

On the Receiving End

The Role of Scholarship, Memory, and Genre
in Constructing *Ljósvetninga saga*

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Abstract

Ljósvetninga saga takes place in Northern Iceland during the tenth and eleventh centuries and focuses on the political maneuverings of the chieftain Guðmundr inn ríki Eyjólfsson and his son Eyjólfur. Most of the academic debate surrounding *Ljósvetninga saga* has focused on the issue of its origins. This saga, most likely written in the thirteenth century, is atypical in that it has two separate redactions that offer highly divergent information and narratives in several segments, dividing the saga between the A-redaction, based on the late fourteenth–early fifteenth-century manuscript AM 561 4to, and the C-redaction, based on the mid-fifteenth-century manuscript AM 162 c fol. and its approximately fifty post-medieval paper copies. The divergent redactions are the source of much speculation about the text's origins, split between an interpretation of oral composition, commonly referred to as Freeprose, and one of written composition, commonly referred to as Bookprose. These two understandings of the saga are also tied to two different editions of the saga, which have been alternately used to elevate one redaction over the other. Theodore Andersson's attempt to shift the debate toward a compromise between Freeprose and Bookprose has only been partially successful, due, among other reasons, to his continued elevation of one redaction (the C-redaction). This thesis approaches both redactions as independent, internally-coherent texts rather than stressing their literary relationship. The thesis deals with its primary question: *How did the reception of Ljósvetninga saga influence its construction?* It shows that *Ljósvetninga saga* has been constantly rewritten over time by its oral performers, its literary authors, its scribes, its publishers, and its scholars.

In the introduction, the thesis establishes its material philology approach, presents its assumptions about medieval authorship and intentionality, and argues for the use of the paper manuscript AM 485 4to as the

base manuscript for its treatment of C-redaction. The scholarly debate about the saga is presented with special attention paid to matters of origins and dating, examining *Ljósvetninga saga*'s relationship with *Brennu-Njáls saga*, and what is gained from a literary connection between the two. A literary interpretation of both redactions as texts that have their own intrinsic value is provided, showing how each of these texts creates meaning using internal connections, including the C-redaction's *þættir*. *Ljósvetninga saga* is used as a tool to discuss the role of cultural memory in composition and interpretation, with a stress on the scholar Barði Guðmundsson, AM 162 c fol.'s fifteenth-century scribe Ólafur Loftsson, and AM 561 4to's hypothetical fourteenth-century context. The thesis offers a synchronic and a diachronic reading: the first treats memory as a template for events and people contemporaneous with the author, whereas the second acknowledges both past and present as significant for interpretation. The thesis also examines *Ljósvetninga saga* in its generic context, questioning and expanding the definition of the *Íslendingasögur* (Sagas of Early Icelanders) category, and rejecting the usefulness of the term 'post-classical' *Íslendingasögur* altogether. Using Rick Altman's concept of generic crossroads, the thesis analyses both redactions' manuscripts' approach to the issue of power.

This thesis reveals how scholarly preconceptions guided the reception of a specific saga, *Ljósvetninga saga*, and contributes to a wider understanding of how saga, Old Norse, medieval, and general literature are each constantly changing and unstable, both in their preservation, and in the ways they are presented to the general public and scholarly community.

Útdráttur

Ljósvetninga saga gerist á Norðurlandi á tíundu og elleftu öld og fjallar fyrst og fremst um pólitískar fléttur höfðingjans Guðmundar hins ríka Eyjólfs-sonar og sonar hans Eyjólfs. Fræðileg umræða um *Ljósvetninga sögu* hefur öðru fremur einblínt á uppruna hennar. Sagan, sem talin er rituð á þrettánda öld, er óvenjuleg að því leyti að hún er varðveitt í tveim gerðum sem mjög eru frábrugðnar um ýmis atriði og atburði. Þannig skiptist sagan í A-gerð, sem byggð er á handritinu AM 561 4to frá seinni hluta fjórtánda aldar eða upphafi þeirrar fimmtánda, og í C-gerð, sem byggð er á handritinu AM 162 c fol. frá miðri fimmtánda öld og um það bil fimmtíu pappír safritum sem rituð eru eftir siðbreytingu. Hinar frábrugðnu gerðir sögunnar hafa orðið tilefni til mikilla vangaveltna um uppruna sögunnar og skiptar skoðanir þar um. Ein skoðun er sú að sagan sé upprunnin í munnlegri geymd og er kennd við skóla sagnfestukenningarinnar, en önnur skoðun er sú að sagan sé frumsamin á bókfell og er hún kennd við bókfestukenninguna. Sá ólíki skilningur sem lagður er í söguna út frá þessum tveim meginkenningum tengjast sömuleiðis tveim ólíkum fræðilegum útgáfum á sögunni, sem hvor um sig hafa verið notaðar sem rök fyrir gildi annarrar gerðarinnar fram yfir hina. Tilraun Theodore Andersson til að setta umræðuna og fara bil beggja kenninga hefur ekki tekist nema að hluta til, meðal annars vegna þeirrar óbilandi afstöðu sem hann tekur með C-gerð sögunnar. Í þessari ritgerð verður litið svo á að báðar gerðir sögunnar séu sjálfstæðir og sjálfum sér samkvæmir textar fremur en að bókmenntaleg tengsl þeirra verði í forgrunni. Lykilspurningin sem ritgerðinni er ætlað að svara er: *Hvaða áhrif höfðu viðtökur Ljósvetninga sögu áhrif á samsetningu hennar?* Hér verður sýnt að *Ljósvetninga saga* hefur stöðugt verið endursamin hvort heldur sem er í munnlegum flutningi, af bóklegum höfundum hennar, handritaskrifurum, útgefendum og fræðimönnum.

Aðferðir efnislegrar textafræði eru grundvöllur rannsóknarinnar. Í inngangi eru kynntar forsendur rannsóknarinnar er varða höfunda á miðöldum og bókmenntalegan atbeina þeirra, og rök eru færð fyrir því að pappírshandritið AM 485 4to sé grundvallarhandrit að C-gerðinni. Áhersla verður lögð á þá fræðilegu umræðu um söguna sem hefur að gera með uppruna hennar og aldur. Þar með verða tengsl *Ljósvetninga sögu* við *Brennu-Njáls sögu* skoðuð og hvað samband þessara texta getur sagt okkur. Báðar gerðir sögunnar eru greindar með aðferðum bókmenntafræði enda eru þær sjálfstæðar gerðir sem hvor hefur gildi í sjálfri sér, og það er sýnt hvernig merkingarsköpun hvors texta hangir saman við innbyrðis tengingar, þar með talið þætti C-gerðarinnar. *Ljósvetninga saga* er ennfremur notuð sem rammi um umræðu um hlutverk menningarminnis í samsetningu og túlkun sögunnar, með áherslu á fræðileg skrif Barða Guðmundssonar, skrifara fimmtánda aldar handritsins AM 162 c fol., og ætlað fjórtánda aldar samhengi handritsins AM 561 4to. Ritgerðin býður hvort tveggja upp á samtímalegan og sögulegan lestur á sögunni; hinn fyrri lítur á minni sem skapalón fyrir notkun atburða og persóna samtíða höfundinum, meðan hinn síðari viðurkennir að hvort tveggja fortíð og nútíð skipta máli fyrir túlkun texta. Ritgerðin kannar einnig bókmenntagrein *Ljósvetninga sögu* og færir fram efasemdir um og útvíkkun á skilgreiningu Íslendingasagna, og hafnar jafnframt alfarið hugtakinu ‘unglegar’ eða ‘póstklassískar’ Íslendingasögur. Með stuðningi í hugtaki Rick Altman ‘vegamót bókmenntagreina’ (e. generic crossroads) er ráðist í greiningu á nálgun handrita beggja gerða sögunnar á völd.

Ritgerðin leiðir í ljós hvernig fyrirframgefnar ályktanir fræðimanna hafa haft áhrif á viðtökur *Ljósvetninga sögu*. Hún er framlag til aukins skilnings á því hvernig forníslenskar sögur og bókmenntir almennt eru stöðugt breytingum háðar, bæði hvað geymd þeirra snertir og hvernig þær eru kynntar almenningi og fræðasamfélaginu.

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Prologue: Lentils and Lenses–Intent, Audience, and Genre

The Saga of the People of Ljosavatn was written late in the 13th century and takes place around the Eyjafjord district, North Iceland, from about 990-1060. Dealing with the common theme of regional feuds and disputes, the saga contains a number of memorable scenes, characters, and dialogues. The saga contains three independent tales (short accounts of Icelanders): The Tale of Sorli, The Tale of Ofeyg and The Tale of Vodu-Brand, which were later added to the saga. As a whole, the saga itself appears more as a collection of a number of independent oral tales than a fully constructed saga.¹

Many family sagas break down into more or less independent parts or episodes, as for example *Ljósvefninga saga*, and this too is no compositional device, but is forced upon the saga by its material, i. e. ultimately by reality.²

In the midst of finishing up this thesis, I sat with a good friend for coffee. She told me that she had recently heard someone suggest that the *Íslendingasögur*, the Sagas of the Early Icelanders, were nothing but tabloid press: the sex lives of the rich and famous, who killed who, who hated who. Maybe these sagas were just thrown together with no thought behind

¹ Ellert B. Magnússon, *Quotes and passages from the Icelandic sagas*, 36.

² M. I. Steblin-Kamenskii, *The Saga Mind*, 79.

them, just like tabloids, and the only reason we find meaning in them is because we stare at them for long enough until we find patterns. She reminded me of a recent event in which we were both staring at lentils spinning around in a water pot, and how we both found this extremely fascinating and eerily purposeful. Regardless to say, as any person who has ever been close to finishing a major project might understand, I made a mild scene at the coffee shop and responded unfavorably to her suggestions. But even as I protested, the notion that she was also right had started creeping into my head.

My friend pointed out three major points: 1) that the sagas lack any meaning, it is scholarship that creates this meaning; 2) that the interest that the medieval audience had in the sagas was much more trivial than saga scholarship usually pretends, and 3) that I am looking at the *Íslendingasögur* with the wrong set of generic expectations. Where I seek meaning, all that was meant was entertainment. That I got upset is instructive. This PhD thesis is built on the assumption that there is meaning behind *Ljósvetninga saga*—meaning that is not incidental, but intended, whether or not that intention is uncoverable. That the medieval Icelanders could read into these texts anything other than grandiose statements about the use and distribution of power seemed to me preposterous. And the icing on the cake, grouping in the *Íslendingasögur* with that lowly genre of the tabloid, was an unbearable thought.

These three issues, that of authorial intent, audience, and the text's genre, are the main issues that lead my discussion in the present thesis. The thesis's emphasis on the text's meaning and inner-coherence is a response to years of *Ljósvetninga saga* scholarship, which saw the saga as an assortment of tales rather than as an authored whole. An illustrative example is found in Ellert B. Magnússon's summary of *Ljósvetninga saga*: "As a whole, the saga itself appears more as a collection of a number of independent oral tales than a fully constructed saga."³ The implication here is that someone threw these stories together and labelled it *Ljósvetninga saga*.

³ Ellert B. Magnússon, *Quotes and passages*, 36.

In opposition to this, I posit throughout this thesis that there is nothing random about this selection of stories, that these make a coherent whole. While it is not argued here that ‘collection’ equates to carelessness, it seems that Ellert was operating within these connotations. The question of whether or not the C-redaction’s *þættir*—short stories that do not revolve around *Ljósvetninga saga*’s main feud between the Ljósvetningar and the Mǫðruvellingar—are intentionally present is evident from scholarship as early as Bååth. The opposite assumption, that the A-redaction’s creator had intended the second part of the saga as part of its version, despite codicological evidence that points otherwise, is also apparent in nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship. Steblin-Kamenskii’s quote at the beginning of this prologue strips *Ljósvetninga saga* of all manuscript and philological context, and simply presents us with an intentionless text, the composition of which was dictated by the reality of the historical situation described. The only solace one has is that for Steblin-Kamenskii, all sagas are intentionless.

The audience of this saga, as with others, has varied across time. Some of the text’s concerns are indeed on high literary themes, but some are also more trivial, tabloid: the defamation of one person through the negative portrayal of his ancestors. It is this plurality of target audiences that is often forgotten in saga analysis, the audiences that go beyond the original implied thirteenth-century audience, but rather the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century audiences as well. Furthermore, it is worth considering that we usually hear the voice of a social elite in these texts. How did the thirteenth- or fifteenth-century petty farmers react to these texts? Would they treat them as the stories of their own ancestors? Or did they look at these stories from afar, as we do when we read of the lives of the rich and famous in tabloid press?

My reaction to grouping tabloids and the *Íslendingasögur* together is quite telling in that it reveals the power of genre. I would not have reacted the same way had my friend suggested that the *Íslendingasögur* were like the historical novels of their time. We have set notions of the hierarchy of

certain texts, but it seems—at least according to AM 162 c fol.—that fifteenth-century Icelanders did not share these prejudices. A *riddarasaga* alongside *Íslendingasögur* did not seem odd, or at any rate not odd enough to warrant its exclusion. Preconceived notions of genre have also influenced Old Norse scholarship, which has picked and chosen what sagas are ‘classical’ based on subjective taste and a somewhat inflexible historical understanding of how Icelandic literature developed.

My friend’s drifting lentils are the lenses through which this thesis should be read. While the different chapters each provide a different focus, they all attempt to understand what we lose and what we gain from the biases that have led scholarship of *Ljósvetninga saga* specifically, and the *Íslendingasögur* at large. These extant texts, I will argue, were shaped by someone to mean something, and the audience perceived this to be the case—the medieval audience, that is. It is up to the readers to determine if my literary interpretations, historical analysis, and theoretical suggestions convince them, but these lentils should always be on their minds, silently drifting away in a pot, until a cook decides to scoop them up and create something.

1. Introduction

Tönn tímans hefur búið illa við Ljósvetninga sögu.¹

Ljósvetninga saga is a thirteenth–fourteenth-century saga concerning the Eyjafjörður district in Northern Iceland. It focuses on the Møðruvellingar (the people of Møðruvellir, a farm south of modern Akureyri) chieftain Guðmundr inn ríki and his attempts to expand his district’s power at the expense of the Ljósvetningar (the people of Ljósavatn, a lake east of modern Akureyri) and other Northeastern rivals, as well as his retaliation for attacks against his masculinity. Following Guðmundr’s death by paranormal means, his son Eyjólfr becomes chieftain of the Møðruvellingar and continues to vie for power against the Ljósvetningar, at the price of his brother Koðrán’s death. *Ljósvetninga saga* is extant in two fragmentary medieval manuscripts: AM 561 4to with several lacunae from the end of the fourteenth to the beginning of the fifteenth century, and the fragments of AM 162 c fol. from the middle of the fifteenth century. There is only one nineteenth-century paper manuscript copy of AM 561 4to, and all others—around fifty—can be traced to AM 162 c fol. The two medieval manuscripts and their copies are exceptional in that, while in certain parts they follow the same wording and order of events, in other parts several stories are completely omitted from AM 561 4to, or are executed in significantly different details, wording, and narrative. This issue has been the center of much of the debate surrounding the saga, and it is this to which this thesis wishes to contribute.

In the following introductory chapter, a short summary will be provided as a reference for those less acquainted with the saga. The chapter then discusses some theoretical considerations that lie behind the thesis as

¹ Björn M. Ólsen, “Um Íslendingasögur. Kaflar úr háskólafyrirlesturum,” 366.

a whole, with an emphasis on issues of authorship and the concept of authorial intent. Finally, the saga's manuscripts will be introduced, with an explanation of their transmission history and an argument for a preference of the 1830 edition over the Íslenzk fornrit edition more commonly used in scholarship.

1.1 *Ljósvetninga saga's* Plot in the A-redaction and C-redaction

Chapters 1–4: The saga begins with the badly behaving Sǫlmundr wreaking havoc on his district. He is outlawed for three years after he kills a Norwegian merchant, who was friends with a *þingmaðr* of Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði. He performs well abroad and catches the attention of the ruler of Norway, Hákon jarl. Despite only two years of his three-year sentence passing, the jarl pushes to commute Sǫlmundr's lesser outlawry, sending him back to Iceland with gifts for the lawspeaker, Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði, and an Eyjafjörður chieftain, Guðmundr inn ríki. This irregular request from a foreign ruler begins a violent dispute between Guðmundr and Þorgeirr on the one side, and Þorgeirr's sons Tjǫrvi, Hǫskuldr, Finni, and Þorkell on the other. Despite Sǫlmundr's timely death, the feud continues until an uneasy settlement is forced. The saga then moves to relate Guðmundr's dealings with the people of the North-east in chapters 5–12.

Chapter 5: It is Guðmundr's wont, we learn, to host the young sons of influential people. One such youth, Sǫrli Brodd-Helgason, joins Guðmundr after the *alþingi* as a guest at Möðruvellir. There he earns the good graces of Guðmundr's daughter Þórdís, much to the chieftain's chagrin. When the daughter is moved to Guðmundr's brother Einarr's farm of Þverá, the visits continue, but when Einarr attempts to persuade his brother to allow the two to marry, the latter bluntly refuses. The marriage is eventually made possible through the mediation of Þórarinn Nefjólsson, who is at some point before or after this narrative a member of king Óláfr helgi's retinue.

Chapters 6–7: Next it is told how Guðmundr makes it a habit to visit his *þingmenn* in the Reykjadalur district with a very large entourage of thirty people, and thus strains the farmers in a time of famine. The farmers call upon Ófeigr Járngerðarson, a friend of Guðmundr and his brother Einarr. Ófeigr teaches Guðmundr a lesson by visiting his farm with a large gathering of thirty men and thirty stallions and staying there for a week, which causes quite a strain on the *goði*'s household. Despite Guðmundr acknowledging Ófeigr's point well-made, he sees it as an omen that the man will give him trouble in the future.

Chapters 8–12: Guðmundr enters a legal dispute with the Eastfjords chieftain Þorkell Geitisson around the troublesome youth Vöðu-Brandr, who following a successful *útanferð*, returns and gets into trouble in Iceland. Guðmundr insists on having the youth outlawed, but his plans are thwarted by the intervention of Ófeigr, as the *goði* predicted would happen.

Chapters 13–21: The saga then turns to relate the wedding between a dependant of Guðmundr and of another Eyjafjörður *goði* called Þórir Helgason. During the wedding, an insult to Guðmundr's masculinity is voiced, devised by Þórir Helgason and the son of Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði, Þorkell hákr. Guðmundr proceeds to prosecute cases against Þórir Helgason's men. One of them gets complicated and Þórir is implicated in a legal indiscretion and is sentenced to lesser outlawry. Guðmundr then focuses his efforts on his other insulter, Þorkell hákr. He enlists the help of the somewhat useless spy Rindill, and attacks and kills Þorkell. After Þorkell is killed, his cousin avenges his death by killing the spy Rindill. Guðmundr overreacts and threatens to burn a house where the killers are staying, despite the fact that his wife and son are both present there as well. Guðmundr then goes on to live to an old age, and is plagued by fears of vengeance. Eventually Finni Þorgeirsson sends a man to relate a dream to Guðmundr, an act which apparently kills him.

Chapters 22–31 (Eyjólfur's bulk): The rest of the saga continues by relating the dealings between Eyjólfur, the son of Guðmundr, and the Ljósvetningar. The Ljósvetningar reject a parental claim made by

Friðgerðr, the daughter of Eyjólfur's dependent. This causes a conflict that reaches its climax when Eyjólfur and the Ljósvetningar, led by Þorvarður Hóskuldsson, meet in battle in Kakalahóll, where Guðmundr's other son Koðrán is killed while trying to stop the fighting. In the following trial, many of the Ljósvetningar are outlawed and exiled from Iceland, but Eyjólfur nevertheless kills Þorvarður's brother Þórarinn in retaliation. The main story concludes with several anecdotes where the value of peace is promoted.

Chapter 32: The saga ends with an ostensibly interjected and fragmented tale relating the early dealings of Eyjólfur and Þórarinn ofsi, the killer of Þorgeirr Hávarsson, a retainer of king Óláfr helgi, one of *Fóstbræðra saga's* protagonists.

The A-redaction contains chapters 1–4 and 13–21, whereas the C-redaction contains all the narrative stated above. Chapters 1–4 and the middle of chapters 18–21 in both the A-redaction and C-redaction tell the same stories in the same words—though scribal variance is important to remember—but chapters 13–18 tell a very similar story with a notable difference in narrative and certain details such as place names and character names. Scholarly consensus has it that chapters 5–12 were never present in the A-redaction, and (as will be shown) chapters 22–32 were possibly not incorporated into that redaction as well. One could compare this with the difference between the king sagas *Heimskringla* and *Morkinskinna*—at times they tell the same story with the same words, at times they relate a similar story but with a significant difference in wording and details, and at times they each incorporate stories that were never present in the other.

1.2 How to Approach *Ljósvetninga saga*

Ljósvetninga saga is a tale of political intrigue, with relatively few battle scenes. Its characters managed to remain lively and compelling throughout the millennium that passed from their alleged existence, passing from mouths to ears, quills to parchment, pen to paper, and press to Íslensk fornrit. While the saga itself is (subjectively) as beautiful a piece of art as

Brennu-Njáls saga and *Grettis saga*, its preservation is a sordid affair that has affected the way this saga has been received over the last two centuries. Since no complete medieval manuscript of the saga is extant, scholars allowed themselves to pick and choose what parts of the post-medieval material to include and what to omit. Scholars therefore projected on this saga their own notions of how *Íslendingasögur* should look and behave. This makes *Ljósvetninga saga* an interesting case study for how scholarship has perceived the *Íslendingasögur* as a whole, and the radical editorial choices that they allowed themselves to practice in the name of that belief. This thesis's primary question is therefore: *How did the reception of Ljósvetninga saga influence its construction?* The circular nature of the question is intentional. The leading assumption is that *Ljósvetninga saga* is and has been constantly rewritten by its oral performers, by its literary authors, by its scribes, by its publishers, and by its scholars. This thesis is another step in that process of reception and construction, arguing for yet another way to approach and to read *Ljósvetninga saga*.

1.2.1 How to Approach This Thesis

This thesis seeks a better understanding of the editorial choices that were made along the winding path of *Ljósvetninga saga*'s transmission. It focuses on three milestones: the thirteenth century, when the saga was probably put down in writing; the end of the fourteenth and middle of the fifteenth century, when the two extant medieval manuscripts were scribed; and the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the critical Old Norse editions of the saga were printed.

The first chapter, The Part About the Critics, concerns itself with how *Ljósvetninga saga* has been treated in Old Norse scholarship and how this evolved. *Ljósvetninga saga* was a major point of contention for the oral and written theories of saga composition, known as Freeprose and Bookprose, and their differing opinions left *Ljósvetninga saga* a misunderstood text, which affected much of the debate surrounding it and its subsequent relative neglect. Special attention is placed on the attempt to date the saga,

contending that the current *Íslendingasögur* dating is based mostly on biased suppositions rather than on clear methodology. Dating is and will remain tied to the specific scholarly *zeitgeist* if considerations like manuscript evidence and oral origins are not taken more into account. This is illustrated with a case study of the connection between *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Brennu-Njáls saga*, which exemplifies both the advantages of seeking out literary connections, and the pointlessness of dating based on this uncertain method in a literature highly based in oral transmission.

The second chapter, *Are Each of the Redactions Internally Consistent?* sets out to understand how each of the redactions' texts works as an internally-coherent whole: What meanings can be found if these redactions are considered on their own merit? This is offered as an alternative to the common scholarly practice attempting to trace which of the two redactions is the closer to the original. Rather than attempting to trace which of the versions could have been written earlier and whether these differences stem from written or oral origins, the thesis interprets these differences as indicative of meaning, and the focus turns to how each redaction corresponds with itself rather than how the redactions correspond with each other. Most importantly, the chronological discrepancies in the text pointed out by scholars are intentional literary moments where the differences and similarities in the intergenerational strife between the *Ljósvetningar* and the *Möðruvellingar* are underlined.

The Part About Memory takes a look at Barði Guðmundsson's approach towards *Ljósvetninga saga* as a *roman à clef*, and discusses its approach towards memory. It then turns to look at the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries respectively and suggests both a more restrictive Barði Guðmundsson-ian reading of AM 162 c fol., and a perspective that takes into account the interplay between generations.

The Part About the Genres takes a look at the *Íslendingasögur* as a group of texts to which *Ljósvetninga saga* allegedly belongs, and questions our understanding of the concept of genre. The current generic definitions are too narrow, and a more pluralistic approach will allow scholarship to work

within categories and yet be less limited by them. By analyzing *Ljósvetninga saga*'s manuscript neighbors in AM 561 4to *Gull-Þóris saga* and in AM 162 c fol.'s *Finnboga saga* and their place within the *Íslendingasögur*, an alternative, complimentary approach towards genre will also be suggested. This more comprehensive approach takes into account manuscript context, focusing on the regional history as the organizing principle of the extant AM 561 4to, and of plot expansion and the theme of power as the organizing principles of AM 162 c fol.'s extant sagas.

The focus of this thesis is on *Ljósvetninga saga*'s reception and development through both medieval times and modern scholarship, with three primary themes:

– First and foremost, the thesis offers a literary interpretation of *Ljósvetninga saga*'s redactions, which sheds light on the mechanisms of these texts. The thesis advances a reading wherein everything in the text is intended. As such, rather than glancing over chronological discrepancies, the interpretation dwells on them. Rather than settling ambiguous readings, the analysis explains what is gained from the dual interpretations. In addition, this thesis stresses the creation of internal meaning and coherence in each redaction. The analysis of the connections between *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Njáls saga* also offers an alternative to the Bookprose insistence of direct literary influence, replacing this with a model of mutual interaction in a literature that is orally (in)formed.

– The thesis focuses on the late fourteenth–fifteenth-century context of the saga's manuscripts rather than the thirteenth century, when it was probably composed. The fifteenth century, while attracting interest in recent years, is an under-studied period of Icelandic history. This is particularly unfortunate when it is considered that many of the Old Norse sagas we possess are first attested to in fifteenth-century text witnesses. Since Björn Þorsteinsson's work in the mid-twentieth

century, no comprehensive history of the fifteenth century has been written, though historians such as Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir, Árni Daniél Júlíusson, and Hans Jacob Orning have made significant contributions to our understanding of the period. This thesis wishes to contribute to knowledge of the fifteenth century through its use of primary sources to analyse scenes from Ólafur Loftsson's life and debate with the period's historiography.

