk skrift, men när han argumenterar för hur förträffliga de är åberopar han grekiska och

hebreiska. Han säger exempelvis att runorna är sexton, precis som hos
de äldsta grekerna, och att när runmästarna behövde en runa för /y/ tog
de den från hebreiska – en förklaring som tycks vara grundad på den
isländska formen på runan, ↕, till skillnad från den norska �አ eller andra
varianter (Males 2020: 183). Gång på gång undlåter han också att nämna
olikheter mellan runor och latinsk skrift som kunde föranleda tvivel om
runornas ypperlighet. Läsaren skall av detta förstå att runorna är lika
bra som – och mer ursprungliga än – sina latinska motsvarigheter. På
så vis gör han för runor vad han i den andra delen av avhandlingen gör
för inhemsk poesi. Där påstår han att västnordisk diktning kom från
Troja utan översättning, medan romarna fick nöja sig med översättningar
gjorda i Aten. Därefter byter han ut alla latinska poetiska exempel i den
efterföljande texten – en översättning av Donatus *Barbarismus* – mot
isländska strofer, och återställer på så vis avhandlingen till den form den
borde ha haft om den hade varit författad i Troja. I sitt bruk av runor och
poesi är den Tredje grammatiska avhandlingen kanske det mest vältaliga
vittnet till det isländska 1200-talets uppbyggnad av en ärbar forntid, ett
projekt som i sin iver och sina ambitioner närmast kan beskrivas som
protogöticistisk.

Runt 1350 hade situationen på Island åter förändrats, och det var nu
oftare munkar än lärda hövdingar med världsliga intressen som var ton-
givande för den litterära produktionen. Litteraturen med alla dess grenar
var sedan länge etablerad och behövde inte längre försvaras i förhållande
till latinet. Arbetet med att avskriva den Tredje grammatiska avhandlingen
föranledde vid denna tid en anonym munk att sammanfatta sina intryck av
texten. Han skriver bland annat:

> Skal yðr sýna hinn fyrsta letrshátt svá ritinn eptir sextán stafa stafrófi í danskri
> tungu, eptir því sem Þóroddr rúnameistari ok Ari prestr hinn fróði hafa sett í
> móti látínumanna stafrófi, er meistari Priscianus hefir sett. Hafa þeir því fleiri
> hljóðsgreinir með hverjum raddarstaf sem þessi er tungan fátalaðri, svá at þat
> má undirstanda með hljóði umbeygilegu, hvǫssu ok sljófu, svá at einnar tíðar
> fall væri í hváru tveggja stafrófi, til þess at skáldin mætti þá mjúkara kveða
> eptir nýfundinni letrlist […] (Björn M. Ólsen 1884: 154–55)

> 'Nu skall ni få se det första sättet att skriva, upptecknat enligt det sexton-
> staviga alfabetet på danska [= norrönt], enligt det som runmästaren Þóroddr
> och prästen Ari har fastställt gentemot de latintalandes alfabet, som mäster
> Priscianus har fastställt. De [runorna] har flera accenter för varje vokal i den
> mån som detta språk [norrönt] har färre ljud, så att man kan förstå det [en
> vokal] med cirkumflex eller akut eller grav accent, så att det blir en och samma

accent i båda alfabeten, för att poeterna skulle kunna framföra [sina dikter]
mjukare enligt den nyfunna bokstavskonsten […]'.[12]

Påståendet att norrönt har färre vokalljud än latin kan framstå som för-
vånande, men är grundat på en uppfattning om att varje latinsk vokal
hade en av tre accenter, så att deras antal därigenom tredubblades, och på
en sammanblanding av tecken och ljud som var vanlig under medeltiden.
Det som är avgörande i detta sammanhang är dock att denne munk helt
bortser från Óláfrs huvudsakliga budskap, nämligen att runorna är äldre
än latinsk skrift och överlag förträffliga. I fråga om runornas antal hän-
visar vår munk inte till de äldsta grekerna, utan till två auktoriteter från
1100-talet. Vad gäller hans något oklara tankar om accenter är åtminstone
så mycket tydligt han menar att en överföring av accenter från latinsk
skrift till runor innebär en uppgradering av runskriften som leder till att
poeterna kan dikta mer behagligt (förvirringen mellan tecken och ljud
är här fullständig). Runskriften är alltså dels ung och kan dels förbättras
genom anpassning till latin. Detta är raka motsatsen till vad Óláfr påstår.
Detsamma gäller när vår munk något tidigare hänvisar till Óláfrs poetik.
Här finns ingen trojansk ursprunglighet, utan tvärtom *ný skáld og fræði-
menn* 'nya diktare och lärda' som korrigerar de äldre diktarnas villfarelser.
Trots att han visar stor uppskattning för Óláfrs avhandling har han