– The thesis offers new questions on the subject of genre in Old Norse literature. It suggests a new approach by introducing film theory as a guide to break through the firm generic boundaries that have been dealt with in that field of studies. In particular, the concept of *generic crossroads* offers a new possibility for the interpretation of sagas in their generic setting, but even more so, in their wider manuscript setting. With this in mind, while the application of material philology on the Old Norse matter is far from new, the thesis's application of manuscript-oriented thinking for genre alongside innovations from the field of film studies hopes to bring something new to the debate. The thesis questions the usefulness and, in fact, truthfulness of the term 'post-classical' *Íslendingasögur*, and its conclusions promote rejecting the use of this concept altogether. In addition, the thesis repositions the *Íslendingasögur* category, expanding it and allowing for texts generally considered outliers to be included within it.

The ideal reader of this thesis would have Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason's 1830 *Ljósvetninga saga* edition,² and Íslenzk fornrit volume 10 at hand. Guðmundur Þorláksson's 1880 *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga* edition offers a highly detailed critical apparatus,³ and Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell's posthumous partial translation and

² Bækur.is, accessed 2 Jan. 2019, <http://baekur.is/bok/000247042/Ljosvetninga/>.

³ Archive.org, accessed 7 June 2019, <https://archive.org/details/slenzkarfornsgu00sagagoog/>. It is a poor scan of the text.

edition, *Origines Islandicae*, is also a useful edition to consult.⁴ Most of the translations provided here are from Andersson and Miller's *Law and Literature* and will only be marked with page numbers. My revisions to their translations will be marked with square brackets, and those places that I chose to translate myself will be marked as such. For other sagas, the standard Íslensk fornrit edition is used, unless otherwise specified. This decision is made out of considerations of scope, but many of the issues raised here in regard to the *Ljósvetninga saga* Íslensk fornrit edition are relevant to other (if not most) *Íslendingasögur* as well.⁵

1.2.2 Material Philology

This present attempt to engage with *Ljósvetninga saga* is inspired by my thesis supervisor Ármann Jakobsson's *A Sense of Belonging*, and Elizabeth Ashman Rowe's *The Development of Flateyjarbók: Iceland and the Norwegian Dynastic Crisis of 1389*. In these works, the role of the *þættir*, short stories otherwise treated as interpolated texts, was reassessed and put into the larger context of the kings' saga *Morkinskinna* and the manuscript Flateyjarbók. These studies showed how various texts can form a new meaning when put together, contextualizing this in their thirteenth- and fourteenth-century historical context, respectively. The comparison with *Morkinskinna* is particularly revealing: much like the A-redaction and C-redaction of *Ljósvetninga saga*, this text tells many of the same stories as *Heimskringla*, but in different words and by employing a different narrative style that includes more individual tales about Icelanders in the Norwegian court. This caused *Morkinskinna* to be dismissed to the extent that some Old Norse scholars of the past and present deemed it a synoptic without awarding it a second glance. This is comparable to *Ljósvetninga saga*'s C-redaction, where the *þættir*'s functions within the narrative were dismissed before Theodore

⁴ Available at: <https://archive.org/details/originesislandic02gudb> (as of 2 Jan. 2019).

⁵ For example, see Emily Lethbridge, "Gísla saga Súrssonar. Textual Variation, Editorial Constructions and Critical Interpretations," 150. Lethbridge debates the problematic editorial choices made in regards to the issue of *Gísla saga Súrssonar*'s three different redactions.

Andersson's research into the text. The present thesis also found inspiration in research conducted by Jóhanna Katrín Friðríksdóttir and Emily Lethbridge into the logic of compilation and its connection to generic thinking, which has been an invaluable step in my understanding of Old Norse literature and genre. Jóhanna Katrín Friðríksdóttir has shown how sagas belonging to the traditionally divided *fornaldarsögur*, *Íslendingasögur*, and *riddarasögur* could be united in one manuscript using thematic logic in her research of AM 152 fol., further contextualizing her results in the historical circumstances of compilation.⁶ Emily Lethbridge analysed Eggertsbók (AM 556 a-b 4to) from the perspective of its single *fornaldarsaga*, *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar*, and showed how, viewed thematically, the saga finds its place in its manuscript, which includes three *Íslendingasögur* and three indigenous *riddarasögur*.⁷ Finally, Hans Jacob Orning's investigation into manuscript compilation and *riddarasögur* composition in relation to the historical circumstances of the late fifteenth century is a good example of how to perform historical research based on sagas that describe a very different reality than the one lived by the late fifteenth-century Icelanders, extracting unifying themes that embody historical concerns of the Icelandic aristocracy.⁸ Fittingly, the focus of Orning's research is on Margrét Vigfúsdóttir, who resided in Möðruvellir, the farm where both Guðmundr inn ríki and Ólafur Loftsson's father, Loftur Guttormsson, lived.

Because of the importance that individual manuscripts have for the present research, this thesis takes a material philological approach towards the *Ljósvetninga saga* manuscripts, looking at both redactions as texts with independent worth, rather than trying to trace their thirteenth-century original form, or trying to rank their primacy. Material (or new) philology approaches the philologist's work by embracing variants as a natural part

⁶ Jóhanna Katrín Friðríksdóttir, "Ideology and Identity in Medieval Northwest Iceland. A Study of AM 152 fol.," 98–99.

⁷ Emily Lethbridge, "The Place of *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar* in Eggertsbók, a Late Medieval Icelandic Saga-book," 396–400.

⁸ Hans Jacob Orning, *The Reality of the Fantastic, the Magical, Political and Social Universe of Late Medieval Saga Manuscripts*, 303–339.

of medieval studies, rather than as a problem that requires solving.⁹ As Stephen G. Nichols has it: “It is that manuscript culture that the ‘new’ philology sets out to explore in a postmodern return to the origins of medieval studies.”¹⁰ Much of Old Norse scholarship has embraced the advantages that such an approach has given us, and it has coincided with recent trends, such as looking at the sagas as cultural memory rather than as history versus fiction, and the problematizing of long-standing genre definitions.¹¹ It is worth noting that while the thesis’s approach is a textually pluralistic one, it goes about it in a traditional way. Since only three leaves of AM 162 c fol. are extant, any discussion of the medieval C-redaction text as a whole is by definition reconstructive; I will try to alleviate this contradiction through an insistence on finding a single post-medieval manuscript and sticking to it, rather than trying to reconstruct the text.¹² A ‘full’ material philological approach may have chosen to focus either on the extant three leaves, or on the seventeenth-century context of my preferred manuscript, AM 485 4to. The former will not be attempted, and the latter is certainly grounds for future research.

Material philology grounds the elusive text in a very tangible object. The challenge of medieval literary study in a post-structuralist, post-modern world was charted out almost three decades ago by Gabrielle M. Spiegel. Spiegel reminds us that text is situated within a very specific set of linguistic and societal circumstances, outside of which it cannot be understood.¹³ True literary history can only be achieved, according to her, by

⁹ Nichols, “Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture,” 1.

¹⁰ Nichols, 7.

¹¹ See references in Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, “Expanding Horizons: Recent Trends in Old Norse-Icelandic Manuscript Studies,” 210–212; Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, “Ideology and Identity,” 88, n. 3, refers to further material philology research conducted in Old Norse scholarship at the onset of the twenty-first century. See also Jürg Glauser, “The Speaking Bodies of Saga Texts,” 13–18, 20–21, which connects together much of these recent trends.

¹² Though this is not to say that I do not condone such attempts in the future, since the Íslenzk fornrit version of *Ljósvetninga saga* should not remain the final word in the saga’s critical editions.

¹³ Gabrielle M. Spiegel, “History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages,” 77. Patterson does this as well in “On the Margin Postmodernism, Ironic History, and Medieval Studies.”

both contextualizing the text in its specific historical and societal circumstances, and by recognizing its constructs and form.¹⁴

1.2.3 Authorship and Intentionality

Throughout this thesis, the assumption is that these texts were authored. But its definition of author is different from how this character has been traditionally viewed. A model differentiating three kinds of authorship has been offered by television studies scholar Jason Mittell, who distinguishes between a (perceived) single authorship of a literary piece, which he terms “*authorship by origination*”; a cinematic authorship that does not make every creative decision but has a (perceived) final say over the finished product, called “*authorship by responsibility*”; and the serial nature of television authorship, where the important voice is not of an episode’s specific director or writer, but rather the show’s producer/s or showrunner/s, which he terms “*authorship by management*.”¹⁵

In Old Norse literature, the lines between origination, responsibility, and management are often confused, due to a lack of context and paratext. Often, we cannot ascertain whether a certain aspect of the extant text stems from the person designated as its originator (nor, as the Freeprose–Bookprose debate expounded below illustrates, can we agree on whether this originator is a text’s oral or literary author), from the responsible scribe/s, or from the project’s managing compiler and/or patron. These lines are further blurred by the fact that sometimes a manuscript’s scribe can also be its compiler, and sometimes even the originator of the literary text. The people in charge of *Ljósvetninga saga*’s transmission are both readers and authors at once. Each edition, be it a fifteenth-century, seven-

¹⁴ “There is no way to determine *a priori* the social function of a text or its locus with respect to its cultural ambience. Only a minute examination of the form and content of a given work can determine its situation with respect to broader patterns of culture at any given time. What this means is that a genuine literary history must always, to some extent, be both social and formalist in its concerns, and must pay attention to a text’s ‘social logic’ in the dual sense of its site of articulation and its discursive character as articulated ‘logos.’” Gabrielle M. Spiegel, “History, Historicism, and the Social Logic,” 77–78.

¹⁵ Jason Mittell, *Complex TV, the Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling*, 87–89.

teenth-century, or twentieth-century copy situates the *Ljósvetninga saga* text within a new framework and context. In a sense, the medieval and post-medieval manuscript culture of copyists preserving old (and lost) texts is the embodiment of the post-Structuralist claim of the reader becoming the author of the text, since the copyists do not only copy, they also re-interpret, and in this action influences how we receive the texts. It is important to note a distinction between the medieval notion of authorship and a modern one. While ties to the continental writings were stronger than scholars of the Bookprose approach believed, there is a lack of research in medieval Icelandic literary theory in general, and particularly on their approach to concepts such as *auctor*.¹⁶ Steblin-Kamenskii's work is perhaps almost notoriously opposed to the notion of any similarity between Modern continental authorship and Old Norse literature saga composition. He interprets saga authors as merely conveying what they perceive as truth, which he defines as *syncretic truth*: a worked description of historical events that the saga author perceives as truthful.¹⁷ Slavica Ranković's notion of distributed authorship is also important to bear in mind when approaching the *Íslendingasögur*;¹⁸ these were oral texts constantly developing and reacting to each other, even after they were put to parchment.¹⁹ Even if inspired by their oral material, the saga authors had a great degree of control over what to include and not include in their texts.²⁰ The textual transmission discussed in this thesis goes hand in hand with the notion of the dynamic medieval authorship, which is to be commented upon and revised.²¹

¹⁶ On continental medieval authorship, see Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*. See also Margaret Clunies Ross, "Criticism and Literary Theory in Old Norse-Icelandic."

¹⁷ Steblin-Kamenskii, *The Saga Mind*, 49–68.

¹⁸ Slavica Ranković, "Who Is Speaking in Traditional Texts? On the Distributed Author of the Sagas of Icelanders and Serbian Epic Poetry." See also Steblin-Kamenskii, *The Saga Mind*, 57.

¹⁹ Knut Liestøl, *The Origin of the Icelandic Family Sagas*, 43–44.

²⁰ Pernille Hermann, "Saga Literature, Cultural Memory, and Storage," 346.

²¹ While the assumption in scholarship is more often than not that the author of a particular piece is male, it is important to remember the role of women as female scribes (and authors). See Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, "Genbrug í Skagafjörður: Arbejdsmetoder hos skrivere i klostret på Reynistaður," 148–150 and Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir, "Cultural Memory and Gender in Iceland from Medieval to Early Modern Times," 385–389.

The concept of the *intentional fallacy* warns us against confusing what the author had intended when they put their work to words and the final meaning that the audience derives from it.²² According to Frye’s presentation of this approach, if one were to ask Shakespeare what he had meant by including a certain part in *Hamlet*, he would respond to us that he “meant it to form part of the play.”²³ Knapp and Michaels, on the other hand, warned against separating intention from meaning, claiming that the two concepts are inseparable.²⁴ While the author’s intent cannot be ignored, it does not mean that they managed to successfully convey this intention perfectly onto the final product. To clarify, the intention of the text is not, in any part of this thesis, the final aim of the discussion. Rather, intention is a theoretical assumption that underlies the research. A literary interpretation affixed by the audience and its reaction to a piece of literature ignores the fact that this audience is guided by its understanding of the author’s intentions and adjusts its reaction accordingly.²⁵ In what he calls *postfoundational intentionalism* or, discouragingly, *weak intentionalism*, Mark Bevir stresses that one is not rejecting theory simply by acknowledging intentionality. Rather, one suggests that there was a certain set of beliefs that existed in the mind of the author of the piece, and while this belief is external to the text, it is the key to understanding the author’s world, which is the historian’s task.²⁶ Actually, acknowledging intentionality and

²² W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy.” As Wayne Booth points out, the far-reaching cries to completely disconnect the author from the literary piece were never Wimsatt and Beardsley’s intention, Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, 126, n. 13.

²³ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 86.

²⁴ Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, “Against theory,” 138–139.

²⁵ See A. J. Close, “Don Quixote and the ‘Intentionalist Fallacy,’” and Mittell, *Complex TV*, 105–117, who suggests shifting the question from the implied author to the audience’s understanding of certain implied authors in their “reception and comprehension,” and instead discusses the “*inferred author function*,” which he defines as “the inferred author function is a viewer’s production of authorial agency responsible for a text’s storytelling, drawing on textual cues and contextual discourses,” 107.

²⁶ “When historians ascribe meanings to texts, therefore, they do so by appealing to objects external to those texts—to beliefs, which might be sincere or insincere, conscious or unconscious, rational or irrational. Although historians only have access to the text, they still can legitimately postulate beliefs external to the text in order to ascribe a meaning to it,” Mark Bevir, “How to Be an Intentionalist,” 215.

authorship are pre-requisites when approaching manuscripts from a material philological approach, since this approach grounds texts in a specific sociological context.²⁷ Simply put: “work and life are not opposed, not even in the casual manner by which night is opposed to day.”²⁸ As Umberto Eco points out with a simple discussion of the Woodsworth sentence “A poet could not but be gay,” an interpretation stripped of its context would posit that this sentence discusses the poet’s sexual orientation rather than mood.²⁹ A literary interpretation must be grounded in the author’s time, but this notion of authorship—in the case of *Ljósvetninga saga*, at any rate—must be informed by the fact that we are facing a text that has changed from the one that first was set to parchment in the 1200s. If you kill the author, you kill context. If you kill the author, you kill the possibility of trying to interpret the text in a meaningful, historical way.³⁰ Umberto Eco insists that answers to the text can be found, not in seeking the intentions of the authors or seeking the intentions of the audience, but rather in seeking the intentions available to us in the text.³¹ He is both right and wrong. It is all a matter of the questions being asked.

²⁷ For the existence of a clear intentionality behind manuscript compilation, see a good survey in Orning, *Reality of the Fantastic*, 62–67.

²⁸ Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, 188.

²⁹ Umberto Eco, “Between author and text,” 68.

³⁰ Booth states in *A Rhetoric of Irony*, “a reconstructing of implied authors and implied readers relies on inferences about intentions, and these often depend on our knowing facts from outside the poem,” 133; see also 132, n. 17. In “Overinterpreting Texts” Umberto Eco states: “Deciding what is being talked about is, of course, a kind of interpretative bet. But the contexts allow us to make this bet less uncertain than a bet on the red or the black of the roulette wheel,” 63. As Seán Burke points out about Paul de Man’s outing as a closeted anti-semitic: “The fact is that his fellow theorists have defended de Man as a *person* and often with considerable dignity and passion,” *Death and Return*, 5; emphasis in the original. Seán Burke argues that the author has always been a blindspot in Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida (and Paul de Man’s) theories, and that they never really managed to detach the author from the work. It is important to situate the authors and remember that, of all these theorists, Paul de Man was very radical in his interpretation of these ideas (and had grave personal reasons to do so, see Burke, 1–8), and he is the one that led post-structuralist thinking in the US. Knapp and Michaels are not responding to Barthes, Foucault, or Derrida. They are responding to de Man. I thank Roderick McDonald for stressing to me to not underestimate the importance of location when it comes to theoretical discussion.

³¹ Umberto Eco, “Between author and text.” His analysis of the audience and critical reception of his own works in this chapter is a fascinating (perhaps unwitting) response

While further theoretical discussion of authorship is not taken up directly in the thesis, different notions of authorship are at play. The Part About the Critics is concerned with the saga's audience, and how these became the authors of their own versions of *Ljósvetninga saga*. The saga cannot be read or even thought about without their mediation. The chapter Are Each of the Redactions Internally Consistent? and its investigation into the inner workings of the text is underlined by the assumption that someone had intended the saga's redactions to take these shapes. In The Part About Memory, the focus is on the authors' intentions, more specifically on *Ljósvetninga saga*'s audiences of Barði Guðmundsson and the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century compilers, who become its authors: Barði by offering a reading that completely changes the way the saga is read, and the compilers by actively manipulating the text through the mere action of choosing a redaction. Finally, The Part About the Genres is where authorial, textual, and audience intent come together, since all three operate when discussing genre. The author creates the text within a set of certain generic conventions, the text embodies these and interacts with other texts of the same and different genres, and the audience receives the text with their own notions of genre, informed by their perception of the author's generic intent, their own individual and historical circumstances, and the text's place in the manuscript.

1.3 The Manuscripts

Ljósvetninga saga has two extant medieval manuscripts, AM 561 4to and AM 162 c fol., both fragmentary. In addition, forty-four paper copies have been listed by Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, to which three more can be added (see Appendix). Forty-six of these are copies of AM 162 c fol., the C-redaction medieval manuscript, and one, written by the Icelandic

to Frye quoting a ghostly Shakespeare above. It also presents Eco's urge as an author to deem which interpretations of his own works are admissible and which are not, under the guise of his position and prestige as literary critic (which is itself fueled by his position and prestige as literary author).

scholar Guðbrandur Vigfússon, is a copy of AM 561 4to, the A-redaction medieval manuscript. The present discussion introduces these manuscripts, though a stemma is not attempted. AM 561 4to will be introduced, followed by the issue of AM 162 c fol.'s scribal attribution. Finally, the editions of *Ljósvetninga saga* will be compared regarding their choice of paper manuscripts, with the argument that, despite its flaws, Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason's 1830 edition best reflects the extant C-redaction tradition.

1.3.1 AM 561 4to

A has abbreviated clumsily and become entangled not only in illogicalities but also in breaches of taste. He is an abridger in the worst sense, either bereft of any literary sense (including a sense of drama and a sense of humor) or too precipitate to take heed. His revision shows a pragmatic interest in the plot but little concern for the incidentals of preservation.³²

AM 561 4to is the only extant medieval text-witness of *Ljósvetninga saga's* A-redaction.³³ It is better preserved than AM 162 c fol. and allows a good understanding of how the manuscript would have looked. This cannot be said of AM 162 c fol., which can be only somewhat reconstructed through its non-direct paper manuscript copies. However, unlike AM 162 c fol., much less is known about its origins and scribe, and so we can say much less about it than we can about its fellow medieval manuscript. While it is

³² Andersson, *The Problem of Icelandic Saga Origins: A Historical Survey*, 165.

³³ Notice that in ÍF 10:LVII (and elsewhere), Björn Sigfússon mistakenly cites AM 461 4to as a text witness for *Ljósvetninga saga's* A-redaction, when in actuality it is a c. 1700 paper manuscript of *Egils saga Skallagrímsson*. The actual A-redaction textual witness is AM 561 4to, which Björn Sigfússon himself refers to in other places, e.g., ÍF 10:2. Pointing out this mistake might seem nitpicky, but it is a crucial mistake since it is recreated by, for example, Guðni Jónsson's 1947 edition of the saga, *Þingeyinga saga*, VII. Elsewhere he names the medieval C-redaction manuscript "AM 162, 4to" rather than AM 162 c fol, *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*, 3.

taken as axiomatic that all paper manuscripts are of AM 162 c fol., it is very important to note that there exists at least one paper copy of AM 561 4to scribed by Guðbrandur Vigfússon himself, Bodleian ms Icelandic c. 9.

AM 561 4to has been dated by Kålund to c. 1400.³⁴ It presently contains three sagas: *Reykðæla saga*, *Gull-Þóris saga* (or *Þorskfirðinga saga*), and *Ljósvetninga saga*. Unfortunately, as Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson shows, wear had damaged the external sides of all of the gatherings.³⁵ Two sides of *Reykðæla saga* (9r and 16r) have been lost, and examples of younger *rímur* were written on the parchment. Two sides of *Gull-Þóris saga* (23v and 24r) have also been lost, but these made space for *Úlfhams rímur*,³⁶ and two sides (31v and 32r) have disappeared. *Ljósvetninga saga* has only one damaged side (37v), which was replaced with a summary based on the content that was legible to its scribe.³⁷ Guðvarður argues, based on a codicological analysis, that one or more additional sagas could have been in the manuscript before it was damaged.³⁸

Guðvarður discusses the extent of the lost leaves in the first lacuna of *Ljósvetninga saga*. According to him, it is most likely that only one leaf is missing in the first lacuna between chs. 4–13 (34v–35r). He finds it unlikely that more than this is missing, since the manuscript is consistently composed of gatherings of eight leaves. As such, *Sorla þáttr*, *Ófeigs þáttr*, and *Vøðu-Brands þáttr* would not have been in the missing part.³⁹ This thesis accepts the absence of the *þáttir* in their present form from AM 561 4to, since the codicological argumentation is convincing. About the second lacuna—the damaged 37v and the leaves that could have come after it—Björn Sigfússon states that “afrit þetta þarf ekki að vera neitt afbakað, svo langt

³⁴ Kristian Kålund and Jón Ólafsson, *Katalog over Den Arnamagnæanske Håndskriftsamling*, vol. 1:712–713. Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson agrees, “AM 561 4to og Ljósvetninga saga,” 67.

³⁵ Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, 76.

³⁶ On *Úlfhams rímur*, see Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, *Úlfhams saga*, XLVIII–XLIX.

³⁷ ÍF 10:36, n. 1.

³⁸ Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, “AM 561 4to,” 77–78. Though a significant loss of the first part of the manuscript would then need to be accounted for.

³⁹ Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, 78–79. See also Adolfine Erichsen, *Untersuchungen zur Ljósvetninga Saga*, 10 and *Origines Islandicae*, eds. Gudbrand Vigfússon and F. York Powell, 347–348.

sem það nær, en síðan í A hefur náð lengra,”⁴⁰ downplaying the lost material. Guðvarður, however, points out that Björn’s logic does not follow through, since the extant summary contains 210 words: if only one leaf in an eight-leaf gathering is missing, and we count at least 400 words per side, we have lost 1200 words of the A-redaction’s account of the legal dealings of Guðmundr inn ríki and Þórir Helgason. The 210-word summary must have lost much.⁴¹ The corresponding segment in the C-redaction contains around 650 words, and thus the A-redaction account of the events leading up to Þórir’s exile would have been significantly longer. This, Guðvarður argues, discounts the possibility that more than one leaf is missing before 38r; two leaves would mean an astronomical 2000 words missing, a 1350-word difference between the redactions.⁴² Such variance is unheard of in the other deviations in chs. 13–18.⁴³ Finally, Guðvarður argues that after 41v only one leaf is missing, one that would have contained the ending of chapter 21. This would also mean that this six-leaf gathering would be the final one in the manuscript, otherwise the presence of Eyjólfir’s bulk and *Þórarins þáttur* would make for an odd manuscript. One or more sagas would need to come after it, or the gathering would be of a very odd size.⁴⁴

Guðvarður’s argument stands on several literary assumptions:

1. The summary in 37v indeed reflects the lost material, and the A-redaction and the C-redaction followed a similar plot throughout the Þórir Helgason episode. It is therefore unreasonable to expect 2000 missing words.
2. The C-redaction’s version of Eyjólfir’s bulk is the only way to finish the narrative.
3. *Þórarins þáttur ofsa* was never included in the A-redaction.

⁴⁰ ÍF 10:36, n. 1.

⁴¹ Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, “AM 561 4to,” 75–76.

⁴² Adolfine Erichsen expressed a similar sentiment, *Untersuchungen*, 11.

⁴³ Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, “AM 561 4to,” 79.

⁴⁴ Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, 80, n. 28.

Both Björn Sigfússon and Hallvard Magerøy would agree with the first assumption.⁴⁵ As noted above, Guðvarður assumes that the A-redaction would not have significantly varied from the plot of the C-redaction. This is not unreasonable, but in the abbreviation provided in 37v, the plot already strays somewhat from the path of the C-redaction. Þorkell Geitisson's presence in the dealings between Guðmundr and Þórir is unparalleled in the C-redaction.⁴⁶ Gísli Sigurðsson uses Þorkell's presence to support his theory of a separate oral tradition that informs the A-redaction version.⁴⁷ What seems abrupt to us would have been reasonable in an oral tradition that tied Þorkell Geitisson with the lives of Guðmundr and Einarr. Gísli acknowledges the fragmentary state of the extant AM 561 4to, but his attempt to explain the abruptness of Þorkell Geitisson's appearance does not take into account the fact that this takes place in a 210-word summary of a sequence at least 1200 words long. In the lost narrative, it is likely that more words would have been spent on Þorkell's appearance, even if it would have remained no more than a cameo.⁴⁸ Andersson's dismissal of the A-redactor similarly does not take into account that the apparent rush to conclude the feud between Þórir Helgason and Guðmundr inn ríki stems from the fact that around 1000 words are missing from the narrative, which are in fact 350 words more than the C-redaction allocated for this part of the narrative.

As will be suggested in this thesis's chapter Are Each of the Redactions Internally Consistent? it is not hard to imagine that Þorkell Geitisson's presence would be explained, for example, through his marriage to Einarr's daughter,⁴⁹ or as the very event that would facilitate the wedding between the two. This deviation should already cause us to question how much is known about the course of events beyond the fact that the

⁴⁵ ÍF 10:36, n. 1, and Hallvard Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet i Ljósvetninga saga*, 53.

⁴⁶ See also the discussion in the chapter Are Each of the Redactions Internally Consistent?

⁴⁷ Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition*, 171.

⁴⁸ In his equally abrupt appearance in the C-redaction's chapter 30, for example, Þorkell Geitisson receives a speaking line that justifies his presence.