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[12] Översättningen av denna passage bjuder på åtskilliga svårigheter. En av dessa har föranlett
utgivaren att rätta 'fátalaðri' (med färre ljud) till 'fástafaðri' (med färre bokstäver), eftersom
norrönt hade fler vokaler än latin (Björn M. Ólsen (utg.) 1884: 154, 306; se diskussion i Fritz-
ner 1883–96, 1: 395; men rättelsen godtas i 4: 93). Denna passage grundar sig dock på den
Tredje grammatiska avhandlingen, och olikheten i antal vokalfonem i de två språken hör till
de skillnader som undertrycks i den texten. Vidare är rättelsen svår att försvara på grund av att
texten är samtida eller nästan samtida med handskriften, att rättelsen inte motiveras av något
vanligt skrivarfel och att den resulterar i ett hapax legomenon (Males 2013: 41–53, 58). Det vår
munk menar med 'färre ljud' är istället att runorna saknar accenter, enligt vad han just har sagt.
En annan komplikation är uttrycket *einnar tíðar fall*, som bokstavligen betyder 'en tids fall'
och här har översatts med 'en och samma accent'. Bakgrunden till detta uttryck är komplex,
eftersom dess innebörd och dess form inte kommer från samma text. Innebörden tycks komma
från det lika men inte identiska *tíðar tilfelli* 'tidens fall' som återfinns i avsnittet om accent i den
Tredje grammatiska avhandlingen, men som där nämns som en sidokommentar om kvantitet
(Björn M. Ólsen 1884: 55–56). Dess placering i kapitlet om accent verkar ha föranlett vår
munk att använda *tíðar fall* för att beteckna accent. I sin faktiska språkliga realisering härrör
dock uttrycket *einnar tíðar fall* från en annan text som han arbetade med, nämligen *Háttatal*
10: *Í þeima hætti skal velja saman þau orðtǫk er ólíkust sé at greina ok hafi þó einnar tíðar fall
bæði orð ef vel skal vera* ('i detta versmått [*refhvǫrf*] skall man sätta samman de uttryck som
skiljer sig mest i betydelse men som, om det är väl utfört, har samma kvantitet [alltså upptar
samma antal metriska positioner]') (Faulkes 2007: 11).

härigenom motsagt hela dess andemening – dess högstämda chauvinism klingade ohörd för en som var trygg i sin egen textkultur.

Denna kronologiska följd av isländska attityder till runor är ett värde-fullt och sällsynt komplement till studiet av faktiska inskrifter. Utrens-ningen av betydelsen 'bokstav' är alltså inte bara av lexikografiskt och forskningshistoriskt intresse, utan ger oss också tillgång till omdömen om runor som fälldes av dem som under högmedeltiden var Nordens främsta teoretiker kring det egna språket och skriften.

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Abstract

This article argues that Old Norse *rúnar* cannot have the unqualified meaning 'letters', but only 'runes' or, rarely, 'another type of script than the ordinary'. The meaning 'letters' in dictionaries and translations is derived from Latin, which has no word for 'runes', and where the natural translation of *rúnar* is therefore *litterae* 'letters'. When Latin translations were subsequently reverted into the vernacular, the additional meaning 'letters' entered scholarly literature on the subject. This is true not only of Old Norse, but also of Old English and Old High German. This observation can provide us with more secure readings of some textual passages and, more importantly, allows us to follow the expression of attitudes towards runes in Iceland in the period c. 1150–1350.

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Recension

Karl G. Johansson och Elise Kleivane (red.). *Speculum septentrionale*. *Konungs skuggsjá and the European Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*. Bibliotheca Nordica 10. Oslo: Novus forlag, 2018. 328 s.

Under 2018 utkom boken Speculum septentrionale. Konungs skuggsjá and the Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, redigerad av Karl G. Johansson och Elise Kleivane. Det är en artikelsamling med fokus på Konungs skuggsjá. Bakgrunden till artikelsamlingen är en föreläsningsserie vid Universitetet i Oslo om encyklopedisk litteratur under 1200-talet, följd av en konferens om Konungs skuggsjá. Boken består till största delen av bidrag från dessa evenemang, men ytterligare artiklar har lagts till dessa. Artiklarna är ämnesmässigt spridda, från beskrivningar och diskussioner av handskrifterna med Konungs skuggsjá till undersökningar ur ett historiskt och idéhistoriskt perspektiv. Tillsammans ger dessa artiklar en god överblick över forskningsläget kring detta verk. I denna recension ges inledningsvis en kortfattad sammanfattning av samtliga artiklar som ingår i boken, och därefter behandlas tre av dessa mer utförligt.