⁴⁹ Attested in *Vápnfirðinga saga* as well as *Vǫðu-Brands þáttur*, though presenting a contradicting chronology.

endpoint is similar: Guðmundr meets Rindill, and Þórir Helgason spends three winters abroad. However, considering that scholars unanimously dismiss the possibility of *Vøðu-Brands þáttr* appearing in the A-redaction following chapter 4, is it not possible that elements of that story have entered the A-redaction's account of the *alþingi* proceedings? Furthermore, before we entirely dismiss the possibility that 2000 words are missing from the A-redaction (that is, that two leaves rather than one are missing between 37v and 38r), we should consider the roundabout way *Vøðu-Brands þáttr* takes to arrange a confrontation between Guðmundr inn ríki and Þorkell Geitisson. Is it not within reason to allow for such an elaborate build-up before Þorkell Geitisson's appearance in the A-redaction as well?

The second assumption is also interesting; after all, AM 514 4to and its abbreviated ending show that in the narrative sense, other endings for the saga can be imagined. Indeed, the synopsis provided by AM 514 4to could have even fit into the remaining, unaccounted for, side and a half left of AM 561 4to. If the A-redaction and the C-redaction have shown themselves to be capable of significant variation in ch. 13–18, could this not have been the case in later chapters as well?

The final assumption regards the (non-) presence of *Þórarins þáttr ofsa* in the A-redaction. This *þáttr* could have presumably filled up two sides. The story, which brings the Møðruvellingar back into the fold of Christianity by avenging a *hirðmaðr* of king Óláfr helgi, could be a perfectly reasonable ending for *Ljósvetninga saga*. There has never been a convincing attempt to explain *Þórarins þáttr ofsa*'s origins: it has instead been explained away as an apocryphal *þáttr*. Both narrative- and plot-wise it would make perfect sense to include this story at the end of a version of *Ljósvetninga saga* that does not include Eyjólfur's bulk. Like the saga's opening chapters, it starts with a reference to Grettir and continues with the killing of a follower of the Norwegian ruler. It then continues with the Møðruvellingar's leader being enlisted to the cause of said ruler, and it ends, presumably, with a martial and legal battle (the outcome of which we cannot possibly presume). Length and narrative-wise, then, there is a perfectly fitting ending

that could have appeared in an 8-leaf gathering of the A-redaction, even if this were the last gathering of the manuscript. Therefore, the possibility that the description of the legal dealings between Guðmundr inn ríki and Þórir Helgason were significantly longer in AM 561 4to cannot be discarded.

Guðvarður's most convincing argument in regard to the saga's ending is that there is little way to account for a more than 600-word difference between the A-redaction and the C-redaction. While this argument certainly rings true, this is not the only possible explanation for the conundrum. An anecdotal and swift ending also characterizes the two other extant sagas of AM 561 4to: *Gull-Þóris saga* moves quickly from the protagonist's final battle to a brief summary of his older age, while *Reykðæla saga* ends with a brief summary of the legal settlements conducted after the betrayal and killing of the saga's second protagonist, Víga-Skúta. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that the saga's ending would have looked like the synopsis offered in AM 514 4to, though perhaps less hastily written.

AM 561 4to, then, is an incomplete text, and has been further misunderstood by scholars, who have underplayed the importance of the significant lacuna between 37v and 38r to understanding the text's workings. Technological advances could reveal more of the text hidden under 37v, which is partly legible to the naked eye and was made more visible thanks to Þorgeir Sigurðsson and Haukur Þorgeirsson's ultraviolet and infrared photos of the damaged side. Further research will allow for a more extensive reading of 37v than is presently available, and could reveal more about the manuscript's composition from its at times illegible marginalia.

1.3.2 AM 162 C fol.

AM 162 C fol.'s current state reveals what a significant loss it is for the present understanding of saga literature. In their *Origines Islandicae*, Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell argue that: "In importance this once splendid codex must, as a collection of Islendinga Sagas, rank next only to AM. 132 and the lost Waterhorn-book, and before Mela-book

vellum.”⁵⁰ They claim that it contained not only *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Vápnfirðinga saga*, *Droplaugarsona saga*, *Finnboga saga*, and *Þorsteins þátr stangarhöggs* (leaves of which are still extant),⁵¹ but also suggested that it would have contained within it *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, *Valla-Ljóts saga*, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, and **Njarðvíkinga saga*, making the size of its *Íslendingasögur* portion around 86 folios.

Presently, however, AM 162 C fol. is composed of seven extant leaves of these *Íslendingasögur*, and four additional leaves of the *riddarasaga Sálus saga og Níkanórs*, which were added by Kålund. Jón Helgason argues that Kålund added these leaves due to similarities in the scribal hand and decided to exclude them from his reading of AM 162 c fol.,⁵² but Kålund seemed to be much more convinced about this than Jón lets on.⁵³ Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell, who accepted *Sálus saga og Níkanórs*’s inclusion into the manuscript, preferred as early a date as possible for the manuscript, namely the end of the fourteenth century.⁵⁴ Scholarly consensus, however, places the manuscript in the middle of the fifteenth century,⁵⁵ and this has been strengthened by Stefán Karlsson’s attribution of the scribal hand to Ólafur Loftsson.

1.3.2.1 What Is Ólafur Loftsson?

Ólafur Loftsson is believed to have been a son of the late fourteenth- and early-fifteenth-century Icelandic magnate Loftur Guttormsson, from an unknown mother.⁵⁶ His activity is mentioned in documents from 1424–

⁵⁰ *Origines Islandicae*, 346.

⁵¹ Note that Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell argue that a third of the manuscript would have been with *riddarasögur* material, *Origines Islandicae*, 345.

⁵² “Syv Sagablade (AM 162 C fol, bl. 1–7),” ed. Jón Helgason, 1.

⁵³ Kristian Kålund, “Droplaugarsona saga,” 160: “At også de 4 blade af *Saulus’ ok Níkanors saga* hører herhen, har ikke tidligere været bemærket, men er aldeles utvivlsomt for enhver, der vil sammenligne disse blade med de 7 andre.”

⁵⁴ *Origines Islandicae*, 344, 346. See “Syv Sagablade,” ed. Jón Helgason, 5.

⁵⁵ “Syv Sagablade,” ed. Jón Helgason, 5.

⁵⁶ If in *Íslenzkir attstuðlar* vol. 1:198–199, Einar Bjarnason argues that Ólafur was “væntanlega sonur Lofts Guttormssonar,” he later asserts this as fact, treating Eiríkur Loftsson’s representing Ólafur’s daughter Margrét in a marriage contract in 1461 (DI 5: item 551, pp. 610–611; presumably 3 years after Ólafur’s death) as “staðfesting” for the family relationship, *Íslenzkir attstuðlar* vol. 1:211. This argument is more than reasonable,

1449, and his death would have occurred sometime around the year 1458, since his inheritance is handled in the year 1459 by his daughter Margrét and his son Jón.⁵⁷

Stefán Karlsson has attributed six diplomas, several manuscript segments, and two manuscripts to Ólafur's scribal hand. Before we look into the logic behind the scribal attribution, a survey of the material attributed to him is provided:

1. AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. VII 29 = DI 4: item 335, pp. 273–275 = IOD: item 172, pp. 217–219. (1420) pertains to a land dispute case regarding Grund í Eyjafirði, and features Loftur Guttormsson as a witness.⁵⁸
2. AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. VIII 11 = DI 4: item 372, pp. 313–314⁵⁹ = IOD: item 193, pp. 243–244. (1424) pertains to a post-plague inheritance dispute between Hrafn Guðmundsson and Ari Guðmundsson.⁶⁰
3. AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. VIII 16 = DI 4: item 389, pp. 339–340 = IOD: item 202, pp. 260–261. (1426) has Ólafur Loftsson, along with 11 other men, witness a ruling in a land dispute between Arnbjörn

and at any rate this proves that Ólafur must have been very closely connected with the Skarðverjar. In DI 4: item 555, p. 520, n. NB, the editor Jón Þorkelsson lists Ólafur as a son of Loftur Guttormsson's mistress Kristín Oddsdóttir, but Einar Bjarnarson deems this "rangt," *Íslenzkir attstuðlar*, Vol 1:208, n. 99. The editor of DI 2, Jón Þorkelsson, left no room for doubts when discussing a certain Eiríkur: "þessi Eiríkr var sonr Torfa í Klofa, Jónssonar, Olafssonar, Loftssonar hins ríka," DI 1: item 22C, p. 100, and the annotation in DI 1: item 95, p. 354. See also Páll Eggert Ólason et al., *Íslenzkar æviskrár frá Landnámstímum til ársloka 1940*, vol. 4:65. It is also curious that in *Skarðsárannál's* A-redaction, Ólafur's name is removed from the list of Loftur ríki Guttormsson's children, while the H-redaction adds his name, *Annálar 1400–1800*, vol. 1.1:58. *Fitiannáll* too has Ólafur as a son of Loftur (whose death is moved back to 1416!), but does not specify his mother, *Annálar 1400–1800*, vol. 2.1:16.

⁵⁷ DI 5: item 186, pp. 200–201. See also DI 4 index, p. 1011.

⁵⁸ Stefán Karlsson, "Ritun Reykjarfjarðarbókar," 137, and "Íslenzk bókagerð á miðöldum," 290. Cf. Lasse Mårtensson, *Studier IAM 557 4to [...]*, 28. Of the diplomas attributed to Ólafur Loftsson, this one was the latest to have been identified by Stefán Karlsson, and is not mentioned in this context in *Íslandske originaldiplomer indtil 1450*.

⁵⁹ Not to be confused with 373, wrongly marked as 372 as well in p. 314 of DI IV.

⁶⁰ IOD, p. IL. Stefán Karlsson pays extra attention to explain why the scribal hand of this document could not have been the aforementioned Hrafn Guðmundsson.

- Einars-son and Jón Jónsson over Sandar í Miðfirði, also in Aðalból, Bessa-staðir, Oddstaður, and Bálkastaðir.⁶¹
4. AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. LXVI 6 = DI 4: item 562 = IOD: item 241, pp. 308–309. (1433) pertains to a land exchange between Björn Sæmundsson and Oddr Snorrason.⁶²
 5. AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. XII 16 = DI 4: item 780 A, pp. 756–757 = IOD: item 320, pp. 389–391. (1449) is a land exchange agreement between Ásgrímr Jónsson and Ólafur Loftsson. Ólafur Loftsson gives his lands in Tjörn and Hafralæk í Aðaldal to Ásgrímr Jónsson and gets Lundarbrekka in return (with the consent of Ásgrímr’s wife Guðrún Magnúsdóttir).⁶³
 6. AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. XII 10 = DI 5: item 33, pp. 33–34 = IOD: item 330, pp. 403–404. (1449) has Jón Helgason and Þorvaldr [sic] Jónsson swear that Þorkell Guðbjartsson sold Lundarbrekka to Ásgrímr Jónsson.⁶⁴
 7. Stock. Perg. 4to 16 (Helgastaðabók)
 - a. ii r: is a record of a transfer of the Helgastaðir church to Ólafur Loftsson from Þorkell Guðbjartsson (DI 4: item 781, p. 758);
 - b. 60v: features a copy of diplomas 5 and 6 above.⁶⁵
 8. AM 557 4to (Skálhóltsbók) contains various sagas, some complete and some fragmentary: *Valdimars saga*, *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, *Hallfreðar saga vandræðaskálds*, *Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, *Eiríks saga rauða*, *Rögnvalds þáttur og Rauðs*, *Dámusta saga*, *Hróa þáttur heimiska*, *Eiríks saga víðförla*, *Stúfs þáttur*, *Karls þáttur vesæla*, and *Sveinka þáttur Steinarssonar*.
 9. AM 162 c fol. could be considered two manuscripts if one considers leaves 8–11 to be separate, though this thesis argues that these texts belong together.⁶⁶

⁶¹ IOD, p. II.

⁶² IOD, p. II.

⁶³ IOD, pp. II–L.

⁶⁴ IOD, pp. II–L.

⁶⁵ IOD, p. L; *Helgastaðabók* [...], eds. Selma Jónsdóttir et al., 84–85 (Icelandic), 194–196 (English).

⁶⁶ Stefán Karlsson, “Ritun Reykjarfjarðarbókar,” 137–138, and “Íslenzk bókagerð,” 291.

Stefán Karlsson poses two assumptions that must be dealt with here:

- a. that all of these texts can be attributed to the same scribe.
- b. that said scribe was Ólafur Loftsson.

Recently, Lasse Mårtensson has argued that AM 557 4to can be split into three parts: 1–23r, 23v–40v, and 41r–48.⁶⁷ This in itself is not contradictory to Stefán Karlsson’s argument,⁶⁸ rather Mårtensson advances the argument by analyzing these and arguing that they stem from a change of hands. If Parts One and Three share the same hand at slightly different time periods, Part Two is written by a different hand entirely; the difference between the parts is most striking due to the abrupt change in script size. The abruptness of the change is made more visible as it happens relatively early into *Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*. As Lasse Mårtensson attests, this is not a necessarily new idea. Louisa Fredrika Tan-Haverhorst had already argued along these lines as early as 1939, though this was immediately contested by Dag Strömbäck the following year. Strömbäck argued that the same scribe could have written different parts of the manuscript at different periods of time, accounting for the differences in script size. Since then there has been no significant discussion of the change in script size.⁶⁹

Mårtensson provides 4 possible explanations as to why the script changed:

1. The same hand would have written both Parts One and Two, but changed size in order to save space.
2. The same scribe wrote both parts but after taking a significant break. He thinks that this is unlikely because of the point in which the break happens (mid-sentence),⁷⁰ but does not immediately dismiss it.

⁶⁷ Mårtensson, *Studier i AM 557 4to*, 30–38.

⁶⁸ Mårtensson himself says that his “studie är avsvedd att utgöra åtminstone en del av Stefán Karlssons efterlysta undersökning,” 29.

⁶⁹ Mårtensson, 32–33.

⁷⁰ This argument holds less water considering the context of the present thesis; the abruptness with which *Ljósvetninga saga*’s ch. 19 suddenly converges has up to now not been

3. A new scribe took over after a long or short period of time, though Mårtensson thinks a long period is unlikely for the same reasons as explanation two.⁷¹
4. Fol. 23v and following would have been erased or damaged and would have needed to be rewritten. Mårtensson says that there is no evidence for this.⁷²

Mårtensson's study continues into a micropaleographic, macropaleographic, and orthographic analysis of the three manuscript parts. The main conclusions that he draws from this are that the micropaleographic evidence points to a clear distinction between Parts One and Two, and a clear similarity between One and Three, though with a certain amount of time (short or long) passing between the latter two. His macropaleographic analysis argues similarly, that Parts One and Three are similar and One and Two different. He dismisses the option that a long break would explain these changes, arguing that it would be unnatural for a scribe to adopt new features and then abandon them, as the scribe of Part Two seems to have done. In terms of orthography, while some words feature a clear change between Part One and Part Two, others exhibit a gradual change. In addition, Part One tends to be more heavily abbreviated than Part Two, with Part Three in the middle. This tendency for fewer abbreviations in Part Two indicates, according to Mårtensson, less likelihood that the change of style was meant to save space. In addition, Mårtensson believes that Part Three was written before Part One.

The importance of Mårtensson's study to the present discussion of Ólafur Loftsson lies in the fact that if the manuscript is split into two scribal hands, the similarities found by Stefán Karlsson, even if proved to be correct, would only fit a single hand of the two. Mårtensson, however, does

given a convincing explanation. Sometimes things work in a logic foreign to ours, and the reason for it is forever lost in a no longer extant exemplum or archetype.

⁷¹ This is less convincing: If parts 1 and 2 indeed have different hands, we do not know for what reasons these were switched; therefore, any period of time (justified by codicological evidence) could have passed between these two.

⁷² Mårtensson, *Studier i AM 557 4to*, 33–34.

not discuss at length the implications of his study on Ólafur's scribal hand, nor does he provide an analysis of the similarities and dissimilarities between the different diplomas and manuscripts. In connection to the texts attributed to Ólafur Loftsson by Stefán Karlsson, Mårtensson indicates a similarity between Parts One and Three of AM 557 4to and AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. VII 29, the first diploma Stefán Karlsson attributed to Ólafur, which is dated to 1420.⁷³ Mårtensson uses this diploma to date AM 557 4to to before 1420.⁷⁴ Mårtensson argues that AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. VII 29 and the other five diplomas attributed to Ólafur are dissimilar, but does not expand the argument. He allows for Ólafur's relative inexperience and development to explain these differences.⁷⁵ AM 162 C fol., however, is most similar to Part Two of AM 557 4to.⁷⁶ This creates a problematic division for the present thesis, since now the works attributed to Ólafur Loftsson can be split up into these three groups:

1. AM 557 4to Parts One and Three and AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. VII 29.
2. The five remaining diplomas and Helgastaðabók copies.
3. AM 557 4to Part Two and AM 162 C fol.

While Mårtensson allows that groups one and two could be attributed to the scribe's change of style with time, group three stands alone. Therefore, even if we accept Stefán Karlsson's external reasoning for attributing the diplomas' scribal hand to Ólafur, this does not help identify AM 162 C fol.'s scribal hand. In fact, if we accept Mårtensson's argument, we might determine that AM 162 C fol.'s scribe could be anyone other than Ólafur Loftsson.

⁷³ Stefán Karlsson himself indicated that AM 557 4to is most similar to this diploma, "Íslensk bókagerð," 290.

⁷⁴ Mårtensson, *Studier i AM 557 4to*, 286–290.

⁷⁵ Mårtensson, 28. Stefán Karlsson said in regards to this: "Óvíst er að Ólafur hafi verið af unglingsaldri 1420, og skriftin á bréfinu frá því ári ber þess merki að vera ekki fullmótuð," "Ritun Rekjarfjarðarbókar," 325.

⁷⁶ Mårtensson, *Studier i AM 557 4to*, 29.

It is possible to approach the matter in another way, and that is the assumption under which this thesis operates. Since Stefán Karlsson himself indicated that AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. VII 29 is exceptional,⁷⁷ we could venture to remove it along with Parts One and Three of AM 557 4to, and retain groups two and three, which could still be associated with Ólafur Loftsson. This assumption remains a hypothesis that cannot be affirmed without paleographical research into the connections between the diplomas and AM 162 C fol. Furthermore, even if AM 162 C fol. and Part Two of AM 557 4to are not scribed by Ólafur, these two scribes were nevertheless connected, and operated in the same cultural and perhaps political milieu. The thesis will continue in a careful manner to attribute AM 162 C fol. to the hand that scribed the five diplomas identified by Stefán Karlsson.

The second assumption that needs to be dealt with is whether or not the scribe here consistently identified is, indeed, Ólafur Loftsson. Stefán Karlsson provides little paleographical information as to why all six diplomas were written by the same hand, besides the common feature of an ‘o’ hooked from above (ó) “without regard for phonetic value.”⁷⁸ It is noteworthy that in his analysis of AM 557 4to, Mårtensson finds that Part One and Part Two share a similar use of ‘ó’ for /ö/ and /o/,⁷⁹ arguing that the scribe of Parts One and Three had gradually picked this usage up.⁸⁰ Mårtensson does not address why this unique feature would appear in both the hands of Part One and Three and of Part Two, but it strengthens a connection between the two hands of the manuscript. Once he determined a single hand for these diplomas, Stefán based his scribal attribution on external evidence.⁸¹ Stefán responds to the *Diplomatarium Islandicum*

⁷⁷ Stefán Karlsson, “Íslensk bókagerð,” 290.

⁷⁸ *Helgastaðabók*, 84 (Icelandic), 195 (English).

⁷⁹ Mårtensson, *Studier i AM 557 4to*, 200–201.

⁸⁰ Mårtensson, 282, 287.

⁸¹ Stefán Karlsson had explained his general method for dating and localizing manuscripts in his 1999 “The Localisation and Dating of Medieval Icelandic Manuscript.” There he argues the benefits of using circumstantial evidence: “a greater number of charters reduces the number of persons who can be seen to have been present on all the occasions when the charters were executed or to have had an interest in them all. And it is also an

editors' argument that AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. VIII 16 was scribed by Hrafn Guðmundsson, noting that the other diplomas by the same hand were written after the latter's death, which automatically dismisses him as the possible scribe.⁸² Stefán traces Hvassafell in Eyjafjörður to Ólafur Loftsson's family, first with a mention of its possession by Halldórr Loftsson in 1403,⁸³ and then with mention that it was under the control of Margrét Ólafsdóttir, Ólafur Loftsson's daughter, in 1488.⁸⁴ Stefán Karlsson then uses this information to determine that Ólafur Loftsson was in possession of Hvassafell, so that when AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. XII 10 is written down at Hvassafell, it would be by Ólafur Loftsson's hand.

The argument makes sense: AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. XII 16 attests to the land transaction in which Ólafur Loftsson acquired Lundarbrekka and the church of Helgastaðir.⁸⁵ In the letters from Bishop Gottskálk,⁸⁶ Ólafur Loftsson's possession of the church is said to be contested by Þorkell Guðbjartsson, and that a serious dispute had arisen around this, to the point where the bishop intervened. Therefore, AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. XII 10—the document in which witnesses attest to have been present when Þorkell Guðbjartsson sold Ásgrímr Jónsson his property in Lundarbrekka—is clearly a document that would have been dear to him, especially in light of him being summoned by the bishop to defend his possession of the land. That the same hand, according to Stefán Karlsson, copies AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. XII 16 and AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. XII 10 into Stock. Perg. 4to 16, as well as writes a statement regarding the change of the church's ownership, strengthens the conviction that it would have been Ólafur Loftsson.⁸⁷ All subsequent attributions that Stefán makes stem from this point of

advantage if the relevant charters are chronologically spread over a longish period, since this reduces the possibility that likely candidates had the same secretary the whole time; and one can in certain cases observe small changes in writing which can contribute to a closer dating of any manuscript which might be in the charter-writer's hand," 145.

⁸² IOD, p. II.

⁸³ IOD: item 155, pp. 198–202.

⁸⁴ DI 4: item 568, pp. 640–641. On this document see also IOD, p. II. Margrét is the one deciding regarding the property in this case rather than her husband Bjarni Ólason.

⁸⁵ DI 4: item 781, p. 758; a text found in Helgastaðabók.

⁸⁶ DI 5: item 60, pp. 74–75 and DI 5: item 63, pp. 77–78.

⁸⁷ IOD, p. L.

departure, strengthened by the fact that AM Dipl. Isl. Facs. VIII 16 contains Ólafur Loftsson as a named witness. The fact that Ólafur Loftsson was Hrafn Guðmundsson's son-in-law further supports Stefán's arguments, especially in light of *Diplomatarium Islandicum's* attribution of one of these to Hrafn himself. It is important to note that Stefán wrote that a more extensive discussion needs to be conducted.⁸⁸

The fact that we have a named person whose interests are best served by a text does not mean that that person is the one who wrote it. It is clear from the diplomas we possess that the scribe assumed to be Ólafur Loftsson is someone who has the latter's best interests in mind, or someone employed at his service. Not committing to a precise identity, but acknowledging whose side the scribe is on might be the best compromise. It allows us to avoid a reading of the manuscript that is too invested in the personal history of one specific man, and allows us to zoom out to his kin group, his region, and, perhaps, his shared ideologies. A future paleographical study could either strengthen or entirely dismiss this argument, and as such one should be careful not to pull a Barði Guðmundsson⁸⁹ and invest too much of the interpretation in the identity of one man.

To conclude this discussion, it is almost impossible to ascertain whether Ólafur Loftsson was the scribe of AM 162 C fol. Nonetheless, this person must have been closely tied to Ólafur, to the extent that he would copy a document declaring his control of Helgastaðir into a manuscript with a Saint's life. The issue of whether or not there is a direct link between Helgastaðabók and the five diplomas of the same hand to AM 162 C fol. remains open, but this thesis will trust Stefán Karlsson's reasoning as the basis for its historical assumption.

⁸⁸ Stefán Karlsson, "Ritun Reykjarfjarðarbókar," 138, n. 57.

⁸⁹ In the sense of understanding the choices made by the fifteenth-century compiler of *Ljósvefninga saga* as a *roman à clef*, rather than in the sense of gathering men for a battle in a heath (à la *Heiðarvíga saga's* Barði Guðmundarson).

1.3.2.2 Copies of the C-redaction: Choosing an Edition

The obvious choice for a working edition of *Ljósvetninga saga* is Björn Sigfússon's Íslensk fornrit edition from 1940, as it is considered the standard in the field and is the basis for Andersson and Miller's English translation. However, I argue that Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason's 1830 edition is the better choice, based on the use of AM 485 4to as its main manuscript, with the reservation that Þorgeir and Þorsteinn were so invested in their readings of the post-medieval manuscript that they preferred it at times over AM 162 c fol. itself.⁹⁰

It is important to note that all of the C-redaction paper manuscripts examined, including those that belong to the AM 514 4to tradition, are most likely copies of the same copy of AM 162 c fol.⁹¹ There are several indications of this. The abrupt ending of *Þórarins þáttur ofsa* is a sign that, by the time the manuscript was copied for the first time, this story already ended with a lacuna. However, AM 514 4to ends with a synopsis that makes no mention of Þórarinn ofsi, so it could have potentially stemmed from a copy of AM 162 c fol. that did not include the *þáttur*. The most illustrative example that includes AM 514 4to can be found in *Sörli þáttur*. There, in AM 162 c fol., when Þórarinn discusses Sörli Brodd-Helgason's marriage proposal with Guðmundr inn ríki, the following dialogue appears: "satt er þat. s. Gud. þórarinn. 00 0ueriu letztu suarat uerda. eigi syndizt mer þat. kuat hann. huat kom til þess. hefir hann eigi ættina til. e. er hann eigi 00 uel mannaðr sem þu uillt."⁹² Here all of the paper manuscripts, including AM 514 4to 6r, write a variant of "Satt er þat, segir Guðmundr. Þórarinn mælti: vel mannaðr, sem þú veizt."⁹³ The paper copies jump over a manuscript line in AM 162 c fol., and since they do this in unison, the omission must stem from their common exemplar.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ E.g., *Ljósv.* 1830, 15, n. 3.

⁹¹ *Origines Islandicae*, 344, 346; *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, XIX–XX, XXV, XXVIII; ÍF 10:LVII; and Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, "AM 561 4to," 70.

⁹² "Syv sagablaðe," ed. Jón Helgason, 44.

⁹³ *Ljósv.* 1830, 15.

⁹⁴ See *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 129–130.

No proper stemma of *Ljósvetninga saga*'s manuscripts has been made, nor will it be attempted here,⁹⁵ despite the fact that the following discussion provides some observations that will hopefully contribute to this goal.