I Karl G. Johanssons och Elise Kleivanes inledande uppsats *Konungs skuggsjá* and the Interplay between Universal and Particular, ges en bred introduktion till detta verk. Här diskuteras handskriftsförhållanden, verkets europeiska bakgrund och liknande. Denna artikel behandlas utförligare nedan. Mary Franklin-Browns artikel, Wonders at the End of the World: The Time of Marvels in Gerald of Wales's *Topographia Hibernica*, behandlar som titeln antyder Gerald of Wales' beskrivning av Irland, och hur de märkligheter man menade fanns där placeras in i en europeisk lärdomskontext. Alfred Hiatt, *Quasi in Speculo*: Maps and Geographical

Thought in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, diskuterar geografiskt tänkande och världsbilden under medeltiden. Dale Kedwards skriver i The World Image of the *Konungs skuggsjá* om den världsbild som beskrivs i Konungs skuggsjá. Han behandlar bl.a. de klimatzoner som man räknade med i medeltidens världsbild, och hur Norden placerades in i denna kontext. Hanteringen av Grönland i detta sammanhang ges särskild uppmärksamhet. Karl G. Johansson behandlar de äldsta handskrifterna med Konungs skuggsjá i artikeln *Konungs skuggsjá* and the Earliest Fragments – A Key to New Insights into Norwegian Literate Culture. Denna artikel behandlas utförligare nedan. Elise Kleivanes bidrag heter There is More to *Stjórn* than Biblical Translation. Även denna behandlas utförligare nedan.

Sverrir Jakobsson skriver i artikeln Prester John at the Norwegian Court: The Learned Discourse about the Indies in Old Norse Sources om bilden av Indien i det medeltida Västnorden. Indien sågs som en plats för stora rikedomar, monster, ett östligt kristet kungadöme (Johannes prästen) och till och med själva Paradiset. Utifrån huvudsakligen det irländska verket De duodecim abusiuis saeculi skriver Elizabeth Boyle om kungateori under medeltiden. Artikeln heter Biblical Kings and Kingship Theory in Medieval Ireland and Norway. Bland annat beskrivs hur kung David och Kyros II ("den store") används som exempel i fråga om kungars agerande. I artikeln Composition and Social Structure in *Konungs skuggsjá* diskuterar Sverre Bagge den bild av samhället som ges i Konungs skuggsjá. Alessia Bauer bidrar med artikeln Encyclopaedic Tendencies and the Medieval Educational Programme: The Merchant's Chapter of *Konungs skuggsjá*. Här behandlas avsnittet om handelsmannen, och de encyklopediska tendenser som återfinns där. Hon framhåller att författaren av Konungs skuggsjá här tar upp flera aspekter som faller inom medeltidens utbildningsprogram, trivium och quadrivium, även om det inte görs på ett sätt som fullt ut svarar mot utbildningsprogrammet. Hans Jacob Orning diskuterar i artikeln The *Konungs skuggsjá* and the Emergence of a New Elite in Thirteenth-Century Norway bl.a. hur Konungs skuggsjá introducerar och behandlar konceptet *hæverska*, och hur detta representerade något nytt i tidens samhälle.

Karl G. Johanssons och Elise Kleivanes inledande uppsats, *Konungs skuggsjá* and the Interplay between Universal and Particular, är som nämnts en introduktion till Konungs skuggsjá. Den fungerar som en pedagogiskt väl utformad introduktion till de mer detaljerade studier som följer. Johansson och Kleivane diskuterar bl.a. den tredelning som ofta

har gjorts av detta verk, i en del om handelsmannen, en om hirdmannen och en om kungen. Det finns också en prolog, men den är enbart bevarad i yngre isländska handskrifter. Johansson och Kleivane poängterar dock att den nämnda tredelningen av innehållet inte finns tydligt markerad i huvudhandskriften, AM 243 b α fol. Den initial som inleder kungadelen har en storlek av tre rader, och sådana initialer finns det flera av, utan att de markerar ett nytt avgränsat innehåll. Den kodikologiska gränsen mellan hirdmansdelen och kungadelen är därmed inte lika tydlig som den mellan exempelvis köpmansdelen och hirdmansdelen, och inte heller textmässigt finns en lika tydlig avgränsning. Johansson och Kleivane menar att man istället bör räkna med en tvådelning av innehållet i Konungs skuggsjá. De menar också att det inte finns något innehållsligt hinder till att prologen, bevarad i yngre handskrifter, kan ha funnits med i det ursprungliga verket. Det är istället det faktum att den har bevarats i yngre handskrifter som gör att man skulle kunna anta att den är yngre.

Johansson och Kleivane sätter också in Konungs skuggsjá i ett europeiskt genreperspektiv. Detta verk knyter an till genren *Fürstenspiegel/ Mirror of Princes*, med flera representanter på europeisk botten. Ett sådant exempel är Policraticus (1159) av John of Salisbury. Samtidigt framhålls att Konungs skuggsjá inte är formad efter en enskild förebild, utan den utgör en kombination av internationell och inhemsk lärdom. Man konstaterar vidare att författaren är anonym, och inte heller går det att bestämma exakt när verket har tillkommit. Johansson och Kleivane ger också en inspirerande översikt, utifrån aktuell forskning, över den litterära miljön i Norge under 1200-talet, dvs. den runt Hákon Hákonarson, hans barn och barnbarn, som genererade en rik översättningsverksamhet av verk på latin, franska och tyska. Många av dessa verk är bevarade i yngre, isländska handskrifter, men Konungs skuggsjá, tillsammans med t.ex. Strengleikar, finns bevarad i handskrifter från 1200-talet.

Avslutningsvis ger Johansson och Kleivane en beskrivning av de handskrifter som innehåller Konungs skuggsjá, och Johansson gör sedan en fördjupad granskning av de äldsta fragmenten (se nedan). De redogör också för de utgåvor av Konungs skuggsjá som finns.

Karl G. Johansson bidrar som nämnts också med artikeln *Konungs skuggsjá* and the Earliest Fragments – A Key to New Insights into Norwegian Literate Culture. Hans huvudsyfte är att undersöka vilken information dessa fragment ger om den tidiga spridningen av Konungs skuggsjá, och om de miljöer där textvittnena skrevs ned. Som huvudhandskrift för Konungs skuggsjá framhålls ofta AM 243 b α fol., och dess position

som huvudhandskrift kommer bl.a. av att den är det mest omfattande textvittnet, medan de övriga tidiga textvittnena är fragment. Fragmenten som behandlas är följande: NRA 58 A, NRA 58 B och NRA 58 C, varav den sistnämnda från början utgjorde en del av samma handskrift som NKS 235 g 4to. En viktig utgångspunkt för Johanssons artikel är Ludvig Holm-Olsens undersökning av Konungs skuggsjá (1952, Håndskriftene av Konungs skuggsjá; Bibliotheca Arnamagnæanæ 13), och hans stemma för handskrifterna återges. Den isländska traditionen, som ligger inom den s.k. A-gruppen hos Holm-Olsen, lämnas därhän i artikeln, och fokus ligger på det norska handskriftsunderlaget. Johansson understryker att det stemma Holm-Olsen ställer upp förutsätter en talrik reproduktion av Konungs skuggsjá under en relativt kort period efter verkets antagna tillkomst.

Johansson beskriver handskrifterna kodikologiskt och paleografiskt, och diskuterar proveniensfrågan. Fragmentet NRA 58 A, som i stemmat utgör en egen gren, har sannolikt tillkommit i sydvästra Norge, eventuellt nära Bergen. Fragmentet NRA 58 B är det enda textvittnet av de behandlade som tillhör Holm-Olsens A-grupp (i övrigt isländska handskrifter). Detta textvittne ska ha skrivits av en norsk skrivare, även om texten i övrigt knyter an till den isländska traditionen. Johansson nämner möjligheten att detta textvittne utgör utgångspunkten för den isländska grenen i Konungs skuggsjá-traditionen. Fragmentet NRA 58 C/NKS 235 g 4to är textmässigt nära kopplat till huvudhandskriften AM 243 b α fol. I sitt stemma anger Holm-Olsen att AM 243 b α fol. är en avskrift av NRA 58 C/NKS 235 g 4to. De visar också upp kodikologiska och paleografiska likheter, och troligtvis har de tillkommit i samma miljö. De två skrivarhänder som har producerat NRA 58 C/NKS 235 g 4to visar dock upp östnorska drag, medan skrivarhanden i AM 243 b α fol. har sydvästliga drag. Johansson konstaterar att de äldsta textvittnena har utgjort prakthandskrifter, och att detta tyder på att Konungs skuggsjá åtnjöt hög prestige.

Johanssons diskussion av de aktuella textvittnena är god syntes av det som har skrivits tidigare, och han gör flera intressanta nya observationer. Det jag dock saknar i beskrivningarna och diskussionerna av paleografi och kodikologi är bilder och illustrationer. Sådana är till stor hjälp för läsaren när det gäller att ta ställning till likheter och skillnader i fråga om skrivteckens utformning.