1.3.2.2.1 *Ljósvetninga saga* Critical Editions' Preferred Paper Manuscripts

Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason's 1830 edition and first publication of *Ljósvetninga saga* was based mostly on AM 485 4to (which they marked as *A*), noting some variants in its critical apparatus of Isl papp 35 fol. (which they marked as *S*), AM 162 c fol. (which they marked as *C*), the A-redaction's AM 561 4to (in the parts that are shared between the two redactions, and which they marked as *D*), and the B-redaction's AM 514 4to (which they marked as *B*).⁹⁶ Guðmundur Þorláksson, on the other hand, considered AM 485 4to "einna lélegast af öllum pappírshandritunum, og má heita fullt af vitleysum."⁹⁷ Guðbrandur Vigfússon says about AM 485 4to, that it is "a pretty good copy of 'a,' as far as we can test it against the vellum leaves."⁹⁸ About the 1830 edition's choice of AM 485 4to, Björn Sigfússon says that it "fylgir afargölluðu pappírshandriti."⁹⁹ Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell's *Ljósvetninga saga* edition, printed in their *Origines Islandicae*, which only follows until Guðmundr's death in chapter 21, also followed AM 485 4to as the main text for the C-redaction.

As noted, Guðmundur Þorláksson dubbed Kall 616 4to (which he named C3) as "bezt af öllum handritunum og næst skinnblöðunum,"¹⁰⁰ and used it as the basis for his own 1880 edition of *Ljósvetninga saga*. Guðbrandur Vigfússon called this "a second-rate MS."¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ A very initial one was offered by Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell, in which AM 514 4to and BL ADD 4867 4to (written as "BM 4867") were designated as separate from AM 485 4to, with all three stemming from the same seventeenth-century copy.

⁹⁶ Unnumbered two-paged introduction.

⁹⁷ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, XXIX.

⁹⁸ *Origines Islandicae*, 346.

⁹⁹ Björn Sigfússon, *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*, 3.

¹⁰⁰ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, XXX.

¹⁰¹ *Origines Islandicae*, 348.

While Björn Sigfússon avoided judgement of Guðmundur Þorláksson's choice of Kall 616 4to, he did note that it is a copy of his preferred manuscript, JS 624 4to, Látrabók.¹⁰² Jón Helgason pointed out that some of the readings in JS 624 4to were added to this post-medieval manuscript that were never in AM 162 c fol. itself.¹⁰³ This implies that JS 624 4to does not strictly follow AM 162 c fol. While not addressing JS 624 4to, Guðbrandur Vigfússon did discuss BL ADD 4867 4to, which has many shared readings with JS 624 4to. He marked this manuscript as *a*³ and said of it, that “The scribe has made one or two emendations, for instance, *viner*, 4.10, and he has slurred over corrupt clauses; thus he gives 4. 14 thus—‘ok kvaz hann hafa þer í hende sem þú vilder,’ instead of ‘ok kvað hann hafa half-þynno eina í hende’ of the *a*¹ [AM 485 4to]. This last sample suffices to show that it would not be feasible to base the text on *a*³ instead of on *a*¹.”¹⁰⁴ JS 624 4to reads very similarly: “og qv(at) h(an)n hafa þi(er) i hende s(e)m þü villd(er).”¹⁰⁵

1.3.2.2.2 JS 624 4to vs. AM 485 4to

As is clear, there are two very contradictory approaches towards AM 485 4to on the one hand, and JS 624 4to and its connected manuscripts on the other hand. In order to choose between Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason's 1830 edition and Björn Sigfússon's 1940 edition, a comparison of their two base-manuscripts with AM 162 c fol. is needed to answer the question: which of the two reflect the only extant medieval manuscript of the C-redaction better? As will be shown, AM 485 4to offers a more accurate reading, while JS 624 4to has a tendency to add readings that are not present in AM 162 c fol.

¹⁰² ÍF 10:LVIII, n. 2.

¹⁰³ “Syv sagablade,” ed. Jón Helgason, 10.

¹⁰⁴ *Origines Islandicae*, 347.

¹⁰⁵ JS 624 45v.

Example A: JS 624 4to vs. AM 485 4to

For example, in *Vøðu-Brands þáttr*, AM 162 c fol. 2r:¹⁰⁶

AM 162 c fol. 2r		ok	Tala	nu	um	malit	ok	urdu		a	allt	sattir
JS 624 4to 44v		og	Tala		um	málid		urded þeir	á	allt	vel	sátter
AM 485 4to 19r		og	Tala		um	málid	og	urdu		á	allt	sætter

Notice that both JS 624 4to and AM 485 4to remove the “nu.” This is common to all C-redaction manuscripts I have examined, whereas JS 624 4to changes the form of *verða* and adds a “þeir” and “vel” that are not to be found in AM 162 c fol., while AM 485 4to remains relatively faithful to the medieval manuscript.

Example B: JS 624 4to vs. AM 485 4to

Some further examples can be found in chapter 27 of *Ljósvetninga saga*, which is found in AM 162 c fol., 3v:

AM 162 c fol. 3v		ok	Er	þessir	hofdu	hladit	seglinu.
JS 624 4to 85r		og	Er	þeir	hofdu	hladed	seglum
AM 485 4to 55v		og	Er	þeir	hofdu	hladed	seglum.

Here, both JS 624 and AM 485 replace “ok er þessir” with “og er þeir,” as seems to be the C-redaction copy rule. The same goes for “seglinu,” which all paper manuscripts I have examined read as “seglum.”

Example C: JS 624 4to vs. AM 485 4to

AM 162 c fol. 3v		sidan	reid	Skeggbroddi
JS 624 4to 85r			leit	skeggbr.
AM 485 4to 55v		sidan	reid	Skegg Brodde

Noticeably, JS 624 4to replaces the *reid* with *leit* and drops the *síðan*, while AM 485 offers a correct reading.

¹⁰⁶ All subsequent readings of AM 162 c fol. are based on “Syv Sagablade,” ed. Jón Helgason.

Example D: JS 624 4to vs. AM 485 4to

AM 162 c fol. 3v	munu	uer	fara
JS 624 4to 85r	munum	vier	fara
AM 485 4to 55v	munu	vid	fara

Here JS 624 4to offers a more correct reading than AM 485 4to.

Example E: JS 624 4to vs. AM 485 4to

AM 162 c fol. 3v	þeir	gera	nu	sua.	ok	uar	þa	rætt
JS 624 4to 85r	og	ganga hvórutveggiu til	búða sína	var	þá	rædt		
AM 485 4to 55v	þeir	giora	nu	svo.	og	var	þar	Rætt

Here the most dramatic difference is found between JS 624 4to and AM 162 c fol.'s reading of AM 162 c fol. 3v. JS 624 4to eliminates the “þeir gera nu sua,” and adds a new clause, whereas AM 485 4to follows the section, albeit replacing “þa” with “þar.” This change in JS 624 4to is significant, and it is clear that the manuscript’s exemplar, or its scribe, was trying to change the narrative flow.¹⁰⁷

Example F: JS 624 4to vs. AM 485 4to

AM 162 c fol. 3v			þat	ætlaek
JS 624 4to 85r	hann	svarar	þad	ætla ek
AM 485 4to 55v			þad	ætla ek

JS 624 4to adds “hann svarar,” while AM 485 4to adds nothing.

Example G: JS 624 4to vs. AM 485 4to

AM 162 c fol. 3v	e'	þo	hugar
JS 624 4to 85r		oc	hugur
AM 485 4to 55v	er	þo	hugur

¹⁰⁷ BL Add 4867 4to offers a similar reading.

JS 624 4to’s attempt to correct the unclear reading offered by AM 162 c fol. may make for a more streamlined text, but it takes the reading further away from the earlier manuscript.

Example H: JS 624 4to vs. AM 485 4to

AM 162 c fol. 3v	enn	hamingju.		uggir	mig		at	ek
JS 624 4to 85r	enn	hamingjan	rádr	ugger	mig	þó	ad	eg
AM 485 4to 55v	enn	hamingian		uggir	mig		ad	eg

Here, once again, JS 624 4to adds text to clarify certain aspects of the text, but in doing so distances itself from AM 162 c fol.

In conclusion, it is quite clear that AM 485 4to is a significantly better choice than JS 624 4to, since Björn Sigfússon’s favorite manuscript interpolates, changes, and removes too many words. Though the words removed from JS 624 4to are mostly interjections, the words and clauses that are added are significant, since they distance the manuscript from AM 162 c fol.

AM 485 4to, then, sports a better reading of AM 162 c fol. than JS 624 4to. Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason’s 1830 edition, and Guðbrandur Þorláksson and Powell’s *Origines Islandicae* edition, are therefore a more reliable representation of *Ljósvetninga saga*’s C-redaction than Guðmundur Þorláksson’s 1880 edition or Björn Sigfússon’s Íslensk fornrit edition.¹⁰⁸

1.3.2.2.3 A Selected Comparison of AM 485 4to to Other Paper Manuscripts

While it is outside of the scope of this thesis to compare all of the extant paper manuscripts, in order to establish the use of Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason’s 1830 *Ljósvetninga saga* edition, several additional

¹⁰⁸ Though *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, ed. Guðmundur Þorláksson remains better for the variance-minded, as it marks most (though by no means all) of the significant variants between the extant AM 162 c fol. leaves and its paper copies, and between the paper copies themselves.

comparisons will be provided. Given the high number of extant C-redaction manuscripts, this investigation limits itself to manuscripts dated to 1750 and earlier, excluding JS 624 4to (Látrabók), which has already been discussed (see also manuscript list in the appendix):

AM 514 4to	Boreal 119	Kall 621 4to
Isl papp 35 fol	NKS 1704 4to ^I	Lbs 1629 4to
AM 485 4to	NKS 1714 4to	Thott 984 I–III fol.
AM 554 e 4to	NKS 1704 4to ^{II}	
BL ADD 4867 4to	Kall 616 4to	

Of these, some can be immediately dismissed. As Björn Sigfússon argued, Kall 616 4to is a copy of JS 624 4to,¹ or an associated manuscript. The manuscript Kall 621 4to omits too much of the narrative to be a good representative of *Ljósvetninga saga*'s C-redaction.² In addition, it frequently omits words or slightly changes the text, perhaps to make a cleaner text, but nonetheless one that is further from AM 162 c fol.³ Lbs 1629 4to could be a copy of the earlier AM 554 e 4to, since both skip the opening dialogue of *Vøðu-Brands þáttr* in chapter 12, as well as share similar readings.⁴ Boreal 119 offers unique and interesting readings, but since it is merely a phrase-book, it is not helpful to advance our understanding of the C-redaction tradition. It distorts many of the quotes it takes from *Ljósvetninga saga*,⁵

¹ ÍF 10:LVIII

² *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, XXX.

³ For example, for AM 162 c fol.'s "geingu up jmoti. þeim jlendingu," Kall 621 4to reads "g(e)ngu ad lending ä muote þ(e)im"; AM 162 c fol.'s "þu farir til budar" is changed in Kall 621 4to to "þu kom(ir) i bud." One curiosity is in chapter 4, where AM 561 4to reads "gior(ir) eftir vorn vilia." Kall 621 4to alone recreates this with "þu gior(er) vorn vilia," whereas all the other copies of the C-redaction that I have examined read this as a "giorir það sem vit/vier vilium." This could be a scribal innovation, but it certainly problematizes the transmission of the saga.

⁴ The most striking being chapter 4's "kalla þeir oss onyta i kvíðburdenum," which all other C-redaction manuscripts I have examined read as "ómæta," or chapter 19's "nu liggia ute yduren i mier." Of the earlier manuscripts, this adding of "i mier" is unique to AM 554 e 4to, which reads "nu liggia a uti ydrin i mier."

⁵ For example, it reads "þar kom gudm(undr) og brä bonda þori Eintal" (206v), where AM 162 c fol., 2v reads "þar kom Gud', ok bra bonda. þegar a eintal," "Syv sagablade," 54.

though it does offer at least one instance where it could have had access to a better copy of AM 162 c fol. or perhaps even had seen it in a better condition.⁶ NKS 1704^{II} is most likely a copy of AM 514 4to, and even offers the same summary of chapters 22–31.⁷ Guðmundur Þorláksson determined that Thott 984 I–III fol. is a copy of AM 485 4to and Kall 616 4to,⁸ but it could also be derived from JS 624 4to (or BL ADD 4867 4to).⁹ These remaining five manuscripts will be compared with AM 485 4to: AM 514 4to, AM 554 e 4to, Isl papp 35 fol.,¹⁰ NKS 1704 4to^I, and NKS 1714 4to. In addition, a short comparison between JS 624 4to and BL ADD 4867 4to will be provided.

AM 514 4to

AM 514 4to is considered a decent copy of AM 162 c fol., and certainly an early one, but its main flaw is that it ends with a synopsis of chapters 22–31, and skips over chapter 32, *Þóraríns þáttr ofsa*. Its importance in the discussion of *Ljósvetninga saga* warrants attention even though it cuts the story short. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell say about the manuscript that: “we note that the scribe, tiring of writing, gives his own abstract of Section VIII: that he often skips corrupt clauses, for instance 4.10 (p. 385, i. 1); and that he keeps a few clauses skipped in *a*¹ [AM 485 4to], for

⁶ AM 162 c fol., 1r’s “enn ek mun forúitnast ok sennda þer ord” is followed by a lacuna, “Syv sagablade,” 43. Boreal 119, 205v reads this as “Eg mun forvitnast til at alijta málum,” which is a unique reading.

⁷ ÍF 10:LVIII–LIX.

⁸ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, XXX.

⁹ For example, in chapter 4 when JS 624 4to reads “ej fara malaefni vor þannen til,” Thott 984 I–III fol. reads “Ecki fara mála-efni sua til.” which fits the more common C-redaction reading of this sentence, including the AM 485 4to reading of it. When AM 485 4to reads “Þorsteinn qvad su mær,” Thott 984 I–III fol. reads “þorstæin suarar: Su mær,” which is the reading that JS 624 4to provides, but also that of AM 162 c fol. An illustrative example is in the AM 485 4to sentence “foru festar fram, skilledi brudkaup vera a þvera,” and JS 624’s alternative reading “föru festar fram oc skilldi brudkaup vera ad þverá,” adding a superfluous “ok” and replacing an “á” with “at.” AM 162 c fol.’s reading is similar to AM 485 4to’s, so this variance does not contribute much to our understanding of that text.

¹⁰ These three, alongside AM 485 4to and JS 624 4to, were consulted by Jón Helgason in his reading of the AM 162 c fol. fragments, “Syv sagablade,” 43.

instance 5.20 (p. 409, l. 1).”¹¹ Guðmundur Þorláksson shared this sentiment.¹² There is not an extant corresponding section in AM 162 c fol. with which to qualify these supposed improvements.

Another feature of the manuscript, which made Guðmundur Þorláksson and others dub it as a unique “B” redaction,¹³ is that it replaces the story of Guðmundr inn ríki’s sons with a synopsis. Benedikt Sveinsson argued that the synopsis must be a copy, due to the illogical sentence “ok eigi vildi hann, at Koðrán bjó í Möðrufelli.”¹⁴ In actuality, the mistake is based on Guðmundur Þorláksson’s misreading, since the manuscript itself reads in 23v: “eigi vildi hann að hann bygge hia ser a móðru vøllum, samdist þa so að kodran biö I móðru felle.”¹⁵ While the synopsis could be an original, it is by no means a perfect summary of the chapters: it replaces Friðgerðr’s father’s name Ísolfr with Friðgeirr, and replaces Høskuldr Þorvarðsson’s patronym to Þorgeirsson. Benedikt says that it is wrong to describe Høskuldr and Hrafn as eager for the battle of Kakalahóll,¹⁶ but this can be strongly disputed, even if later the two seek an excuse to end the martial engagement. Despite these mistakes, nothing in the synopsis gives the impression that it is not derived from a copy of AM 162 c fol. The difference in names, like Høskuldr’s father and the confusion between Ísolfr and Friðgeirr as Friðgerðr’s father are more likely to stem from forgetfulness than an artistic program or oral variants. This is supported by the position of Friðgerðr’s story in the synopsis: it is added at the end, before the description of Brandr’s death, which can be read as a sign that the synopsis’s author remembered to add the reason for the feud between the Ljósvetningar and the Möðruvellingar after already writing the bulk of it. In some places AM 514 4to provides a better reading than AM 485 4to:

¹¹ *Origines Islandicae*, 347.

¹² *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, XXIV–XXV.

¹³ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, XXIV.

¹⁴ *Ljósvetninga saga*, ed. Benedikt Sveinsson, VII.

¹⁵ This is very close to Benedikt’s guess as to what sentence was missing in the process of copying: “hafa tvíbýli á Möðruvøllum. En þat samdist svá,” *Ljósvetninga saga*, ed. Benedikt Sveinsson, VII; *Ljósv.* 1830 provides a more accurate copy of the synopsis in pages 70–71.

¹⁶ *Ljósvetninga saga*, ed. Benedikt Sveinsson, VII.

AM 162 c fol. 1r	uel	mannadr	sem	þu	uillt
AM 514 4to 6r	vel	manadur	sem	þu	villt
AM 485 4to 8v	vel	maanadur	sem	þu	veist

On the other hand, there are cases where AM 485 (and other paper manuscripts) offer better readings of AM 162 c fol.:

AM 162 c fol. 1r	Enn	hallæri	mikit	uar	nodr	þangat
AM 514 4to 6r	en	hallære	var	mikid		
AM 485 4to 8v	en	hallæri	var	mikid	nordur	þar

Despite occasionally providing better readings, AM 514 4to does not offer a substantially better alternative to AM 485 4to. Considering it cuts the story short in chapter 21, AM 514 4to should be considered a lesser copy than AM 485 4to.¹⁷

AM 554 e 4to

Guðmundur Þorláksson called AM 554 e 4to (which he marks as C2) better than AM 485 4to “að sjálfu efninu til,” but does not offer any readings or explanations to back it up, especially since he himself notes that AM 554 e 4to is “ekki vel skrifað og opt misritað.”¹⁸ Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason thought AM 485 4to and AM 554 e 4to read very similarly.¹⁹ AM 554 e 4to occasionally offers better readings than AM 485 4to. For example:

AM 162 c fol. 3v	munu	uer	fara
AM 554 e 4to 34v	munum	vier	fara
AM 485 4to 55v	munu	vid	fara

¹⁷ Erichsen emphasizes that the variant readings in this manuscript stem from a scribal correction rather than from closer access to AM 162 c fol. Erichsen, *Untersuchungen*, 15.

¹⁸ *Glúma og Ljósvefninga saga*, XXIX.

¹⁹ *Ljósv. 1830*, unnumbered introduction.

In this instance, like JS 624 4to, AM 554e 4to offers a more correct reading of AM 162 c fol. 3v. Shortly after, however, there is an example where AM 485 4to offers a better reading:

AM 162 c fol. 3v	komdu	nu	heill.
AM 554 e 4to 34v	kom þu	nu	sæll
AM 485 4to 55v	kom þu	nu	heill,

Another example of a better reading offered by AM 485 4to:

AM 162 c fol. 3v	at	þu	farir
AM 554 e 4to 34v	ad	þu	gengir
AM 485 4to 55v	ad	þu	farir

An instance where AM 554e 4to adds text for clarification:

AM 162 c fol. 3v	ef	saman	lysti	Lidinu.		þat	ætlaek
AM 554 e 4to 34v	ef	saman	liste	lidinu,	hann svarar	þad	ætla eg
AM 485 4to 55v	ef	saman	Liste	Lidinu		þad	ætla eg

As a final example:

AM 162 c fol. 3v	e'	þo	hugar	enn	hamingiu.	uggir	mig
AM 554 e 4to 34v				en	hamingan	rædur	uggir mig
AM 485 4to 55v	er	þo	hugur	enn	hamingian	uggir	mig

Here AM 554 e 4to both omits and adds text to AM 162 c fol. Considering this comparison and the omission of, for example, the beginning dialogue of chapter 12 between Þorsteinn Síðu-Hallsson and Þorkell Geitisson in *Vöðu-Brands þáttur*,²⁰ AM 485 4to is a more reliable text witness than AM 554 e 4to.

²⁰ AM 554 e 4to, 12r.

Isl papp 35 fol.

Guðmundur Þorláksson did not examine Isl papp 35 fol. at length, but stated that its readings mostly agree with AM 554 e 4to,²¹ and would presumably see it as superior to AM 485 4to. Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason thought that, like AM 554 e 4to, it offers a very similar reading to AM 485 4to.²² Isl papp 35 fol. is indeed a good copy of the saga, but when they differ, AM 485 4to usually offers better readings of AM 162 c fol. For example:

AM 162 c fol. 2r	ecki	sidr	mun	þer.	þat		ef	þu	ueitzt
Isl papp 35 fol. 38v	ecke	sidur	mun	þier	þad	þykja	ef	þu	veist
AM 485 4to 19v	ekke	sydur	mun	þier	þad		ef	þu	veist

As with the JS 624 4to branch and AM 554 e 4to (which reads “þekka”), Isl papp 35 fol., adds “þykja,” which was not in AM 162 c fol., rendering AM 485 4to’s reading as superior, though immediately after AM 485 4to omits a *hann* where AM 162 c fol. and Isl papp 35 fol. include it:

AM 162 c fol. 2r	xxxxx	xxxxx	nu	nyrra	tidenda.	þorsteinn.	hann	svarar.
Isl papp 35 fol. 38v	hvad	er	nu	nyrra	Tidinda	þörsteinn?	hann	svarar
AM 485 4to 19v	hvad	er	nu	nyrra	tydinda,	Þorsteinn		svarar

In general, the differences between AM 485 4to and Isl papp 35 fol. are minute. Another example:

AM 162 c fol. 3v	ef	saman	lysti	Lidinu.		þat	ætlaek
Isl papp 35 fol. 108r	Ef	samann	lysti	lidinu?	hann svarar:	þad	ætla Eg
AM 485 4to 55v	ef	saman	Liste	Lidinu		þad	ætla eg

Here Isl papp 35 fol. adds “hann svarar,” while AM 485 4to does not.²³ In all my examinations the same trend held: both manuscripts offer generally correct readings, but AM 485 4to slightly better ones. The connection between this manuscript could actually indicate a family connection. AM

²¹ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, XXXI.

²² *Ljósv. 1830*, unnumbered introduction.

²³ Isl papp 35 fol., 108v.

485 4to was scribed by Jón Hákonarson between 1675–1700. His brother Árni was acquainted with Helgi Ólafsson in Copenhagen, the scribe of *Isl papp 35 fol.*²⁴ It is possible that Árni could have procured his brother’s exemplar for Helgi, or procured the exemplar from Helgi for his brother.

NKS 1704 4to^I

The first copy of *Ljósvetninga saga* in NKS 1704 4to offers a good reading of the saga, but does feature small mistake readings or ‘corrections’ that distance it from AM 162 c fol.:

AM 162 c fol. 2r	þu	gerir		þat	ecki	sidr
NKS 1704 4to^I 11r	þú	gíórer		þier	ekki	sijdur
AM 485 4to 19r	þu	giorer,	er	þat	ecki	sidur

Here an *er* was scratched out of the AM 485 4to text, but it is unclear when. NKS 1704 4to^I exhibits a more dramatic variation, replacing “þat” with “þier.” In another example:

AM 162 c fol. 2r	xxxxx	xxxxx	nu	nyrra	tidenda,	þorsteinn,	hann	suarar.
NKS 1704 4to^I 11r	hvad	er	nu	nyrra?		Þorsteinn		svarar
AM 485 4to 19v	hvad	er	nu	nyrra	tydinda,	Þorsteinn		svarar

Here NKS 1704 4to^I omits *tíðinda* and *hann*, the latter omitted by AM 485 4to as well. On the other hand, NKS 1704 4to^I proves its reliability as one of the few manuscripts that does not add a *þykja* in the sentence “mun þier þad ef þu veist”:

AM 162 c fol. 2r	ecki	sidr	mun	þer.	þat		ef	þu	ueitzt
JS 624 4to 45r	ekki	sijdur	mun	þier	það	þikia	ef	þú	veist
Isl papp 35 fol. 38v	ecke	sidur	mun	þier	þad	þykja	ef	þu	veist
AM 485 4to 19v	ekke	sydur	mun	þier	þad		ef	þu	veist
NKS 1704 4to^I 11r	ecki	sijdur	mun	þier	þad		ef	þu	veist

It is possible that NKS 1704 4to^I used the same exemplar of AM 485 4to and *Isl papp 35 4to*, since it seems closest to their readings, occasionally

²⁴ Jonna Louis-Jensen, “Árni Hákonarson fra Vatnshorn,” 518.

surpassing both, but occasionally providing faulty readings. This excludes the possibility that AM 485 4to copied from it, unless it had another exemplar to consult with. Despite occasionally offering slightly better readings, AM 485 4to is to be preferred over NKS 1704 4to^l because of the latter’s occasional omissions.

NKS 1714 4to

NKS 1714 4to is a rather good copy. As Guðmundur Þorláksson’s critical apparatus shows, NKS 1714 4to frequently offers better readings than AM 485 4to, but occasionally worse.²⁵ As with AM 554 e 4to, this is a problematic copy in that it cuts out the beginning of the *Voðu-Brands þátr* chapter 12 dialogue between Þorsteinn Síðu-Hallsson and Þorkell Geitisson,²⁶ but in addition to that, it also cuts out the end of *Sprla þátr*.²⁷

Sidenote: JS 624 4to vs. BL ADD 4867 4to

It is worth noting that Jón Þórðarson’s BL ADD 4867 4to is a better copy of the same tradition reflected in JS 624 4to, which Björn chose as the main representative of the C-redaction. One example suffices to illustrate this:

AM 162 c fol. 3v	þeir gera nu sua.	ok
JS 624 4to 85r		og ganga hvórutveggju til búða sina
BL ADD 4867 4to 180r	þeir giora nu svo	og ganga huorutueggju til búða sina

BL ADD 4867 4to keeps AM 162 c fol.’s “þeir giora nu svo,” before the added clause “og ganga hvorutveggja til búða sina,” which better reflects AM 162 c fol., though still interpolating new material, which makes this a less reliable copy. BL ADD 4867 4to’s *Ljósvetninga saga* was scribed c. 1691

²⁵ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 129–136, 150–158. In some cases, the variances marked by Guðmundur Þorláksson are faulty or incomplete, for example when pointing out the much discussed above *þykja* being missing from AM 485 4to, Guðmundur does not note that it is missing from AM 162 c fol. as well, *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 152.

²⁶ 280v.

²⁷ 275r.

by Jón Þórðarson, who lived, among other places, in Strandsel in Ísafjarðardjúp.²⁸ JS 624 4to was scribed at the year 1695, at the farm Látur, which is also in Ísafjarðardjúp, not far from Strandsel.²⁹ Given the temporal and spatial proximity, it is likely that the two manuscripts either consulted the same exemplar, or that JS 624 4to used BL ADD 4867 4to as an exemplar.

In conclusion, it seems that AM 485 4to is the best manuscript if one wants to keep ‘on track’ with the saga and not miss many significant scenes or clauses (unless a closer investigation into the post-1750 manuscripts reveals a better one). It is not, however, a perfect copy. If one were to create an edition of the saga that is close to the original, they would have no choice but to do as Guðmundur Þorláksson and Björn Sigfússon did and create a composite text. The best course would be to use AM 485 4to as a basis, and supplement this mainly with Isl Papp 35 4to, as well as AM 554 e 4to, and of course AM 162 c fol. in the parts of the narrative where it is extant. For the narratological and plot-focused analysis of this thesis, however, AM 485 4to is the best choice, since Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason’s edition is readily available. References to the Íslenzk fornrit edition will be provided since it is considered the standard in the field. Since Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason were so invested in AM 485 4to that they at times preferred its readings over AM 162 c fol., Jón Helgason’s reading of the medieval manuscript is a useful supplement.

²⁸ Icelandic Scribes Project, University of Copenhagen, accessed 29 May 2019, <https://icelandicscribesproject.com/manuscripts/london-bl/add-4867/> and <https://icelandicscribesproject.com/scribes/jon-thordarson/>.

²⁹ JS 624 4to 1r.

2. The Part About the Critics

In the last few decades, *Ljósvetninga saga* has taken a relatively minor place in saga studies, but this was not the case in the early twentieth century, when it stood at the forefront of the Bookprose vs. Freeprose debate. Ever since the Freeprose scholar Knut Liestøl framed *Ljósvetninga saga*'s two redactions as a unique example of two separate oral traditions of the same story, scholarship has engaged with this argument, and it has become the main prism through which the saga has been looked at.¹ Freeprose and Bookprose were terms coined by Andreas Heusler,² and the debate between these theories reflected opposing stances on the origins of the *Íslendingasögur*. Freeprose theory advocates the position that these sagas were orally composed as unities before being written down. Bookprose theory, on the other hand, supposes that while the *Íslendingasögur* could have originated from oral traditions to one degree or another, these were effectively literary compositions.³ The opposition between these two general approaches led the debate surrounding *Ljósvetninga saga*, and the notions of the origins has influenced the way in which these sagas were edited, dated, and judged, but it is important to remember that the differences between the two theories were at times minute, and that the positions of scholars that operated within each framework were rarely as clear-cut as they appear from a distance.

This chapter first provides a survey of the main debates surrounding *Ljósvetninga saga*, most notably its origins and composition. Throughout,

¹ An excellent review of *Ljósvetninga saga* scholarship up to the 1950s is found in Hallvard Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet i Ljósvetninga saga*, 8–17, as well as Theodore Andersson, *The Problem of Icelandic Saga Origins*, 150–165. A shorter review of scholarship can be found in Andersson and Miller's 1989 translation, *Law and Literature in Medieval Iceland [...]*, 64–74.

² 'Freiproza' and 'Buchproza.' Heusler, *Die Anfänge der isländischen Saga*, 53–55.

³ See Andersson, *Problem of Saga Origins*, 65–81. On the connection between Bookprose and nationalism, see Jesse Byock, "Modern nationalism and the medieval sagas."

attention is given to the ways in which the saga's editions have organized the saga's material, with the assumption that these have had a profound impact on the reception of the saga. It then takes up the specific question of dating *Ljósvetninga saga*, with special attention to its relationship with *Brennu-Njáls saga*, and to the viability and the implications of dating these texts in relation to one another. In many ways the saga's relative neglect in recent years is a blessed turn of events, which shows that Old Norse scholarship has moved beyond the unsolvable debate of oral vs. literary origins. But the issues of memory and genre debated in this thesis, which constitute a part of this paradigm shift in scholarly debate, cannot be separated from the past understandings of the text that were constructed by modern editions, the notions of origins that surrounded these, and the reasonings behind the saga's dating. Before it is possible to question the preconceptions surrounding *Ljósvetninga saga*, it is important to outline what these preconceptions were.

2.1 The Debate on *Ljósvetninga saga's* Origins in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Scholarship

2.1.1 Early Discussion of *Ljósvetninga saga*: A Compilation of Loosely Connected Episodes

Besides a brief eighteenth-century dictionary entry that hints at the various points that would later be the focus of scholarship,⁴ the first noteworthy discussion of *Ljósvetninga saga* is mentioned in Jon Erichsen's letter to Danish historian Peter Frederik Suhm.⁵ There Jon says that *Ljósvetninga saga* was once two separate sagas put together, and also suggests that there existed a "Sagan af Thorkeli hák" on which the extant text is based.⁶

⁴ George Hickes, et al., *Antiquae Litteraturae Septentrionalis [...]*, 313.

⁵ Wrongly cited in the 1830 *Ljósvetninga saga* edition as p. 445, but actually in pp. 334–335 of the fifteenth volume of Suhm's *Samlede Skrifter*.

⁶ Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell make a similar assumption without citing Erichsen in *Origines Islandicae*, eds. Gudbrand Vigfússon and F. York Powell, 350, n. 1.

The first publication of *Ljósvetninga saga* was in 1830 by Þorgeirr Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason. This edition is usually disregarded, mostly due to its lack of an in-depth discussion of the saga, and the fact that it uses a paper manuscript, AM 485 4to, as its basis, with few other manuscripts (including the two extant incomplete ones) cited to indicate variances. The critical apparatus is limited and barely scratches the surface as to the variance between the saga's redactions, noting simply in the introduction that AM 561 4to relates the narrative “með öllum öðrum orðum,”⁷ and indicating certain differences in the content of the chapters. Basing their assertions on Erichsen's letter to Suhm, the two also point at a structural element that they believe to be in common with *Reykðæla saga*, namely the joining of two separate sagas together: the saga of Þorkell hákr's struggles with Guðmundr inn ríki, and the saga of Eyjólfur Guðmundarson. Despite the edition's faults, the choice of AM 485 4to as its base manuscript makes it a valuable resource.

The publication of Þorgeirr Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason's edition failed to make much of an impression even in its time. The matter was briefly picked up again in Guðbrandur Vigfússon's discussion of the *Íslendingasögur* in his intro to *Sturlunga saga*. There he set the pace for most of the *Ljósvetninga saga* scholarship ahead: “The whole tale,” Guðbrandur asserts, “is a series of loosely-strung episodes, and affords perhaps the earliest example of the process of consolidation of the traditions of a district, which long afterwards results in such artistic Sagas as Laxdæla.”⁸ He follows Þorgeirr Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason in their relative disregard of AM 561 4to, stating that it must have ended before the saga turned to Guðmundr inn ríki's descendants, and would not have included some of the *þættir*, singling out *Sorla þáttur* and *Vøðu-Brands þáttur*.

Heinzel's 1880 *Beschreibung der Isländischen Saga* continued along this line, likewise treating *Ljósvetninga saga* as a disjointed text. He pointed out what he saw as a loose connection between the part about Guðmundr and

⁷ Non-page numbered introduction.

⁸ *Sturlunga saga [...] and other works*, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, lvi.

the part about Eyjólfur.⁹ Like those before him, Heinzel also saw the various disputes in *Ljósvetninga saga* as unconnected.¹⁰ Heinzel hypothesized about a connection between *Ljósvetninga saga* and the La Fontaine fable about the bear and the gardener. In this humorous poem, a priest-gardener strikes up a friendship with a bear, and the bear is tasked with swiping away the flies that land on the human's forehead when he is sleeping. Eventually the bear deals with one persistent fly by slamming the priest-gardener's head with a rock, killing him. Heinzel compares to a moment in *Ljósvetninga saga* where the narrative flashbacks to Guðmundr and Einar's childhood. There it is related how Guðmundr hits his foster-father's head with an axe on Einar's encouragement, when a fly buzzes around his bald head.¹¹ This connection with La Fontaine's fable established that folkloric motifs had entered such an early saga as *Ljósvetninga saga*, but would therefore be dismissed by Bookprose scholars Björn M. Ólsen and Björn Sigfússon.

2.1.2 *Pátrr* theory

A significant step in nineteenth-century *Ljósvetninga saga* scholarship was Guðmundur Þorláksson's edition of the saga, with the assistance of Finnur Jónsson. It was the first significant scholarship that focused on *Ljósvetninga saga*¹² and therefore helped rekindle an interest in this up-to-that-point poorly discussed saga. As such, it formed the way that people have perceived the saga in a long-lasting way. The edition's chapter division has

⁹ Richard Heinzel, *Beschreibung der Isländischen Saga*, 10 [114].

¹⁰ Heinzel, 163 [267].

¹¹ Heinzel, 50 [154]. For the original, see Jean de la Fontaine, *Fables De La Fontaine*, 463–497. See also Jan de Vries, “Een indisch Exempel in een ijslandsche Saga,” 63–80. According to Hallvard Magerøy, the A-redaction's account of these events fits better with the good intentions of the bear in the folktale, while in the C-redaction these good intentions are gone, *Sertekstproblemet*, 48–49. See also Björn Sigfússon *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*, 20–21, and Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *The Folk-stories of Iceland*, 265, who associates this episode with story type AT 1586A ‘Fatal Killing of the Insect,’ also AT 163A and AT 1586 generally. A special thank you to Jules Piet for his help with the poem's original French.

¹² Though, as Adolfine Erichsen points out, hers is the first full study ever to focus solely on this specific saga, *Untersuchungen zur Liósvetninga Saga*, 63.

been criticized by scholars as early as Bååth,¹³ writing just a few years following the edition’s publication, as well as Björn Sigfússon in both his 1937 monograph on the saga¹⁴ and his own 1940 *Íslenzk fornrit* edition.¹⁵ This criticism of the chapter division is an important point of contention. By dividing the saga as he did, Guðmundur constructed a certain way by which scholars and readers perceived the saga, and this division’s influence is still felt today, despite Björn Sigfússon and Theodore Andersson’s best efforts.¹⁶ Guðmundur Þorláksson created the division of the manuscripts into the A-redaction, B-redaction, and C-redaction, though he might have been influenced by Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason’s marking AM 485 4to as *A*, AM 514 4to as *B*, AM 162 c fol. as *C* and AM 561 4to as *D*. Despite the separate designation, Guðmundur considers the B-redaction manuscript to be derived from the C-redaction. Guðmundur Þorláksson based his reading of chapters 1–4 and 19–21 on what is left of the A-redaction since it is older, while for 13–18 he prefers to use the C-redaction, since it is more elaborate and thus closer to the original.¹⁷ This reasoning reveals the subjectivity inherent in the practice of trying to find a text’s original—the same feature of expansion made Björn Sigfússon and Hallvard Magerøy consider the text a revision of the A-redaction later on.

¹³ Albert Ulrich Bååth, *Studier öfver Kompositionen i Några Isländska ättsagor*, 1–2; see also Erichsen, *Untersuchungen*, 70.

¹⁴ Björn Sigfússon, *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*, 4–5. Björn agrees with Bååth’s criticism, but clarifies, “annars kemur það rit lítið við þessari grein,” 4, n. 1. Erichsen is criticized by Björn Sigfússon because her conclusions are based on Guðmundur Þorláksson’s division. See also Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 10, 13. Guðmundur would most likely have responded thus: “Ljósvetninga saga er svo auðsjáanlega safn af smábáttum, að eg hefi ekki hikað mér við að skipta henni niður,” *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, III.

¹⁵ ÍF 10:XXIII, n. 1. Guðbr. Vigfússon also criticized this edition, *Origines Islandicae*, 348.

¹⁶ Other criticism of this edition can be found in Björn M. Ólsen’s review of the book, but while he criticizes some editorial choices and some misreadings, his overall misgivings having more to do with it being aimed more toward the general public, and with Finnur Jónsson’s newfangled Icelandic, “Íslenzkar fornsögur gefnar út af hinu íslenska bókmenntafélagi: I. Glúma- Og Ljósvetningasaga. Khöfn 1880.” On the influence of editions on the way a text is perceived, see discussion in the thesis’s conclusion in the context of Guðni Jónsson’s edition.

¹⁷ Cf. Björn M. Ólsen, “Íslenzkar fornsögur,” 266–7. Björn suggests that it would have been better to print the extant A-redaction material completely and separately, rather than in this fragmented manner, 266. On Björn M. Ólsen see Pétur Pétursson, “Með gyðingum og á móti.”

As part of his research into the composition of the *Íslendingasögur*, A.U. Bååth set out to understand whether or not *Ljósvetninga saga* could be said to have a consistent author. He did this by looking at the saga's representation of various characters and seeing if their behavior and characterization are consistent throughout the text. His final observations were that, while he could find parts in the saga that were connected, he did not see it as a unified text.¹⁸ Bååth used this fragmented nature of the saga to establish his version of the *þáttr* theory for the origins of saga composition, meaning that the origins of the *Íslendingasögur* were short oral stories that, when combined and modified, comprised the sagas as we know them.¹⁹ Bååth's thesis was initially highly influential, and could also be seen as connected to Bookprose theory, in that it tries to explain the work of an author who used the oral material—*þettir*—that was in his disposal. But as Heusler points out, Bååth's *þáttr* theory is insufficient for both the Bookprose and Freeprose doctrines, since those who advocate for written origins would argue that the *þettir* could not be sophisticated and artistic if orally composed, and the supporters of oral origins believed the sagas were composed and refined while still in the oral stage.²⁰ Bååth's theory was generally disregarded following Andreas Heusler's heavy criticism of his work.²¹ It is noteworthy, though, that Heusler agreed with Bååth on the separate origins of *Ljósvetninga saga*'s *þettir*.²²

In the meantime, much of scholarship continued its general trend of looking at *Ljósvetninga saga* as a non-coherent text. For example, W.P. Ker's brief discussion of *Ljósvetninga saga* treats it as a saga that is composed of loosely related chapters.²³

¹⁸ Bååth, *Studier öfver Kompositionen*, 18.

¹⁹ Andersson, *Problem of Saga Origins*, 61–62.

²⁰ Heusler, *Die Anfänge*, 74. See C. M. Lotspeich, "The Composition of the Icelandic Family Sagas" for the Bookprose position, though he does not address Bååth directly.

²¹ Heusler, *Die Anfänge*, 74–79. See Andersson's summary of Heusler's main arguments in *Problem of Saga Origins*, 62. Björn M. Ólsen subscribed to Bååth's arguments more than Heusler, e.g., Björn M. Ólsen, "Um Íslendingasögur. Kaflar úr háskólafyrirlestum," 366.

²² Heusler, *Die Anfänge*, 75.

²³ W. P. Ker, *Epic and Romance*, 189.

2.1.3 Freeprose and *Ljósvetninga saga* as a “Unique” Example of Oral Variance: The Primacy of the C-redaction

Published after Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Frederick York Powell’s deaths, their *Origines Islandicae* translation and edition of *Ljósvetninga saga* ends with Guðmundr’s death in chapter 21.²⁴ Of the saga’s inner connections they state: “This Saga, which in plan nearly resembles Eyrbyggja, is, like it, composed of a series of separate episodes strung together on the thread of the life and actions of a distinguished political figure.”²⁵ Beyond contributing to the fragmented perception of *Ljósvetninga saga*, Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell had much to say on the manuscript AM 162 c fol. in which it is found.²⁶ The two scholars connect the compilation of the manuscript with fifteenth-century Icelandic magnate Loftur Guttormsson—who is discussed below in The Part About Memory—admitting that this is but a conjecture.²⁷ Style-wise they suggest that *Ljósvetninga saga* gives an impression of how *Njáls saga* would have looked before it was shaped by the hands of a law-minded individual, and they express strong opinions in regard to verse-making.²⁸ Their edition also makes two rather unique assumptions: first, that the A-redaction and C-redaction variance ended with the employment of Rindill rather than with the spy’s visit to Þorkell hákr’s farm,²⁹ and second, that the end of chapter 21, only extant in the C-redaction, is a lacuna.³⁰ They consider the parts that comprise the Eyjólfir’s bulk “inferior” and out of their project’s scope, which means that

²⁴ They choose to ignore the second part of the saga due to the “inferior” quality of this part, as well as it lying out of the scope of their project, *Origines Islandicae*, 350.

²⁵ *Origines Islandicae*, 344.

²⁶ *Origines Islandicae*, 344–346.

²⁷ *Origines Islandicae*, 346. On this see also “Syv Sagablade,” 5.

²⁸ “This Saga has never suffered the fate that has come upon many good Sagas of having thrust upon them those ugly, false, late, and unpoetical verses in a metre which was non-existent in the days when those persons lived, who are foolishly made to improvise in it (alive or dead) with the utmost facility, a laboured verse-making which never could have been perpetrated or perpetuated without the aid of *books*. From all this spurious would-be poetry the Saga is happily free,” *Origines Islandicae*, 349.

²⁹ *Origines Islandicae*, 427.

³⁰ *Origines Islandicae*, 427.

chapters 22–32 are not included in their edition.³¹ They also contribute to the Freeprose–Bookprose debate by offering that “it almost seems as if the story of Acre-Thore had been retold imperfectly from memory,”³² an argument later expounded by Adolfine Erichsen and Björn M. Ólsen.

Eugen Mogk’s history of Norwegian–Icelandic literature supported the line of thought that the *þættir* were interpolated, and considered the A-redaction free of interpolations.³³

Andreas Heusler translated *Sorla þáttr* and *Ófeigs þáttr* as independent stories in a supplement to Arthur Bonus’s *Isländerbuch*. These stories were presented outside of the *Ljósvetninga saga* context and not connected with each other. Their manuscript order was even reversed, and *Vöðu-Brands þáttr* was excluded. This publication is in itself a statement that Heusler regarded these texts as separate. As seen in the discussion of *þáttr* theory above, Heusler does not count *Ljósvetninga saga* as a single saga.³⁴

In 1918 Jan de Vries argued that the childhood flashback where Guðmundr hits his foster-father on the head with an axe was interpolated. De Vries argued that this scene contradicts the text itself: in the dialogue proceeding it, Einarr is outsmarted by Guðmundr, whilst in the childhood anecdote it is Einarr who is doing the outsmarting.³⁵ He goes beyond the La Fontaine fable and examines a vast scope of similar tales, and in exact opposition to Björn M. Ólsen says that the correspondence between the two is so great that it could hardly be considered a coincidence.³⁶ The incorporation of this tale, de Vries argues, points at our limited understanding of how medieval texts were composed, and we must open ourselves up

³¹ *Origines Islandicae*, 350. On these kinds of bold editorial choices that characterized Guðbrandur Vigfússon’s work, see Magnús Fjalldal, “The Man Who Knew It All.”

³² *Origines Islandicae*, 348.

³³ Eugen Mogk, *Geschichte der norwegisch-isländischen Literatur*, 761.

³⁴ See also Heusler, *Die Anfänge*, 68.

³⁵ “Het behoeft niet breedvoerig te worden betoogd, dat dit tooneeltje eerst later in de *Ljósvetningasaga* is ingevoeg.” Jan de Vries, “Een indisch Exempel in een ijslandsche Saga,” 64.

³⁶ de Vries, 65. Admittedly, the scene that he examines involves a bishop and a fool and would maybe have been easier for people like Björn M. Ólsen to compare with the childhood-flashback, though one suspects that even this example would not have persuaded the university rector.

to the possibility of continental European influences.³⁷ On the other hand, he states, the anecdote also points to the unique character of the *Íslendingasögur* in the Western European landscape; if other variants of the story have a comical feel and a moral, *Ljósvetninga saga* builds on the tradition to tell a harsher tale.³⁸

Adolfine Erichsen's 1919 Berlin dissertation, the first full monograph dedicated to the saga, was a reaction to Bååth's argument that the narrative was composed of disparate, non-related stories. In this study, she compared the two major redactions of the saga, and argued that the A-redaction was a slightly less logical version. Like Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell before her, and Björn M. Ólsen after her,³⁹ she suggests that this was due to a lacuna in chapters 13–18 of the manuscript that the A-redactor had at hand, while the C-redaction was closer to what the original *Ljósvetninga saga* would have looked like.⁴⁰ She indicates three major discrepancies in the plot that do not make sense. First, the A-redaction does not mention the cloak gift that Guðmundr receives from the merchant who stays with him. Second, the A-redaction omits the mention of Þórir Akrakarl giving Þórir Helgason his cattle, and thus creates a logical discrepancy when Þórir is accused of theft. Third, there is a self-contradiction in the manner in which Einarr responds to his brother's offer of allegiance.⁴¹ In response to Bååth's *páttr* theory, she argues that *Ljósvetninga saga* is in fact a unified piece, and that the four *pættir* (*Sgrla páttr*, *Ófeigs páttr*, *Vöðu-Brands páttr*, and *Þórarins páttr ofsa*) are interpolations to the original C-redaction.⁴² In addition, she argues that the first four chapters of the saga are flawed, not introducing Guðmundr inn ríki properly and inserting an irrelevant story regarding the famous outlaw Grettir Ásmundarson, and are

³⁷ de Vries, 79.

³⁸ de Vries, 79–80.

³⁹ Though the lecture series on which this posthumous publication was based took place before Erichsen's dissertation research was published.

⁴⁰ Erichsen, *Untersuchungen*, 58.

⁴¹ Erichsen, 47; Andersson, *Problem of Saga Origins*, 154.

⁴² Erichsen, *Untersuchungen*, 11, 79–85.

an abbreviated rewrite of a defective text.⁴³ She treats what she sees as digressions, like the childhood flashback, Ófeigr’s threat to Guðmundr over his seat of honor, and the two last chapters in Eyjólfur’s bulk, as interpolations,⁴⁴ and in a sense anticipates the structural debates of Phillpotts, Andersson, and Clover by calling the saga a “zyklus” (cycle), or a “doppelsaga” (double-saga).⁴⁵ The *þættir* that Bååth sees as the origins of the saga were actually interpolated at the end, when the writing of the main text had been done.⁴⁶ Erichsen’s idea that chapters 1–4 are abbreviated, while not shared by me, is not a preposterous interpretation of the material. After all, AM 561 4to’s 37v had been rewritten based on what was decipherable from the smudged out late-medieval words. Why could this not have been the case in an earlier manuscript, where all the A-redaction author had at hand was damaged leaves or lacunae?

Benedikt Sveinsson’s 1921 *Ljósvetninga saga* was the second edition of the *Íslendingasögur* of Sigurður Kristjánsson, the first having been edited by Valdimar Ásmundsson.⁴⁷ This edition’s significantly expanded introduction neglected much of the discussion of the origins of the saga, due to what Magerøy considers Benedikt Sveinsson’s relative scholarly isolation.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, his observations are important, and he stresses in opposition to Guðmundur Þorláksson that the B-redaction should be seen as a separate tradition,⁴⁹ and that AM 561 4to would never have included *Sorla þáttur*, *Ófeigs þáttur*, and *Vöðu-Brands þáttur*.⁵⁰ If Erichsen sees the lack of character exposition for Guðmundr inn ríki and others as an indication of a

⁴³ Erichsen, 63–68.

⁴⁴ Erichsen, 78, 81. This approach is not dissimilar to the approach scholars of *Eyrbyggja saga* such as Guðbrandur Vigfússon have taken, considering some chapters and occurrences as interpolations, indications that the original non-interpolated saga is now lost. See Elín Bára Magnúsdóttir, *Eyrbyggja saga: Efni og höfundareinkenni*, 25.

⁴⁵ Erichsen, *Untersuchungen*, 76, 87. See Bertha Phillpotts, *Edda and Saga*, 200; Theodore M. Andersson, *The Icelandic Family Saga: An Analytic Reading*, 33, 260; and Carol Clover, *The Medieval Saga*, 21.

⁴⁶ Erichsen, *Untersuchungen*, 88

⁴⁷ On this publication see Ármann Jakobson, “Íslendingasögur í mótun.”

⁴⁸ Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 13

⁴⁹ *Ljósvetninga Saga*, ed. Benedikt Sveinsson, VI; *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, XXIV–XXV.

⁵⁰ *Ljósvetninga Saga*, ed. Benedikt Sveinsson, V–VI.

corrupted introduction, Benedikt Sveinsson sees this instead as an indication of the older age of the manuscript, written at a time when these characters were so well known that they needed no introduction.⁵¹ Benedikt Sveinsson suggests that *Ljósvetninga saga* would have been written in Munkaþveráklaustur, or at any rate by someone from the Eyjafjörður–Fnióskadalur region, by a descendant of the Møðruvellingar.⁵²

Unlike Benedikt Sveinsson, Wilhelm Ranisch’s discussion of *Ljósvetninga saga*, in the introduction to his translation, assimilates Erichsen’s conclusions and takes the different origins of the *þættir* as a working assumption.⁵³ Despite this, he incorporates these parts of the saga into the translation, rather than removing them or moving them aside as Björn Sigfússon later does, though he does finish the narrative before *Þóraríns þáttur ofsa*. In chapters 13–18 he prefers to use the A-redaction text, filling in the lacunae with the narrative from the C-redaction,⁵⁴ and thus creates a disorienting hybrid text.

The discussion about *Ljósvetninga saga* in Finnur Jónsson’s second edition of *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie* was influenced by Erichsen’s dissertation as well.⁵⁵ In his first edition, Finnur supported Bååth’s theory that the saga is a composite of unrelated *þættir*,⁵⁶ but in the second edition he adopts Erichsen’s position that, if the four *þættir* are excluded, Guðmundr’s bulk and Eyjólfir’s bulk work together as a text.⁵⁷ Likewise he agrees with Erichsen’s opinion on the first chapters’ fragmentary nature.⁵⁸

In his 1929 work on the origins of the *Íslendingasögur*, Knut Liestøl controversially states that chapters 13–18 of *Ljósvetninga saga* offer us the “only reliable example”⁵⁹ of two separate oral traditions for a saga. Liestøl, a

⁵¹ *Ljósvetninga Saga*, ed. Benedikt Sveinsson, X–XI.

⁵² *Ljósvetninga Saga*, ed. Benedikt Sveinsson, IX–X.

⁵³ *Fünf Geschichten aus dem östlichen Nordland*, trans. W. H. Vogt and W. Ranisch, 8, 13.

⁵⁴ See *Fünf Geschichten*, 227.

⁵⁵ See *Soga om Ljosvetningane*, trans. Hallvard Magerøy, 11.