I Elise Kleivanes artikel There is More to *Stjórn* than Biblical Translation ligger fokus på den s.k. Stjórn 3. Stjórn 3 är en översättning av Josua, Domarboken, Rut, 1 Samuelsboken, 2 Samuelsboken, 1 Kungaboken och 2 Kungaboken. Texten följer Vulgata rätt nära. Stjórn 1 är en

kommenterad översättning av 1 Mosebok och 2 Mosebok fram till kap. 18. Kommentarerna, huvudsakligen från Speculum historiale och Historia scholastica, gör att texten är avsevärt längre än Vulgata. Stjórn 2 är en kortfattad återgivning av delar av återstoden av Pentateuken. Slutligen finns också en Stjórn 4, som utgörs av en avvikande version av Josua i förhållande till den som föreligger i Stjórn 3.

Kleivane påpekar att den bild man kan få i utgåvor av Stjórn (t.ex. den av C. R. Unger från 1862 eller den av Reidar Astås från 2009), dvs. att det är fråga om ett sammanhållet verk från 1 Mosebok till 2 Kungaboken, inte stämmer överens med hur texterna är utformade. Stjórn 1, 2 och 3 är tre skilda verk med olika funktioner, där de norröna texterna förhåller sig på olika sätt till Vulgata. Kleivane karaktäriserar Stjórn 1 som en världshistoria *ante legem*, dvs. innan Moses får lagen vid Sinai. (Stjórn 1 slutar som nämnts i 2 Mosebok, kap. 18.) Stjórn 3 beskriver Kleivane som en kungaspegel, med Saul, David och Salomo som centrala gestalter. Hon framhåller också att Stjórn 3 fungerar väl som ett autonomt verk, och att det inte bara är tänkbart som en fortsättning på Pentateuken. Kleivane nämner att Stjórn 1 inte finns bevarad i norska handskrifter, utan endast i isländska, medan Stjórn 3 finns bevarad i fragment med åtminstone möjlig norsk proveniens. Prologen sätter in Stjórn 1 i en norsk kontext, med kung Hákon Magnússon som initiativtagare, men Kleivane påpekar att texten kan ha tillkommit antingen i Norge eller på Island.

Stjórn 2 finns bara i ett textvittne, nämligen ett lägg inlagt i AM 226 fol. Kleivane nämner förslaget att Stjórn 2 kan ha tillkommit för att fylla luckan mellan Stjórn 1 och Stjórn 3, i syfte att infogas i AM 226 fol.

Tidigare forskning har tolkat slutet på Stjórn 1 i 2 Mosebok 18 som att verket är oavslutat. Kleivane tar även upp den tråden, och argumenterar för att den faktiskt kan vara komplett som den är. Om syftet med Stjórn 1 är att vara en världshistoria *ante legem* är återstoden av Pentateuken av mindre relevans. Dessutom kan man ha uppfattat att lagen, som får ett stort utrymme i återstoden av Pentateuken, var av mindre vikt i medeltidens Skandinavien, där man levde *sub gratia*. Kleivane framhåller också att den fornsvenska Pentateukparafrasen, en parafraserande översättning av Moseböckerna, följer samma mönster som Stjórn 1 och 2: en rikt kommenterad text i 1 Mosebok och inledningen av 2 Mosebok, medan återstoden av Pentateuken är kraftigt förkortad. Hon menar att det inte behöver bero på direkt påverkan mellan de två verken, utan på att man var och en för sig har behandlat de olika delarna av Pentateuken på samma sätt. Kleivanes tolkning av Stjórn 2 är att den är ett utslag av en

senmedeltida syn på Bibeln som en mer fixerad text, och att den är en del av den tendens som ledde till fullständiga biblar på folkspråk under senmedeltiden i t.ex. Tyskland, Frankrike och England.

Även den medeltida danska bibelöversättningen tas upp, vilken börjar på 1 Mosebok och slutar med 2 Kungaboken 23:18, dvs. ungefär där Stjórn 3 slutar. Den danska översättningen skiljer sig från Stjórn 1 och inledningen av Pentateukparafrasen i det att den är en textnära översättning av Vulgata, utan tillägg.

Kleivanes artikel är ett intressant bidrag till forskningen om den medeltida bibelöversättningen i Norden. Hon visar upp en stor beläsenhet på området, och hon ger en välformulerad sammanfattning av forskningsläget, och bidrar med viktig ny kunskap på området. Viktiga exempel på det senare gäller frågan om autonomin hos Stjórn 3, och funktionen hos Stjórn 2.

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