⁵⁶ Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 1st ed., vol. 2:498.

⁵⁷ Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 2nd ed., vol. 2:492, 494.

⁵⁸ Finnur Jónsson, 2nd ed., vol. 2:493–495.

⁵⁹ Knut Liestøl, *The Origin of the Icelandic Family Sagas*, 48. Björn Sigfússon and the *Studia Islandica* publisher Sigurður Nordal respond in *Um Ljósvetninga sögu* to the phrasing in the

student of Andreas Heusler—to whom the book is dedicated—develops Erichsen’s argument that the AM 561 4to scribe wrote from memory, into an expanded theory of the differences between the redactions as oral variants. Liestøl argues that most of the differences in the saga derive from lapses of memory, and that the redactions tend to disagree on matters of little importance “and can thus be more readily altered or forgotten.”⁶⁰ The parts of the saga that appear in a different sequence between the redactions, such as when Einarr returns the cloak to his brother Guðmundr, or the childhood flashback where Guðmundr hits his foster-father, show that these stem from an oral tradition, where different parts of the stories were forgotten but then later incorporated into the narrative when they were remembered. Also, the fact that the childhood flashback is similar in both redactions fits Liestøl’s understanding of how stories are transmitted:⁶¹ since the anecdote is simple and has few implications for the main plot, there is little space or likelihood for it to change.

2.1.4 Bookprose and *Ljósvetninga saga* as a Misrepresented and Authored Text: The Primacy of the A-redaction

Against this background, Björn Sigfússon set out to make a new edition of *Ljósvetninga saga* as part of the Íslenzk fornrit collection. He was visibly displeased with much of the work that was done on the saga before him, especially with the scholarly preference of the C-redaction over the A-redaction, and with the treatment of the saga as fragmentary. Before his more tactful Íslenzk fornrit edition, Björn Sigfússon released a monograph titled *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*—published in Sigurður Nordal’s *Studia Islandica*—which signified the first Bookprose response to the Freeprose analysis of the saga, represented mostly by Liestøl but also Erichsen. Björn Sigfússon focuses much of the book on the explanation of his preference of the A-

Icelandic translation *Uppruni Íslendinga sagna*: “eina örugga dæmi,” 40, translated from Danish *Upphavet Til Den Isländske ættesaga*: “einaste trygge dømet,” 50.

⁶⁰ Liestøl, *Origin*, 50–51.

⁶¹ Björn Sigfússon, *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*, 20–21, and Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 48, would disagree.

redaction over the C-redaction. He saw the A-redaction as a clearer and earlier telling of the story, and the C-redaction as an historical novelization.⁶² What Erichsen argues to be consistency in the C-redaction, Björn Sigfússon shows to be a lack thereof, while in the A-redaction, the linguistic consistency is clearer. The characterization of Guðmundr, he argues, is inconsistent in the C-redaction but rather consistent in the A-redaction.⁶³ In fact, he utterly denies that there would have ever been a complete redaction differing from the A-redaction, “nema í ímyndun manna.”⁶⁴

The responses to this monograph were noteworthy. Haakon Hamre declared this publication as a “victory” for the Bookprose school of thought, though he adds that “Sigfússon’s proof of the scribal relationship between the variants has been generally accepted but not his explanation of why the center section of the saga has been rewritten.”⁶⁵ Andreas Heusler, nearing the end of his life, used Björn Sigfússon’s work as an opportunity to restate the Freeprose position. In an ironic review,⁶⁶ Heusler criticizes the Bookprose choice to ignore the exact nature of the ‘tradition’ that lies behind the text, and defends his students Erichsen and Liestøl’s work,⁶⁷ along with the idea that the divergent mid-section of the saga stems from oral variations rather than literary ones.⁶⁸ In her review of Björn Sigfússon’s *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*, Anne Holtsmark questions his dismissal of oral variance as a solution to the redaction question, stating that Björn did not establish this well enough.⁶⁹

In between Björn Sigfússon’s 1937 monograph and his 1940 Íslenzk fornrit edition, Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag published a series of lectures from the years 1913–1917 by the first rector of Háskóli Íslands, Björn M.

⁶² Björn Sigfússon, *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*, 38. In the English summary of the book he says about the C-redactor: “Much more than an historian, he is an author, who rewrites chapters of Ljósvetninga saga as an historical novel,” 42.

⁶³ Björn Sigfússon, 11–19.

⁶⁴ Björn Sigfússon, 22.

⁶⁵ Haakon Hamre, “Reviewed Work,” 469. Also Andersson, *Problem of Saga Origins*, 156.

⁶⁶ Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 16.

⁶⁷ Heusler “Review of *Um Ljósvetninga Sögu*,” 1–2. One would think that in that particular moment of history there would be people in more need of defending.

⁶⁸ See Andersson, *Problem of Saga Origins*, 155, for discussion and summary of this review.

⁶⁹ Anne Holtsmark “Anmälan av ‘Studia Islandica. Islenzk fræði 1–4,’” 138–139.

Ólsen, on the *Íslendingasögur*. Therefore, despite the fact that these lectures were given before Erichsen's and Björn Sigfússon's monographs, they were published only some 20 years afterwards. Björn M. Ólsen's work lost traction with this delay, yet his words remained influential and were incorporated into Björn Sigfússon's introduction to his edition of *Ljósvetninga saga*.⁷⁰ Björn M. Ólsen considered *Ljósvetninga saga* as a literary rather than oral fourteenth-century composite of several stories, and the *þættir* as external to the rest of the saga.⁷¹ While the *þættir* never existed in the older A-redaction AM 561 4to manuscript, this redaction would have included the story of Guðmundr's sons Eyjólfur and Koðrán, though its poorer quality suggests a different author.⁷² Björn based this on the literary function of the prophecy of the witch Þórhildr,⁷³ which all but requires that the story of revenge against the sons of Guðmundr be told. Björn M. Ólsen offers a practical solution similar to Erichsen to account for the discrepancies between the redactions in chapters 13–18. The original C-redaction scribe did not have these parts of the A-redaction in front of him, so he wrote them down out from memory. Responding to Heinzl's theory of the connections between the childhood flashback about Guðmundr and his foster-father and the folktale motif discussed above, Björn M. Ólsen argues that "hún er ekki íkja lík sögunni um Guðmund og fóstrann."⁷⁴ Björn admits, however, that he had only read the La Fontaine fable example of this motif.⁷⁵ Though not his intention, the description he provides makes a compelling case for a connection between the stories.

Björn Sigfússon's Íslenzk fornrit edition came at precisely the moment when a response by the Bookprose school was needed for the

⁷⁰ Mageroy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 16–17.

⁷¹ Björn M. Ólsen, "Um Íslendingasögur," 369–372.

⁷² Björn M. Ólsen, 369.

⁷³ Björn M. Ólsen, 372.

⁷⁴ Björn M. Ólsen, 385. One striking moment in connection to this folktale type was when Arngrímur Vídalín had been reading *Ljósvetninga saga* and contacted me to inform me about this scene and its similarities with a folktale he knew from elsewhere. This kind of automatic and unsolicited invocation of the text brings to question what had caused Björn M. Ólsen to so sternly dismiss a connection between *Ljósvetninga saga* and the folktale type; one would suspect that other motivations were at play.

⁷⁵ Björn M. Ólsen, 385.

overwhelmingly Freeprose approach that dominated most of the *Ljósvetninga saga* scholarship. As Stefán Einarsson states in his review: “B. Sigfússon has had the difficult task of accommodating [*Ljósvetninga saga* and *Reykðæla saga*] to the Buchprosa theory. The results are rather complicated, and not always convincing.”⁷⁶ As he established in his earlier monograph, Björn preferred the A-redaction over the C-redaction. This is visible in his organization of the material: in most cases where there is slight textual variation between the A-redaction and C-redaction, the A-redaction is preferred.⁷⁷ In the variant chapters 13–18, the A-redaction is printed in large letters, while the C-redaction text is printed below it and in a smaller font. This is a disingenuous decision. Once the two redactions converge, they in essence tell us the same story in the same words,⁷⁸ but once the story breaks off in the A-redaction, there is no way of knowing what followed, or if anything followed at all. Thus, keeping the large letters after the break is an editorial decision that implies the A-redaction’s inclusion of chapters 22–31 as a fact. If the reason was aesthetic, then it is not consistent; chapter 13 of the C-redaction is printed in small letters until the A-redaction picks the story up.⁷⁹ The three segments designated as *Soprla þáttr*, *Ófeigs þáttr*, and *Vöðu-Brands þáttr* are taken out of the main text and relocated to an isolated space immediately following the ‘saga proper.’ *Þórarins þáttr ofsa* receives an even harsher treatment. While the above-mentioned *þættir* are removed, they still influence the C-redaction chapter-count (to an odd and somewhat disorienting effect). *Þórarins þáttr*, however, is placed at the periphery of the saga. Björn writes in a non-numbered footnote that although the story barely concerns the *Ljósvetninga saga* characters (besides

⁷⁶ Stefán Einarsson, “Publications in Old Icelandic Literature, 1939–1940,” 46.

⁷⁷ There are some exceptions to this, as in cases where the C-redaction version is more correct historically, e.g., “Forni hét maðr, er bjó í Haga í Reykjadal,” ÍF 10:3, which follows the C-redaction version, while in p. 2, n. 2, Björn points out that in the A-redaction the placename is “Reykjardal.” In addition, in most cases the chapter changes follow the C-redaction manuscripts (though this is a complicated matter in and of itself, as there is no consistency in the chapter change in the C-redaction manuscripts).

⁷⁸ But see the discussion in the following chapter about the different word-choices in the extant A-redaction and C-redaction, chs. 1–4 and 19–21.

⁷⁹ ÍF 10:16–20.

Eyjólfur Guðmundarson) and takes place around the events of chapter 12 (in the A-redaction count), it is printed after the saga because of the manuscript evidence.⁸⁰

According to Björn, there was a general misconception in earlier scholarship as to the correct title of the saga, with scholars thinking that the text's focus was actually on the *Moðruvellingar* and not the *Ljósvetningar*.⁸¹ In addition, scholarship showed a preference of the C-redaction as the earlier version of the saga.⁸² Björn Sigfússon stresses the clunky style of the C-redaction, and argues that chapters 13–18 (A-redaction count 5–8) indeed function more as an individual *þáttir* than in the A-redaction, where they are more connected to the main narrative.⁸³ According to Björn, this historical preference of the C-redaction over the A-redaction distorted the treatment of the saga and led to the general understanding of it as a collection of disconnected *þættir*. Regarding the intentions behind the C-redaction revisions, Björn argues that first and foremost, these are intended to improve Guðmundr's image.⁸⁴ He focuses on the illogical flaws found in the plot, such as Einarr's somewhat contradictory reaction to his brother Guðmundr's plea for friendship, or Rindill's unclear function as a spy. Björn argues that such irregularities are proof that the story was not transmitted whole from one person to the other; oral storytellers would have fixed the clunky and illogical points where the plot does not work well.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ ÍF 10:143, unnumbered note. See also ÍF 10:L. For a general discussion of the *þættir*, see pp. L–LVII. Interestingly, the chapter heading in the introduction changes in this part from “*Ljósvetninga saga*” to “*Ljósvetninga saga (Þættir)*.” Rather than being a helpful tool for the scholar consulting the edition, it feels as if Björn puts special efforts to disconnect the *þættir* from the saga, even in the paratext, in order to further the distance between the saga and its interpolated parts. This approach to the *þættir* is backed up by another Bookprose scholar, Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Dating the Icelandic Sagas*, 38.

⁸¹ The widespread notion that *Ljósvetninga saga* in fact centered around Guðmundr inn ríki rather than the *Ljósvetningar* is evidenced, for example, in Ian Ramsay Maxwell, “Pattern in ‘*Njáls saga*,’” 19–20.

⁸² ÍF 10:XLVI.

⁸³ ÍF 10:XXV.

⁸⁴ ÍF 10:XXV.

⁸⁵ ÍF 10:XXXIX

Icelandic *alþingi* member Barði Guðmundsson's monograph *Ljósvetninga saga og Saurbæingar*—Later published as part of his *Höfundar Njála* essay collection—sees *Ljósvetninga saga* as a collection of *þættir*,⁸⁶ and reads the saga as a *roman à clef*, written by Þórðr Þorvarðsson, Sturla Þórðarson's son-in-law.⁸⁷ Barði connects all the occurrences of *Ljósvetninga saga* with the power struggles that Þórðr and his father Þorvarðr Þórðarson had experienced in the mid- to late thirteenth century, and he notably frames *Ljósvetninga saga* as a response to another *roman à clef*: *Brennu-Njáls saga*. Barði makes the claim that *Njáls saga* was written by Þorvarður Þórarinsson, where he portrayed Þórðr Þorvarðsson and Þorvarðr Þórðarson as the villainous Mqrðr Valgarðsson and his father Valgarðr grái Jorundarson. Barði's complex set of arguments is taken up at length in The Part About Memory. This monograph failed to have much effect on *Ljósvetninga saga* scholarship, especially since it diverged from the philological issues that dominated the academic discussion around this saga, until the publication of Andersson and Miller's 1989 translation.⁸⁸ Barði made the argument that the author of the two main parts of *Ljósvetninga saga* would have been the same, based on the distribution of place-names, and excluding the *þættir*,⁸⁹ thus supporting Björn Sigfússon's position.

Hallvard Magerøy's 1957 monograph was something of a sequel to Björn Sigfússon's *Um Ljósvetninga sögu* and the introduction to the Íslenzk fornrit edition, much as his 1950 translation of *Ljósvetninga saga* into Nynorsk (*Soga om Ljosvetningane*) was itself based on Björn Sigfússon's Íslenzk fornrit edition and its interpretative decisions. Magerøy took up the challenge made by Anne Holtsmark's criticism of Björn Sigfússon's *Um*

⁸⁶ Barði Guðmundsson, *Ljósvetninga Saga og Saurbæingar*, 25.

⁸⁷ On Barði Guðmundsson, see Lárus H. Blöndal, *Alþingismannatal 1845–1975*, 49.

⁸⁸ See ÍF 12:CVIII–CXI for Einar Ól. Sveinsson's response to Barði's argument regarding the authorship of *Njáls saga*, with an interesting argument stressing the *Njáls saga* author's lack of knowledge about things Þorvarðr would be knowledgeable about, such as geography and law. Cf. Lönnroth who argues against him and believes that there would be overwhelming reasons why Þorvarðr would be involved in the writing of *Njáls saga*, yet avoids attributing direct authorship, *Njáls Saga*, 181, n. 40. See also discussion below.

⁸⁹ Barði Guðmundsson, *Ljósvetninga Saga*, 45.

Ljósvetninga sögu,⁹⁰ where she questions Björn’s dismissal of oral variance as a solution to the redaction question. Magerøy agrees with Björn Sigfússon’s premise that the A-redaction of *Ljósvetninga saga* was closer to the original, but also agrees with Holtsmark’s criticism that this was not established well enough,⁹¹ and thinks that the issue of Guðmundr’s representation is more complex than Björn lets on—the C-redaction adds not only positive information about Guðmundr but also negative.⁹² Magerøy agrees with Erichsen that the character introductions in chapters 1–4 are problematic and short.⁹³ Throughout his study, Magerøy points to the C-redaction tendency to make things of a bigger scope and scale.⁹⁴ He thinks that there is a consistent logic behind the deviations between the redactions, which he attributes to a conscious agency.⁹⁵ However, Magerøy questions the logical decisions of characters and portrayal of events in the C-redaction throughout his text, and thinks that, with few exceptions, the deviations from the original text are more apparent in that redaction than the A-redaction.⁹⁶ He concludes that, in historical philology, the most parsimonious answer must be chosen, and literary origins make more sense than two separate oral traditions.⁹⁷ While there is a possibility that the C-redaction compiler was working from memory in chapters 13–18, Magerøy prefers the explanation that he had a copy of the original saga in front of him and intentionally decided to deviate from it. Like Björn

⁹⁰ On this response to Holtsmark, see Andersson, *Problem of Saga Origins*, 155, 158–159, and Magerøy *Sertekstproblemet*, 17.

⁹¹ Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 16.

⁹² Magerøy, 15–16. He proves this by citing the *alþingi* scene, which is problematic because that scene in one variation or another had been in the A-redaction as well, though it is now only extant in the 37v summary. However, the fact that the C-redaction contains a scene that portrays Guðmundr as so wretched a character is telling in itself and proof that it did not treat Guðmundr with kid-gloves.

⁹³ Magerøy, 18–20.

⁹⁴ Haakon Hamre finds this explanation of the C-redaction being written “in order to ‘increase the dimensions’ in content and narration” as “not so convincing.” “Reviewed Work,” 469.

⁹⁵ “Det kan då ikkje vera tvil om at desse omलगingane er ein einskild persons medvitne verk.” Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 64, 89.

⁹⁶ Cf. p. 78, where the C-redaction portrayal of Rindill’s dialogue with Þorkell hákr rings truer to Magerøy than the A-redaction one.

⁹⁷ Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 80

Sigfússon, he argues that the logical gaps would have been emended by an oral storyteller. A copyist working mechanically, on the other hand, would have been more likely to miss certain mistakes and inconsistencies.⁹⁸ As for the most striking piece of evidence for oral variation—the different names of characters and places—Magerøy thinks this could easily stem from various manuscript misreadings consistent throughout the text.⁹⁹ In the introduction to his translation, Magerøy argues that the *þættir* were interpolated, and singles out *Sorla þáttir* as a “happy-end-soge.”¹⁰⁰

2.1.5 The Oral vs. Literary Composition Compromise and the Re-Establishment of the C-redaction’s Primacy

In his 1964 study on the origins of the *Íslendingasögur*, Theodore M. Andersson dedicates an appendix for a discussion of the issue of variants, which naturally leads him to a discussion of *Ljósvetninga saga*. Andersson disagrees with Björn Sigfússon’s preference for the A-redaction over the C-redaction, and states that “his conclusions are based on the over-exploitation of minor differences.”¹⁰¹ What Björn sees as logical mishaps, Andersson sees as literary technique. Andersson goes on to say that the Íslenzk fornrit editor conflates a text’s quality with its age.¹⁰² Andersson responds to Magerøy’s study by refuting most of his claims regarding the C-redaction’s corruption, and points out that the inconsistencies that remain are not unique within the *Íslendingasögur* corpus.¹⁰³ Regarding Magerøy’s argument that the differences in names stem from erroneous and consistent manuscript readings, Andersson says: “The variants are not of the scribal type. Furthermore the sheer number of deviations overburdens scribal responsibility.”¹⁰⁴ Andersson disagrees with Magerøy’s

⁹⁸ Magerøy, 83–84.

⁹⁹ Magerøy, 86–87. Cf. Andersson, *Problem of Saga Origins*, 158.

¹⁰⁰ *Saga om Ljosvetningane*, trans. Magerøy, 10–11. Also his *Studiar i Bandamanna saga*, 263.

¹⁰¹ Andersson, *Problem of Saga Origins*, 152.

¹⁰² Andersson, 153.

¹⁰³ Andersson, 156.

¹⁰⁴ Andersson, 158.

premise that the person who inserted the *þættir* would then use those changes as a guide for the changes made to chapters 13–18, because these later changes do not help to integrate the *þættir* into the saga’s main narrative.¹⁰⁵ Andersson, however, concurs with Magerøy’s statement that the most logical explanation for the relationship between the redactions is a literary one, but thinks that, from a stylistic analysis, it is clear that Erichsen was right and that priority should be given to the C-redaction.¹⁰⁶ The A-redactor is thus an abbreviator, who rushes through Guðmundr’s dealings with Þórir Akrakarl in order to get to the saga’s more important event, namely the killing of Þorkell hákr.¹⁰⁷ Andersson reverses the argument of “logical inadequacy”¹⁰⁸ for the A-redaction, pointing out the moments where its narrative and details make less sense than in the C-redaction it shortens. His conclusion is that the A-redaction is “abbreviated clumsily” and he spares few words to show his dismay over the final result.¹⁰⁹ The differences that remain unexplained, he explains, stem from oral traces, meaning the stories that still surrounded the saga’s events at the time that the A-redaction was written down. In this sense, Andersson’s reading could be seen as a compromise between the Bookprose and the Freeprose approaches, neither fully here (*Ljósvetninga saga* is a collection of oral tales; the variants stem from different oral accounts), nor there (*Ljósvetninga saga* is an authored piece and the variants stem from scribal decisions). Andersson’s reading successfully has its cake and eats it too: *Ljósvetninga saga* is an authored piece, based on traditional material, the differences between the

¹⁰⁵ “Appealing as the thought is, I do not think that it is clearly conceived. It raises the question of the origin of the *þættir*. If they were copied from a written source, the scribe had no reason suddenly to abandon a faithful rendering when returning to the saga itself. The changes cannot be interpreted as an effort to interlock the *þættir* with the Þórir Akarakarl episode. On the other hand, if the scribe inserted the *þættir* from oral tradition it would be natural to see in the freedom he allows himself in chapters 13–18 a reflex of the same source which provided the *þættir*, namely tradition. In this case we would in fact be dealing with an oral variant.” Andersson, 159.

¹⁰⁶ Andersson, 159.

¹⁰⁷ “It is with a certain satisfaction that he can say after just sixty-three lines: ‘ok er hann ór sǫgunni.’” Andersson, 161.

¹⁰⁸ Andersson, 162.

¹⁰⁹ Andersson, 165.

C-redaction and the A-redaction stem from an authorial program, but the differences in the details are largely connected with the oral tales that surrounded the saga.¹¹⁰

In Andersson's influential structural analysis of the *Íslendingasögur* from 1967, he both promoted and argued against the perception of *Ljósvetninga saga* as a fragmented text by arguing that it "shares with *Heiðarvíga saga* a transcendent interest in the intricacies of plot,"¹¹¹ stressing that everything in the saga is uniquely doubled: "There are two conflicts, two climaxes, two vengeancees, and two reconciliations."¹¹² On the one hand, by stressing this doubled structure, Andersson is supporting those scholars who treated the saga as a compilation of two or more *þættir*. On the other hand, in his analysis Andersson makes it clear that these two conflicts are "interlocked."¹¹³ Andersson does not improve matters by providing only Bååth's book as supplementary reading, which effectively points the reader towards the *þátr* theory and its perception of *Ljósvetninga saga* as a non-unified text. This must have been a result of his inclination toward a middle-ground solution between the Freeprose and the Bookprose interpretations of the saga.

Björn Sigfússon's 1967 entry for the *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* is a tour de force of one-sidedness. In it he completely ignores Bååth, Andersson, and Guðmundur Þorláksson's 1880 edition, or what any Freeprose scholar, particularly Erichsen and Liestøl, had to say about the topic of *Ljósvetninga saga*. Björn uses the entry to assert the primacy of

¹¹⁰ This finds surprising support in the words of Einar Ól. Sveinsson, certainly an important voice for Bookprose: "If the author of a saga had succeeded in getting all the material from the best-informed people, it might well be that he had included everything with which the story was concerned, and there was then no good reason to add anything. But if much of the material had been left unused, there might then be good reason to make additions, or a new version." *Dating the Icelandic Sagas*, 33. Liestøl supports it from the Freeprose end: "A manuscript of a saga may have been used for reading aloud or as a sort of prompt-book when reciting, and its contents may have become oral tradition again through the medium of the hearers." Liestøl, *Origin*, 43.

¹¹¹ Andersson, *Icelandic Family Saga*, 259.

¹¹² Andersson, 260.

¹¹³ Andersson, 260.

the A-redaction over the C-redaction,¹¹⁴ with a likely date of composition c. 1260, and gives too much weight to Barði Guðmundsson's scholarship. His entry portrays his (well-argued) opinions as facts, and ignores an entire century of academic debate, referring only to his follower Magerøy, and to Barði.¹¹⁵

In 1969, Hallvard Magerøy returned to the issue of *Ljósvetninga saga* in an article meant to show the inner workings of this saga, and to respond to Erichsen's arguments that chapters 1–4 seem out of place in relation to the rest of the saga.¹¹⁶ He agrees with Erichsen that Guðmundr's role in the first chapters is too minor compared to his role in the rest of the saga and suggests that perhaps the author initially intended a smaller part for the character in the saga.¹¹⁷ Magerøy finds various helpful and convincing parallels between Guðmundr's bulk and Eyjólftr's bulk, such as the father–son strife motif, and similar narrative structures and techniques. His further language analysis shows that, contrary to Erichsen's study, the language of the A-redaction has more in common with chapters 1–4 than the C-redaction.

In 1970, the C-redaction camp got a significant backing with the publication of Cecilia Borggreve's "Der Handlungsaufbau in den zwei

¹¹⁴ "Originalversionen finns fragmentariskt på membranen AM 561, 4to, från o. 1400. En yngre utvidgad version fanns på 1400-talsmembranen AM 162 C fol.[...]" Björn Sigfússon, "Ljósvetninga saga," 654.

¹¹⁵ Björn Sigfússon, "Ljósvetninga saga," 653–655. Perhaps this citing of Barði Guðmundsson is meant to create a semblance of an academic debate, thus distracting the non-*Ljósvetninga saga*-initiated reader from the many other debates that surround this/these text/s. The critical reader will be quick to point out that "he who smelt it, dealt it" considering the significant space this thesis awards Barði Guðmundsson.

¹¹⁶ Magerøy, "Den indre sammenhengen i Ljósvetninga saga," 118–146. In an earlier article, "Guðmundur góði og Guðmundur ríki. Eit motivsamband," published after his *Sertekstproblemet i Ljósvetninga saga*, Magerøy discusses possible literary connections between *Ófeigs þáttur* and *Guðmundar saga góða*, but the conclusions there are vague and do not have much significance in the larger debate surrounding the saga.

¹¹⁷ This is not unprecedented even in clearly authored modern creations, such as Aaron Paul's Jesse Pinkman on the AMC TV show *Breaking Bad*. Show creator Vince Gilligan initially intended to kill off Pinkman early in the show, but impressed by Paul's acting, changed the plot to keep the character. PaleyFestLA 2010 Interview. Paley Center for Media, accessed 24 Oct. 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YqnoJ10HqP0/>. For a discussion of Gilligan as author see Jason Mittell, *Complex TV, the Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling*, 102, 112–114.

Versionen der *Ljósvetninga saga*,” in *Arkiv for nordisk filologi*. She argues that rather than being the better version, the C-redaction was used as a template for the A-redaction, which allowed the latter’s redactor to put more finesse and form into an already existing text. Nothing is particularly flawed in the C-redaction version of the saga, but the A-redaction makes the narrative more symmetrical and applies more order. Borggreve establishes the C-redaction as the older and less successful text.

Tommy Danielsson’s PhD thesis on the construction of the *Íslendingasögur* used *Ljósvetninga saga* as a case study, reviving the 100 year old argument and supporting Bååth and Björn M. Ólsen as well as earlier readings of the saga as loosely connected episodes. Unlike Andersson, Danielsson argues that each of the seven parts of *Ljósvetninga saga* has its own individual climax, and as such functions separately.¹¹⁸ This study has failed to make much of an impression in the scholarship that followed, despite being a “controversial and provocative book [...] that deserves attention.”¹¹⁹ Perhaps this is due to the fact that this was a PhD thesis (though Erichsen’s work had a similar context), or perhaps this is due to Danielsson repositioning the debate back at Bååth’s footsteps, which reinforces the stalemate from which Andersson wishes to finally break free, by advancing a literary interpretation of the saga using the C-redaction (though significantly ignoring *Pórarins þáttr ofsa*) as the main text.¹²⁰ From this point onward, *Ljósvetninga saga* scholarship has been largely left in Andersson’s hands.

¹¹⁸ Tommy Danielsson, *Om Den Isländska Släktsagans Uppbyggnad*, 35–36.

¹¹⁹ Kirsten Wolf, “Tommy Danielsson. Om Den Isländska Släktsagans Uppbyggnad,” 452. The only mention of it that I could find in scholarship connected to *Ljósvetninga saga*, was Magerøy’s encyclopedic entry in *Medieval Scandinavia, an Encyclopedia*, “Ljósvetninga saga,” 39, which is generally more balanced than Björn Sigfússon and Theodore Andersson’s encyclopedic entries on the saga.

¹²⁰ Andersson is certainly aware of Danielsson’s other writings, per his “Five Saga Books” review article. See also Lars Lönnroth’s quite positive discussion of Danielsson’s thesis in connection with structural analyses of the *Íslendingasögur*. Lönnroth hints at another reason why Danielsson’s study failed to make a lasting impression on debates in the saga field: “It may be noted in this context that Danielsson was an engineer before he turned to saga studies. [...] his approach to the sagas may be difficult to master for most ordinary humanists,” “Structuralist Approaches to Saga Literature,” 72.

Andersson, like Björn Sigfússon, uses his dictionary entry of *Ljósvetninga saga* to make his thesis into fact: “No final solution has been reached, but it seems most likely that redaction *C* is closer to the original and that *A* is an abbreviation.”¹²¹ Andersson’s grand *Ljósvetninga saga* statement can be found in his 1989 translation of the saga alongside William Ian Miller. While Miller uses *Ljósvetninga saga* to analyse the legal world found in the text and how it reflects on its society in general,¹²² Andersson provides an extensive analysis of the literary aspects connected to it.¹²³ Andersson briefly summarizes the debates surrounding *Ljósvetninga saga*, but more importantly provides his own take on the redaction question, defending his own opinion of the A-redaction as an abridgement of the C-redaction.¹²⁴ He discusses the problematic chronology of the saga, dating issues, character portrayal, the motivations behind its composition, and the value system reflected in the text. In addition, Andersson offers one of the few interpretations of the *þættir* as intrinsic to the text, suggesting that the structure of *Ljósvetninga saga* “is episodic with or without the *þættir*.”¹²⁵ He argues that these texts connect with the main story thematically, and thus belong in the saga. An important contribution of the introduction is its discussion of Guðmundr inn ríki’s appearances elsewhere in the *Íslendingasögur* and *Landnámabók*. Andersson attributes differences in the portrayal of the powerful *goði* to the different “clan or regional biases” of the oral traditions that would later become the sagas,¹²⁶ such as *Njáls saga*’s positive portrayal of

¹²¹ Theodore M. Andersson, “Ljósvetninga saga,” 636.

¹²² In many ways this is a prelude to his more extensive analysis of *Njáls saga* in *Why Is Your Axe Bloody?* as well as his more recent monograph *Hrafnkel Or the Ambiguities: Hard Cases, Hard Choices*. In addition, it is clear that his extensive introduction and footnotes on legal matters were an important study leading up to his monumental 1990 study in Icelandic feud *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, which makes frequent use of *Ljósvetninga saga*.

¹²³ That the two had a clear division of material is clear from the forward to the translation’s introduction. Andersson moves between referring to his own work as “I” (e.g., p. 66) and “Andersson” (e.g., p. 70).

¹²⁴ *Law and Literature*, 66–74.

¹²⁵ *Law and Literature*, 73.

¹²⁶ Finnur Jónsson has argued along similar lines in his discussion in the different attitude towards Guðmundr inn ríki in the chapter 6–12 *þættir* (excluding *Sorla þáttir*) from what he considers the main text; the *þættir* are overly negative towards the Eyjafjörður chieftain because they originate from a different region, *litteraturs historie*, 2nd ed., vol.

Guðmundr due to his support of the Njálssynir, and *Ljósvetninga saga*'s negative portrayal of him for his opposition to the Ljósvetningar.¹²⁷

A recent exception to Andersson's strong voice is a 2007 article by Gísli Sigurðsson, where he advances a much more extensive oral interpretation of the *Íslendingasögur* than Andersson and argues for a "coherence and consistency" in Guðmundr inn ríki's different portrayals in the sagas, with differences in behavior explained by the different stages of his life in which the different sagas take place.¹²⁸ The article is largely a reaction to Paul Schach's research into character creation in the *Íslendingasögur*, where he argues that *Njáls saga*'s positive portrayal of Guðmundr inn ríki is a response to the negative portrayal of Guðmundr in *Ljósvetninga saga*, therefore promoting a literary rather than an oral connection between these two sagas.¹²⁹ Gísli Sigurðsson stresses that Guðmundr's character is fleshed out in the tradition that surrounds him, with certain distinguishing features that make him identifiable to the audience.¹³⁰

In Andersson's further discussions of *Ljósvetninga saga*, he develops issues he has discussed in the translation's introduction. He goes deeper into the question of *Ljósvetninga saga*'s authorship and its connections to Munkaþverá and Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson,¹³¹ and advances an understanding of *Ljósvetninga saga* as a turning point in the Icelandic saga historiography, where the focus of the narrative turns inward to the Icelanders themselves, rather than the Norwegian kings.¹³²

2:498. Andersson would probably not subscribe to this opinion since he treats the *þettir* as part of the *Ljósvetninga saga* whole. These two opinions are not necessarily contradictory, as the oral origins of the tale may have originated elsewhere.

¹²⁷ *Law and Literature*, 88–89.

¹²⁸ Gísli Sigurðsson, "The Immanent Saga of Guðmundr ríki," 215.

¹²⁹ "Character Creation and Transformation in the Icelandic Sagas," 265–67.

¹³⁰ Gísli Sigurðsson, "The Immanent Saga," 218.

¹³¹ Theodore M. Andersson, "The Literary Prehistory of Eyjafjörðr." See also Theodore M. Andersson, "Domestic Politics in Northern Iceland," 166–170.

¹³² Theodore M. Andersson, *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180–1280)*.

2.2 Dating *Ljósvetninga saga*?

One issue that stands out in the scholarly debate about *Ljósvetninga saga* is its date of composition. Dating sagas has been seen recently as a somewhat pointless undertaking that is based on many false premises in need of revision.¹³³ Dating decisions often tell us more about the scholar than about the saga they are trying to date.¹³⁴ As is perhaps natural, each scholar puts something of their own inclinations and prejudices into the suggested date's logic.¹³⁵ As most of the extant saga manuscripts we have come from the fourteenth and fifteenth century, it is becoming abundantly clear that the saga texts themselves originate at least in part from those centuries.¹³⁶ Jürg Glauser pointedly notes that when dating a saga, all that is available is a snippet of that text's development in oral and literary transmission: "It is – to use an image from modern media history – a photographic recording, or perhaps a still of a film, which otherwise is largely lost."¹³⁷ This is especially true for *Ljósvetninga saga*. As Einar Ól. Sveinsson asks, "can we rely on these manuscripts to give evidence of the original text? One of them is certainly unreliable as a witness, but are they not both? Is not

¹³³ See Torfi H. Tulinius, "Dating *Eyrbyggja Saga*: The Value of 'Circumstantial' Evidence for Determining the Time of Composition of Sagas about Early Icelanders," 115–32, and Daniel Sävborg, "Den efterklassiska Islänningasagan och dess ålder," 19–57, as well as the discussion below in regards to the hypothetical post-classical *Íslendingasögur* sub-genre.

¹³⁴ On this see Torfi Tulinius, "Dating *Eyrbyggja saga*," 115–32. One particular sentence stands out: "Writing in 1978, Rolf Heller needed to date *Laxdæla saga* later than hitherto has been done, because he believed it echoes certain Icelandic events from after the middle of the thirteenth century" (127). This reveals much about the considerations for and motivations behind scholarly decisions about dating. Another illuminating example is Steblin-Kamenskii's assertion that the *Íslendingasögur* cannot have been preceded by the *konungasögur*'s composition. He assents that these texts may have existed in written form before the *Íslendingasögur*, because of the prestige of their subjects. However, stories of tenth- and eleventh-century Icelanders must have already existed in *oral* form—otherwise they could not have been composed—and therefore dated to before the *konungasögur*, *The Saga Mind*, 47–48.

¹³⁵ Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, *Dating the Icelandic Sagas*, 95 shares a similar—though not as generalizing—sentiment.

¹³⁶ Ármann Jakobsson, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 104.

¹³⁷ Jürg Glauser, "What Is Dated, and Why?" 28.

Ljósvetninga Saga what might be called a badly preserved saga?”¹³⁸ This original text, or more specifically the *archetype*, is especially hard to come by in the case of a “two-pronged stemma.”¹³⁹ When this stemma is composed of two significantly differing redactions, as is the case of *Ljósvetninga saga*, matters are complicated even further. In addition, as Emily Lethbridge notes, the preoccupation with finding the original writer and original redaction, and consequently downgrading the significance of material that is not considered close to these, “shifts the critical focus away from this surviving evidence for the continuous, regenerative tradition of the saga narrative, to a single, hypothetical, irrecoverable articulation.”¹⁴⁰ And yet, some benefit could still come from grappling with issues of dating and the search for an author. As Torfi Tulinius’s discussions of *Egils saga*’s connection to Snorri Sturluson have shown, sometimes assuming a text is connected with a certain author or a certain individual’s milieu can produce fruitful interpretative advancements.¹⁴¹

The tendency to view *Ljósvetninga saga* as a collection of *þettir* meant that it was often dated early to the twelfth century.¹⁴² Björn Sigfússon cites in this connection a variety of nineteenth-century scholars:¹⁴³ Peter Erasmus Müller, who argued that *Ljósvetninga saga* evinces the beginnings of Icelandic aristocracy;¹⁴⁴ Guðbrandur Vigfússon in his prologue to the *Sturlunga saga* edition;¹⁴⁵ Bååth;¹⁴⁶ Mogk, who dated it to the beginning of the

¹³⁸ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Dating the Icelandic Sagas*, 28. Einar Ólafur also warns that because of the nature of writing in the Eyjafjörður region which incorporated many loosely connected *þettir*, one should tread carefully when dating the sagas of this region (38). While disagreeing with his opinion on the *þettir* issue, it should be noted that such an authority recommended caution with dating sagas of this area.

¹³⁹ Jonna Louis-Jensen, “Dating the Archetype: *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*,” 135.

¹⁴⁰ Emily Lethbridge, “Dating the sagas and *Gísla saga Súrssonar*,” 104.

¹⁴¹ Torfi H. Tulinius, *The Matter of the North [...]*, 264–68.

¹⁴² ÍF 10:XLVI.

¹⁴³ ÍF 10:XLVI–XLVII, n. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Müller, *Saga Bibliothek*, vol. 1:140.

¹⁴⁵ *Sturlunga saga*, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, LVI. Guðbrandur and Powell estimate a similar date in *Origines Islandicae*, 346.

¹⁴⁶ In fact, Bååth explicitly stated that he does not intend to date the four sagas discussed in his study, though he did place it as older than *Laxdæla saga*, *Njáls saga*, and *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Studier öfver Kompositionen*, VI.

thirteenth century;¹⁴⁷ and Finnur Jónsson, who dated the main saga and *Ófeigs þáttir* and *Vöðu-Brands þáttir* to the twelfth century, and *Sorla þáttir* to the thirteenth.¹⁴⁸ Valdimar Ásmundarson, in his non-critical edition, also asserted that *Ljósvetninga saga* is from the twelfth century and therefore one of the oldest *Íslendingasögur*.¹⁴⁹ Rafn also dated the saga to the second half of the twelfth century.¹⁵⁰

Björn M. Ólsen subscribed to Bååth's *þættir* interpretation of *Ljósvetninga saga*'s composition, and he therefore dated its parts separately. The compilation itself, according to Björn, is from the fourteenth century, but its various parts were written in different times. Because of misunderstandings of the law in chapters 1–4, he dates these to after 1300.¹⁵¹ *Sorla þáttir*, on the other hand, could be dated to the mid-thirteenth century, based on its linguistic features.¹⁵² *Ófeigs þáttir* and *Vöðu-Brands þáttir*, which he groups together following Bååth,¹⁵³ could not come from before 1300, since they show a misunderstanding of the quarters-system.¹⁵⁴ Björn similarly places the final part of the saga that deals with Guðmundr's son Eyjólfur at a later date, since it shows a misunderstanding of Icelandic law.¹⁵⁵

Björn Sigfússon responds to the misconceptions that according to him surrounded *Ljósvetninga saga* and the preference of the C-redaction, and argues for a second half of the thirteenth-century dating, going against Björn M. Ólsen's later dating based on legal evidence.¹⁵⁶ Björn Sigfússon dates the saga to no earlier than the last decade of the Icelandic commonwealth, but by no means after 1275, due to the C-redaction's connections to

¹⁴⁷ Eugen Mogk, *Geschichte*, 761–762.

¹⁴⁸ Finnur Jónsson, *litteraturs historie*, 1st ed., vol. 2:504; 2nd ed., vol. 2:498.

¹⁴⁹ *Ljósvetninga saga*, ed. Valdimar Ásmundsson, unnumbered introduction page.

¹⁵⁰ *Antiquités Russes [...]*, ed. Carl Christian Rafn, vol. 2:271.

¹⁵¹ “Ljósvetninga þáttur er því naumast samin fir enn svo sem einum mansaldri eftir að þjóðveldið og hin fornu lög þess liðu undir lok, eða ekki fir enn um aldamótin 1300.” Björn M. Ólsen, “Um Íslendingasögur,” 386.

¹⁵² Björn M. Ólsen, 386.

¹⁵³ Björn M. Ólsen, 368. See *Law and Literature*, 79.

¹⁵⁴ Björn M. Ólsen, “Um Íslendingasögur,” 386–87.

¹⁵⁵ Björn M. Ólsen, 387–88. See also *Law and Literature*, 78–79.

¹⁵⁶ ÍF 10:XLVII

Brennu-Njáls saga.¹⁵⁷ According to Björn, the author of *Njáls saga* would have been aware of the C-redaction's description of Guðmundr, since he shares much in *Njáls saga* with that version's description of his character.¹⁵⁸ It is also important to bear in mind that the C-redaction is dated later than the original A-redaction since, according to Björn Sigfússon, the former is based on the latter. It is clear that Björn Sigfússon bases much of his dating on the Icelandic grand narrative of subjugation to Norwegian rule. The Norwegian king referring to the Icelanders as “mína þegna,”¹⁵⁹ my people, is inconceivable, according to Björn Sigfússon, before the very last years of the commonwealth,¹⁶⁰ a point that Björn M. Ólsen agreed with, though in his case it caused him to advocate for an even later date.¹⁶¹ Björn Sigfússon's arguments are tied with his Bookprose approach towards the sagas, an approach he championed with his edition of the allegedly highly oral *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Reykðæla saga*.¹⁶² In the promotion of *Ljósvetninga saga*, or any other saga, as an authored piece rather than one where there are clear oral traces, the later the date, the better.¹⁶³

Theodore Andersson questioned Björn Sigfússon's mid-thirteenth-century dating of *Ljósvetninga saga*, and wished to follow Guðbrandur Vigfússon's “instinct” for an early dating.¹⁶⁴ Influenced by a later trend that questioned the Icelandic grand narrative, he counters Björn Sigfússon's arguments by citing a case where Icelanders are referred to as the king's “þegna” in *Gísls þáttur Illugasonar*, which is dated to the early-

¹⁵⁷ ÍF 10:XLII–L, n. 3. Einar Ól. Sveinsson also hints at this (*Dating the Icelandic Sagas*, 35). See also Paul Schach, “Character Creation,” 265–67, and Gísli Sigurðsson's response to what he sees as a misunderstanding of the way oral stories work and are transmitted (“*The Immanent Saga,” 213–17). Björn Sigfússon is much more conclusive about the dating in his *Kulturhistorisk leksikon* entry, where he states that it “är sannolikt författad o. 1260, möjl något senare.” Björn Sigfússon, “Ljósvetninga saga,” 653–54.

¹⁵⁸ ÍF 10:XLVIII–L.

¹⁵⁹ *Ljósvetninga saga*, 97.

¹⁶⁰ *Ljósvetninga saga*, XLVII–XLVIII.

¹⁶¹ Björn M. Ólsen, “Um Íslendingasögur,” 388.

¹⁶² See, e.g., Heusler, Review of *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*, and Stefán Einarsson, “Publications in Old Icelandic Literature,” 46.

¹⁶³ See Emily Lethbridge, “Dating the sagas,” 82.

¹⁶⁴ Theodore M. Andersson, “Guðbrandur Vigfússon's Saga Chronology: The Case of *Ljósvetninga saga*,” 8.

thirteenth century, a scene that Björn himself referenced in a brief footnote.¹⁶⁵ According to Andersson, service at the Norwegian court was not new to the late thirteenth century, and neither was the kind of relationship between Icelanders and the Norwegian king portrayed in *Ljósvetninga saga*.¹⁶⁶ Andersson’s dating of *Ljósvetninga saga* to c. 1220 is connected with his idea that the saga was a turning point in Icelandic storytelling,¹⁶⁷ as well as his assertion that the Northern monastery Munkaþverá was a center for saga production.¹⁶⁸ *Ljósvetninga saga* must have been written around 1220 because of its relationship with *Morkinskinna*, its similarities with *Reykðæla saga* (which he prefers to date between 1207–1222),¹⁶⁹ and the saga’s connections to Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson (d. 1207) and his family’s connection to Munkaþverá.¹⁷⁰ *Ljósvetninga saga* reports to us Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson’s catchphrase: “Höfum nú Veisubragð,”¹⁷¹ as a reference to a scuffle that occurs in the farm of Veisa in the eleventh century. Andersson says that an un-witty sentence like that would not have been remembered more than a decade after the man passed away.¹⁷² We cannot always assess which events and witty retorts will be remembered and which ones will be forgotten.¹⁷³ In addition, as Einar Ól. Sveinsson points out, there is nothing that clearly indicates that Þorvarðr was dead when the line was put on parchment; it could also have been in the latter years of his life when “he

¹⁶⁵ ÍF 10: 97, n. 4. That this was relegated to a footnote by Björn rather than discussed in the main introduction is noteworthy.

¹⁶⁶ *Law and Literature*, 79. In the context of *Hreiðars þáttr* and the representation of interactions with the Norwegian court, see Yoav Tirosh, “Icelanders Abroad.” Finnur Jónsson, who subscribed to an even earlier dating of the saga, noted the use of *þegna* but did not make changes to his dating due to this. Finnur Jónsson, *litteraturs historie*, 1st ed., vol. 2:504; 2nd ed., vol. 2:498.

¹⁶⁷ Andersson, *Growth of the Sagas*, 119–31.

¹⁶⁸ E.g., *Morkinskinna* [...], eds. Theodore Murdock Andersson, Kari Ellen Gade, 67–71.

¹⁶⁹ *Law and Literature*, 82, based on arguments made in Dietrich Hofmann “Reykðæla saga und mündliche Überlieferung.”

¹⁷⁰ *Law and Literature*, 79.

¹⁷¹ ÍF 10:73.

¹⁷² *Law and Literature*, 83–84.

¹⁷³ Einar Ól. Sveinsson also argues that the citation makes more sense when Þorvarðr was dead, or at least after his retirement to a monastery in the latter part of his life, but does not state how long a period after his death this would have been cited: “they could very well have been written in 1208, or 1218, or later.” *Dating the Icelandic Sagas*, 56–57.

was off the scene.”¹⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Einar Ólafur’s inclination for dating *Ljósvetninga saga* was, like Andersson, towards a date close to Þorvarðr’s death.¹⁷⁵ Björn Sigfússon argues that it is the people around Ögmundur sneis Þorvarðsson, the son of Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson, who wrote *Ljósvetninga saga*. This could be an alternative explanation for Andersson’s dating: it is likely that people would remember their fathers’ terrible dad-jokes long after their passing. Hallvard Magerøy suggests that this could also be an entirely different Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson, a son of Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði who is mentioned in *Landnámabók*.¹⁷⁶ While this option is doubtful, considering Þorvarðr’s likely advanced age in the mid-eleventh century, it remains a possibility due to *Ljósvetninga saga*’s proclivity to create chronological rifts, discussed below in the chapter Are Each of the Redactions Internally Consistent?

If it is believed that the *Njáls saga* author knew *Ljósvetninga saga*’s C-redaction, the latter should be at least a few years younger than the former. Barði Guðmundsson, who is discussed at length in The Part About Memory, suggested that both redactions of *Ljósvetninga saga* would have been written after *Njáls saga*, since, as will be shown, he read its depiction of Guðmundr inn ríki as a slander against the controversial late thirteenth-century Þorvarðr Þórarinsson. There is also the possibility that only *Ljósvetninga saga*’s C-redaction was written after *Njáls saga*, with the A-redaction having been written before, and the C-redaction using *Njáls saga* as a source, rather than the other way around. To understand this issue fully, it is important to address the argument that *Njáls saga*’s descriptions of Guðmundr inn ríki and Þorkell hákr are based on and respond to *Ljósvetninga saga*. The connection between *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Njáls saga* will now be explored with the aim of understanding how these texts communicate with and respond to each other.

¹⁷⁴ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 56.

¹⁷⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 57.

¹⁷⁶ Magerøy, “indre samanhengen,” 89.

2.3 A New Look at the *Ljósvetninga saga*-*Brennu-Njáls saga* Connection

An interesting issue that arises from Barði Guðmundsson's reading of *Ljósvetninga saga* is the fact that he sees it as a response to *Brennu-Njáls saga* rather than the other way around. After all, Björn Sigfússon asserts that *Njáls saga* would have been aware of *Ljósvetninga saga*'s C-redaction. As such, the saga's A-redaction, which he deems as earlier, would have predated *Njáls saga* by quite some time.¹⁷⁷ While the implications of which of the sagas were written first will be discussed below, the connection between these two sagas is, at times, overwhelming, almost to the point where it appears undeniable that one is responding to the other in various events, descriptions, and character representations. The question is: which is responding to which? The answer does not have to be so clear cut; in circumstances of oral composition, both sagas could be responding to each other. But whether the main thrust of the narrative comes from the story's oral origins or from the moment(s) it was brought to writing, it will be shown that *Njáls saga* and *Ljósvetninga saga* each as a unity have deep connections to one another.

In his research into characterization in the *Íslendingasögur*, Paul Schach argued that, rather than there being a set of characters that existed in a "communal memory bank,"¹⁷⁸ each representation of a character in each saga is based on its own function in that specific text and on the intent of its author. This is true, he argues, even for a character as ubiquitous in the *Íslendingasögur* as Snorri goði, about whom Steblin-Kamenskii argued that he is "treated in exactly the same way in various sagas."¹⁷⁹ Schach dedicates some space to the character of Guðmundr inn ríki and his representation in various texts. What connections he finds, he attributes to a literary connection between the texts. He argues that Guðmundr's image in *Njáls saga* "is of almost superhuman dimensions," and that it "is clearly

¹⁷⁷ ÍF 10:XLVIII–L, n. 3. See also ÍF 12: XL–XLI.

¹⁷⁸ Schach, "Character Creation," 249.

¹⁷⁹ Steblin-Kamenskii, *The Saga Mind*, 80.

intended as a rebuttal to Ljósvetninga saga,”¹⁸⁰ In Gísli Sigurðsson’s article on Guðmundr inn ríki discussed above, he calls Schach’s approach “untenable,”¹⁸¹ and states that “the views expressed by Paul Schach [...] provide clear evidence of the way that misconceptions about the nature of oral tradition can mislead people in their conclusions regarding saga characters who, like Guðmundr *ríki*, appear in several written texts.”¹⁸² Gísli criticizes Schach for conflating oral tradition with historical accuracy, not realizing that an oral storyteller can be just as creative with his material as a literary author.¹⁸³ In addition, Gísli argues that Schach is wrong to assume that a character emanating from oral tradition must show a consistency in every text in which they appear. Different texts shine a light on different aspects of a certain character.¹⁸⁴ While Gísli’s argument that Schach misunderstands oral tradition rings true, it is important to remember that even in oral composition two ‘independent’ stories could correspond to each other, precisely because of the concept of *immanence* discussed by Gísli (as well as Clover and Foley before him).¹⁸⁵

The argument for a literary connection between *Ljósvetninga saga*’s C-redaction and *Njáls saga* is a strong one, but it is difficult to ascertain which preceded which. It could be argued that the C-redaction author, after reading *Njáls saga* in its written form, decided that more connections between the two sagas needed to be made than there were in an already existing A-redaction.¹⁸⁶ Thus, for example, *Sqrli þáttr* could have been inserted into the narrative as a response to Flosi’s confrontation with Sqrli Brodd-Helgason. However, the argument in the opposite direction is just as likely: when, in *Njáls saga*, Flosi approaches Sqrli Brodd-Helgason for support in the *alþingi* following the burning of Njáll and his family, Sqrli

¹⁸⁰ Schach, “Character Creation,” 267. See also ÍF 12: XL–XLI.

¹⁸¹ Gísli Sigurðsson, “*The Immanent Saga,” 213.

¹⁸² Gísli Sigurðsson, 213.

¹⁸³ Gísli Sigurðsson, 213. See also Rankovic “Who Is Speaking in Traditional Texts.”

¹⁸⁴ Gísli Sigurðsson, “*The Immanent Saga,” 214–215.

¹⁸⁵ Carol J. Clover, “The Long Prose Form;” John Miles Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic*.

¹⁸⁶ See ÍF 10:XLVIII–XLIX, n. 3, for Björn Sigfússon’s discussion of the linguistic ties between *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Njáls saga*.

refuses, stating that he needs to see first what Guðmundr inn ríki, his father in law, decides to do. To this Flosi responds: “Finn ek þat á svörum þínum, at þú hefir kvánríki.”¹⁸⁷ Sqrli’s answer, as well as Flosi’s response to it, make sense in the context of *Njáls saga*, and the situation in its entirety invokes Northeastern regional traditions. A literary connection with *Ljósvetninga saga* need not be proven for this scene to work. However, there is an extra layer of meaning added if we look at this scene in the context of *Ljósvetninga saga*. It is noteworthy that the word *kvánríki* is rather rare: according to the *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog* it also appears in *Finnboga saga ramma*, *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, and *Steins þáttur Skaptasonar*, and its cognate *kvenríki* appears in a mid-fourteenth-century law code on baptism.¹⁸⁸ All of these appear in a negative context. Flosi’s use of *kvánríki* is straightforward: Sqrli has married Guðmundr inn ríki’s daughter, and the statement implies that she is the one who determines things around the house. But there is a double meaning that is hard to ignore. As this is a rare word, it is interesting that it combines *kván* and *ríki*, after, as will be shown, the insults to Guðmundr’s manliness were already invoked in the saga. The woman that rules the house is not necessarily Sqrli’s wife Þórdís, but could rather be Guðmundr himself. This becomes clearer by the use of the word *ríki*, Guðmundr’s epithet. Flosi is made even more admirable a character when, in his hour of need, he finds time to devise elaborate puns.

One aspect where *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Njáls saga* are clearly intertwined is in their treatment of the characters of Njáll and Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði. As I have noted in a forthcoming publication,¹⁸⁹ *Ljósvetninga saga* presents Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði and Hákon jarl as mirror-images of each other: both are famously pagan, manipulative in their conversion, and show a certain willingness to sacrifice their children. Ármann Jakobsson’s discussion of the Nasty Old Men of the *Íslendingasögur*—who wish

¹⁸⁷ ÍF 12: 351 [ch. 134]. “I can see from your answer that your wife rules here,” *Njal’s saga*, trans. Robert Cook, 235.

¹⁸⁸ Dictionary of Old Norse Prose, University of Copenhagen, accessed 21 Oct. 2018, http://onpweb.nfi.sc.ku.dk/wordlist_d.html/.

¹⁸⁹ Yoav Tirosh, “Trolling Guðmundr: Paranormal Defamation in *Ljósvetninga saga*.”

death upon their children—is informative in this context.¹⁹⁰ To call Þorgeirr a Nasty Old Man is more problematic than to call Njáll one. After all, he tries to back off from the battle against his sons, though Guðmundr presses him forward. But he fights them, nonetheless. The father-son dispute reaches its climax in the *goðablóð* ceremony that removes Þorgeirr’s *goðorð*, taking away his power and weakening his side’s legal position. But this is also a very clear symbolic act: “Þorgeirr goði bjó at Ljósavatni” are the first words of *Ljósvetninga saga*’s A-redaction, and most of its C-redaction versions. This byname follows him in many texts in which he appears, including *Njáls saga*,¹⁹¹ *Reykðæla saga*,¹⁹² and *Finnboga saga*.¹⁹³ By stripping away Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði’s *goðorð*, the Þorgeirssynir are stripping away their father’s identity. At one moment during the battle between Þorgeirr and his sons, Þorgeirr’s side begins to show a sign of weakness. To this, Høskuldr Þorgeirsson responds: “Illt er þat, ef fōður minn þrýtr drengskapinn.”¹⁹⁴ This generational strife between Þorgeirr and his sons connects *Ljósvetninga saga* even further to the *Njáls saga* narrative.

Old age connects Þorgeirr and Njáll elsewhere in the texts. In *Ljósvetninga saga*’s C-redaction, when Guðmundr and Þorgeirr meet rough opposition from the side of the Þorgeirssynir, Guðmundr says: “Synir þínir gánga nú fast fram, en þú eldist.”¹⁹⁵ This echoes both the scene in *Njáls saga* where Skarphéðinn points out that his father’s harsh words following Høskuldr’s death should be attributed to his old age, and the compensation scene during which Skarphéðinn points out Njáll’s advanced age.¹⁹⁶ The comment on Þorgeirr’s age is not proof of anything in itself; the expression “svá ergisk hverr sem eldisk” appears in *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*,

¹⁹⁰ Ármann Jakobsson, “The Specter of Old Age: Nasty Old Men in the Sagas of Icelanders.”

¹⁹¹ ÍF 12:271 [ch. 105].

¹⁹² E.g., ÍF 10:209 [ch. 18].

¹⁹³ E.g., ÍF 14:253 [ch. 1].

¹⁹⁴ ÍF 10:13 [ch. 4]. “It’s a shame if my father’s courage is giving out,” 133.

¹⁹⁵ *Ljósvetninga Saga* 1830, 11 [ch. 4]. ÍF 10:13. “Your sons are now taking strong measures and you are getting old,” 132.

¹⁹⁶ ÍF 12:281 [ch. 111]; ÍF 12:314 [ch. 123]. See also Tirosh, “Víga-Njáll: A New Approach Toward Njáls saga,” 219, where references to Njáll’s old age are discussed.

and elsewhere,¹⁹⁷ so clearly *Njáls saga* and *Ljósvetninga saga* did not ‘invent’ this concept. Nevertheless, the connection between getting older and the struggle with one’s children is a recurrent theme in both.

There is merit to Björn Sigfússon’s argument for a stronger literary connection between *Ljósvetninga saga*’s C-redaction and *Njáls saga*. As the following chapter lays out, the C-redaction stresses that it is specifically Þorgeirr to whom the *taparøx* from Hákon jarl was given when he asks him and Guðmundr for support.¹⁹⁸ This ties the *taparøx* specifically to Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði and his commitment to oppose his sons at court and consequently in battle, not unlike Njáll who carries a *taparøx* on his way to gather the support of Ásgrímr Elliða-Grímsson in court, in the midst of his scheming the deaths of his sons. If Njáll’s intention is not clear enough, the author drives the point home by dressing him in a “blárri kápu,”¹⁹⁹ a piece of cloth that is frequently worn by future killers.²⁰⁰ The only other appearance of the word *taparøx* in *Njáls saga* is when Njáll instructs his ally Gunnarr to deceive the well-endowed Hrútr through trickery and manipulation of the law.²⁰¹ This scene shows Njáll’s unnerving understanding of the way his fellow men operate.²⁰² Gunnarr is told by Njáll that the conversation with Hrútr will turn to the people of Eyjafjörður, a rather obvious turn, since Gunnarr is meant to present himself as an Eyfirðingr. To Hrútr’s questions about the people of that area, Njáll tells Gunnarr to

¹⁹⁷ ÍF 11:126 [ch. 8]. See also Richard Lynn Harris, “The Proverbial Heart of Hrafnkels Saga Freysgoða,” where he discusses the uses of proverbs in that saga, and the “Concordance to Proverbs [...]”, University of Saskatchewan, accessed 2 Sept. 2017, https://www.usask.ca/english/icelanders/proverbs_HKLS.html/.

¹⁹⁸ Hjalmar Falk points out the Eastern origins of the ‘*taparøx*,’ which is noteworthy considering it is grouped with a ‘*hatt girzkan*,’ *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 110.

¹⁹⁹ ÍF 12:296 [ch. 118].

²⁰⁰ See, e.g., Anita Sauckel, *Die literarische Funktion von Kleidung*, 80. Sauckel discusses Njáll’s choice of clothes as a disguise. This is a convincing interpretation and not necessarily contradictory to the one presented here.

²⁰¹ ÍF 12:59 [ch. 22].

²⁰² See William Sayers, “Njáll’s Beard, Hallgerðr’s Hair and Gunnarr’s Hay,” 11–12. Sayers posits that Njáll’s lack of a beard constitutes as a sacrifice of his manhood that allows him to understand better the ways of men.

answer: “Ærinn hafa þeir klækiskap.”²⁰³ With these words, the *Njáls saga* author points to a connection between these two stories.

The word *taparøx* is a rather rare one, which, according to *Íslenskt textasafn*, appears only five times in the *Íslendingasögur* corpus: twice in *Njáls saga*, once in *Ljósvetninga saga*, and twice again in *Vatnsdæla saga*.²⁰⁴ The *Vatnsdæla saga* scene where the word appears is also connected to Guðmundr inn ríki. There, a father presents his unacknowledged son, Þorkell krafla, with a *taparøx* and promises to acknowledge their kinship, in return for the death of a man destined by lot to become the Vatnsdæliir *goði*. Þorkell then uses that very axe to do the deed, i.e., to kill a *goði*. *Vatnsdæla saga* continues to relate the adventures of Þorkell krafla in the Orkney Islands. There, he catches the attention of Jarl Sigurðr, the very same jarl who participated in the battle of Brian, mentioned at length in *Njáls saga* and briefly in *Ljósvetninga saga*.²⁰⁵ Jarl Sigurðr gives Þorkell krafla an axe, which is accordingly named *Jarlsnautr* (Jarl’s Gift). The saga then relates that Þorkell krafla is harassed by Glœðir, a nephew of none other than Guðmundr inn ríki. Þorkell, Glœðir claims, had been suckling milk from the teats of sows and has laid beside them because he could not handle the cold of the mountain. Þorkell krafla responds by planting *Jarlsnautr* in Glœðir’s head. When he runs away, a woman called Hildr protects him by holding an axe. The prosecution for the killing is then handled by Guðmundr inn ríki, who, as is his wont, insists on nothing short of pronouncing Þorkell krafla as *sekr*—outlawed. Þorkell turns to the prophetess Þórdís for help, who instructs him to take the named staff *Hognuðr*, and to strike Guðmundr with it. When Þorkell does this, Guðmundr loses his memory and ruins the prosecution; his memory is later restored by another hit from *Hognuðr*. There are several interesting elements here, especially with the ties to *Ljósvetninga saga*’s portrayal of Guðmundr inn ríki. The

²⁰³ ÍF 12:61 [ch. 22]. “They do a lot of nasty things,” *Njal’s saga*, trans. Cook, 38.

²⁰⁴ Hjalmar Falk, *Altnordische Waffenkunde*, 110. See also ÍF 12:59, n. 5 and Anatoly Liberman, *Word Origins*, 142; because of its etymology, a ‘*taparøx*’ could be translated as ‘axeaxe,’ if one were so inclined. The use of the word can be found in <http://corpus.ar-nastofnun.is>, search word “*taparøxi*.”

²⁰⁵ ÍF 12:448–460 [ch. 157]; ÍF 10:61 [ch. 22].

character of Glœðir is a substitute for the usual portrayal of Guðmundr inn ríki: Þorkell offers an alternative ending to the one sustained by Þorkell hákr. A *taparox* is used to strike down a chieftain, and then an axe is given by a jarl, which is used to kill a kinsman of Guðmundr. This could be playing with the traditions surrounding Guðmundr and his *Ljósvetninga saga* ally, Þorgeirr. This is underlined by the fact that we have an axe-yielding woman—a rare feature in the *Íslendingasögur*—and yet something that also appears in *Ljósvetninga saga*, when a certain Þórhildr divines the future using an axe, clad in warrior’s clothes.²⁰⁶

Religion is another aspect that connects Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði and Njáll in *Njáls saga*. The Conversion of Iceland is described as a moment of crisis when pagans and Christians were on the brink of splitting the legal system in two. To avoid this, the man appointed lawspeaker of the Christian side gave three marks of silver to Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði, the lawspeaker of the pagan side, to pronounce which of the two laws should prevail, the Christian or the pagan. There is a lack of clarity in the sources and in scholarship regarding whether or not this was a bribe.²⁰⁷ It is hard to understand what other function the three marks of silver could have had, though some have tried to explain this away as the regular fee given to the lawspeaker.²⁰⁸ After this, Þorgeirr retreats to his booth where he covers himself with a cloak and speaks to no one for an entire day. When he emerges, people gather at the *logberg*, and Þorgeirr declares that one law should preside over all from now on, since “ef sundr skipt er lögnum, þá mun ok sundr skipt friðinum,” and that it will be the Christian one.²⁰⁹ The choice of Christianity as the law of the land over heathen practice was surprising for the pagans, because Þorgeirr was one of their

²⁰⁶ ÍF 10:59–60. On axe-wielding women: Leszek Gardęła, “Amazons of the North?”

²⁰⁷ See ÍF 12:271; *Njáls saga*, 328, n. 2; *Íslendingabók: The Book of the Icelanders*, trans. Siân Grønlie, 8–9. “The Icelandic verb (*kaupa at*) is ambiguous, and could mean either that Hallr and Þorgeirr negotiated a settlement, or that Hallr gave Þorgeirr money (either a bribe or the appropriate fee) to speak the law. [...] Ari leaves the nature of the agreement deliberately murky,” *Íslendingabók*, 25, n. 71.

²⁰⁸ See Miller, *Why Is Your Axe Bloody?*, 185, n. 19; *Íslendingabók*, 25, n. 71 (cited in Miller).

²⁰⁹ ÍF 12:271 [ch. 105]. “If the law is split asunder, so also will peace be split asunder,” *Njáls saga*, trans. Cook, 181.

own. Unlike *Njáls saga*, both *Íslendingabók* and *Kristni saga* relate that “of barnáutburð skyldu standa en fornu lög ok of hrossakjötsát,” meaning that these traditions would be allowed.²¹⁰ In *Njáls saga*, this concession is different: the exposure of children and horse flesh are completely forbidden, unless done secretly.²¹¹ This difference means that these two pagan customs are further condemned specifically in *Njáls saga*; emphasizing the killing of one’s children by Þorgeirr, a man who got close to the killing of his own children, hits rather close to home.

Þorgeirr’s statement on the importance of keeping the country stable stands out. It is logical that with two law systems, chaos would reign. Coming from the lawspeaker, the words have even more weight. But it is hard to ignore that these words are uttered by a man whom the text hints just accepted a bribe. This is not the only case in *Njáls saga* where somebody speaks of the importance of the law for the land. After a failed attack on Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi’s life, Njáll helps his friend by prosecuting the offenders. During the arbitration, Njáll makes sure to demand an amount that will be sufficient to compensate for an eventual killing of one of these attackers, “þó at þat kunni við at bera.”²¹² During that very cynical exchange, Njáll utters the famous proverb “með lögum skal land vart byggja, en með ólögum eyða.”²¹³ Later on, chaos rules the *alþingi* after Njáll gives out advice that causes several legal cases to reach a stalemate. Njáll comes to the rescue with his plan for a Fifth Court—a court that conveniently requires the establishment of new *goðorð*. This comes exactly when he needs his foster-son Hǫskuldr to become a *goði* in order to win the hand of the picky Hildigunnr. Njáll has created the solution, but was also the one who intentionally created the chaos. It is not beyond him to enact significant constitutional change without regard for consequences in order to

²¹⁰ ÍF 1:17 [ch. 7]. See also ÍF 15:36. “The old laws should stand as regards the exposure of children and the eating of horse-flesh,” *Íslendingabók*, ed. Grønlie, 9, 50.

²¹¹ See *Íslendingabók*, 25–26, n. 73.

²¹² ÍF 12:171 [ch. 69]. “Should that occur.” *Njal’s saga*, trans. Cook, 116.

²¹³ ÍF 12:172 [ch. 70]; see also 172–173, n. 6.

achieve his own ends.²¹⁴ William Ian Miller, discussing Njáll's Christian mindframe, illustrates the man's manipulative and vengeance-minded nature in his last moments. While Njáll claims he is too old to avenge his sons, his very last 'Christian' act of lying down under an ox's hide constitutes a performance that invokes that revenge.²¹⁵ This vengeance is made possible by the systemic failings built into the institution of the Fifth Court that Njáll himself had created.²¹⁶ Laws do not always build the land, they sometimes break it as well. If Þorgeirr lies covered in bed in order to perform a process of inner-contemplation and conversion, Njáll's 'Christian' action of lying in bed covered in fur as his house and family burn around him is him using the religious language in order to achieve his ends.²¹⁷ Þorgeirr's 'Christian' act hides a bribe, Njáll's 'Christian' act invokes revenge for deaths he himself orchestrated. Both men cover themselves in the name of Christianity, but both have very different things on their mind than Christianity as they do so.²¹⁸

Several other connections between *Njáls saga* and *Ljósvetninga saga* can be discerned. For example, the scene in which Njáll instructs Gunnarr how to fool Hrútr is very similar to the scene in *Ljósvetninga saga* where Guðmundr inn ríki instructs Rindill how to approach Þorkell hákr's home. The deception itself is similar, as are the careful instructions on how to behave. When Guðmundr inn ríki's men approach Þorkell hákr's home,

²¹⁴ See Anita Sauckel's analysis of Njáll as a trickster figure in her "Brennu-Njáls saga: An Old Icelandic Trickster (Discourse)?" 94–115. See also Schach, "Character Creation," 263–265, who points out that in other sources it was the lawspeaker Skapti who created the Fifth Court. In *Njáls saga* the narrative takes special care to show Njáll instructing Skapti on his legal innovation, ÍF 12:242 [ch. 97].

²¹⁵ Miller, *Why Is Your Axe Bloody?*, 231–234.

²¹⁶ Miller suggests but dismisses this possibility in *Why Is Your Axe Bloody?*, 265.

²¹⁷ Njáll, it is related, "fór opt frá öðrum mönnum einn saman og þulði, einn saman," ÍF 12:255 [ch. 100]. "Often went apart and murmured to himself," *Njal's saga*, trans. Cook, 173. This can stem from genuine belief, but it could also be for show.

²¹⁸ See also Lisa Bennett, "'The Most Important of Events': The 'Burning-In' Motif as a Site of Cultural Memory in Icelandic Sagas," 78, and *Íslendingabók*, ed. Grønlie, 25, n. 72, which compares Þorgeirr's blanket display with Njáll oddly murmuring to himself after becoming Christian.

we are told that “við gnýinn ok vápnabrak vaknaði Þorkell,”²¹⁹ which could remind the audience of Gunnar’s own valiant defense, which begins once his loyal dog Sámr—otherwise underused in the saga narrative—is killed, and his cry awakens the doomed warrior. *Njáls saga* and *Ljósvetninga saga* also share the rivalry between Þorkell Geitisson and Guðmundr inn ríki. This is evident in the C-redaction’s *Voðu-Brands þáttur*, as it is when they take opposing sides in the *alþingi* dispute following the burning of Bergþórshváll. Here it is related that, when Kári achieves a tactical victory against Þorkell Geitisson’s side: “Varð þá óp mikit at þeim af mǫnnum Guðmundar.”²²⁰ The *alþingi* battle also ties into the Ljósvetningar–Mǫðruvellingar dispute: it is related that a Þorvarðr Tjorvason from Ljosavatn received a grievous wound, which was inflicted by Guðmundr inn ríki’s son Halldórr.²²¹ Halldórr, who died by the time of *Ljósvetninga saga*’s Kakalahóll battle, is given a chance to make his own contribution to the ongoing feud in *Njáls saga*. The narrative takes care to point out that Þorvarðr—who is not mentioned in *Ljósvetninga saga*—remains unavenged for his wound, and that this should be counted as an achievement for the Mǫðruvellingar. Finally, it is noteworthy that the battle at the *alþingi* in *Njáls saga* is a result of Mǫðr’s mishandling of the *kviðr* in the Fifth Court. The word *kviðr* becomes significant in both the saga’s A-redaction and C-redaction, due to its dual meaning of ‘jury’ and ‘belly,’ discussed at length in the following chapter. That the defendant’s lawyer, Eyjólfur Bolverksson, is killed by a spear that “kom á hann miðjan” constitutes a significant tie in with Þorkell hákr’s death and the exposure of his guts.²²²

²¹⁹ ÍF 10:51. “Thorkel woke up at the tumult and clash of arms,” 192. All the C-redaction manuscripts miss the words “ok vápnabrak,” *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 186.

²²⁰ ÍF 12:404 [ch. 145]. “There was much jeering at them from Gudmund’s men,” *Njal’s saga*, trans. Cook, 271.

²²¹ ÍF 12:404 [ch. 145]. “Thorvard Tjorvason from Ljosavatn received a great wound; his arm was pierced, and men thought that Halldor, the son of Gudmund the Powerful, had thrown the spear. Thorvard never received compensation for that wound as long as he lived,” *Njal’s saga*, trans. Cook, 271.

²²² ÍF 12:408 [ch. 145]. “Hit him in the waist and went through him,” *Njal’s saga*, trans. Cook, 274.

One sequence of events in *Brennu-Njáls saga* has such a significance in the context of *Ljósvetninga saga*'s plot, that it would not be out of place if it were included in the latter's narrative. Following the killing of their foster-brother Hǫskuldr Þráinsson, the Njálssynir are in a tough spot. Alongside their ally Ásgrímr Elliða-Grímsson, they move between the booths of different prominent Icelandic chieftains at the *alþingi*. This scene is a spectacle, since it gathers many of the most prominent and well-known of the tenth- and eleventh-century players in a single sequence, where they are put up against Skarphéðinn's sharp tongue. Skapti Þóroddsson, Snorri goði, and Hafr Þorkelsson are all confronted by this quick-tempered killer, before he turns to the booth of the Mǫðruvellingar and their chieftain, Guðmundr inn ríki. The Northern chieftain refuses to promise his support, but nonetheless shows the group hospitality. Midway in the conversation, Guðmundr points out the fifth man standing in the row of guests, describing his features as exceptional but unlucky. Skarphéðinn responds by addressing his own guilt for Hǫskuldr's death, and reminding the chieftain of his blame for not avenging himself upon Þorkell hákr and Þórir Helgason.²²³

When this attempt to muster Guðmundr's support fails, the group turns to the booth of the Ljósvetningar, where Þorkell hákr accepts them. The narrative takes special care to build up Þorkell's character, listing his detailed genealogy, and many of his accomplishments outside of Iceland, which included the killing of a dragon. In Þorkell's response to the Njálssynir's plea for help, he inquires how Guðmundr inn ríki responded. When he learns that Guðmundr did not promise help, he declares that Guðmundr must have found the case highly unpopular, and that Ásgrímr must have thought him to be more dishonest to support the defense for this wrongful killing. Then, like the others before him, Þorkell hákr notices Skarphéðinn, and asks for the identity of this ominous-looking individual. Skarphéðinn answers by noting that "hefir mik aldri þat hent, at ek hafa

²²³ ÍF 12:302 [ch. 119].

kúgat fõður minn ok barizk við hann, sem þú gerðir við þinn fõður,”²²⁴ adding that before the *alþingi* Þorkell was seen by his shepherd eating a mare’s ass. This insult crosses the line for Þorkell, who springs up and threatens Skarphéðinn with his sword. Skarphéðinn replies by brandishing his axe, which causes Þorkell to sit back down.²²⁵

Njáls saga’s author here creates a bond between the stories of Njáll and his sons, and the Ljósvetningar’s inner strife, as well as their battle against the Mõðruvellingar. When dealing with this scene in his book *Why Is Your Axe Bloody?*, William Ian Miller mostly stresses the contrasts that the author created between the proven fighter Skarphéðinn, and the bed-post booster Þorkell hákr.²²⁶ Miller’s choice to emphasize the contrasts between them, however, clouds the vast similarities between the two prominent Icelanders’ sons. Whenever they enter a chieftain’s booth, we are told, Skarphéðinn stands in the fifth place in line. Excluding Gizurr hvíti—who gives no trouble in lending his support to the Njálssynir—Þorkell hákr is the fifth person to be approached in this sequence.²²⁷ Since the author takes much care to point out that Skarphéðinn is the fifth in line, this could hardly be a coincidence, given the additional parallels between the two men. As Miller points out, the author takes time to reintroduce Skarphéðinn before his conversation with Þorkell hákr and almost immediately following Þorkell hákr’s description.²²⁸ Despite Miller’s convincing analysis, Skarphéðinn’s physical feats have a fantastical air to them: such ice-sliding and precise axe-swinging is certainly not within the reach of most of the saga’s modern readers, and likely not within grasp of anyone

²²⁴ ÍF 12:304–305 [ch. 120]. “It’s never happened that I threatened my own father or fought him, as you did with your father,” *Njáls saga*, trans. Cook, 204.

²²⁵ ÍF 12:305 [ch. 120].

²²⁶ Miller, *Why Is Your Axe Bloody?*, 212. Apparently, Þorkell’s bedposts depicting his achievements abroad were famous enough to make an appearance in ch. 16 in the mid-nineteenth-century novel *Moby Dick*, 211, n. 3.

²²⁷ Miller points out “that five characters ask after the fifth man,” *Why Is Your Axe Bloody?*, 104, n. 28.

²²⁸ See Marion Poilvez, “Those Who Kill: Wrong Undone in the Sagas of Icelanders” on first killings in the *Íslendingasögur* and how they influence one’s appearance.

but the most acrobatic of the saga's contemporary audience.²²⁹ When Skarphéðinn calls Þorkell out for eating a mare's ass, the Njálsson (or the *Njáls saga* author) must have on his mind the accusation of him and his brothers being *taðskegglingar*, dung-beardlings, though according to Sverrir Tómasson *tað* implies human rather than animal excrement.²³⁰ Beyond the multi-sensory humiliation of having poop smeared over one's face, this accusation against Þorkell has a further bite to it: it is tied to both "oral-anal sex with farm animals" and consequently, "sloppily performed coprophagy."²³¹ This fits well with Skarphéðinn's earlier accusation against Þorkell that he fought against his father. When Skarphéðinn points out that he himself did not fight with his patriarch, his phrasing stands out. I have argued elsewhere that Skarphéðinn's use of the verb *henda* indicates passivity: he did not oppose his father, but if circumstances were slightly different, he might have.²³² Furthermore, Skarphéðinn is being disingenuous; as Njáll himself indicates in his infamous *alþingi* speech, the killing of Hǫskuldr hurt him in an almost physical sense. In addition, *Njáls saga*'s representation of the Ljósvetningar father-sons dispute is not entirely coherent with the extant *Ljósvetninga saga* text, since Þorkell hákr's involvement in the feud with his father is minimized in the latter. His brother Hǫskuldr takes the lead role in the father-sons dispute,²³³ and Þorkell is only mentioned once in chapters 1–4, in a list of Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagöði's sons.²³⁴

While Skarphéðinn might be a more popular and colorful character, Þorkell had dealt with his father's oppression in a 'healthier' manner; he does not share a household with his brothers and father (though this self-

²²⁹ Cf. Qays Constantine Stetkevych, *Grappling Within the Sagas* [...] for a discussion of medieval Icelandic knowledge of grappling.

²³⁰ Sverrir Tómasson, "The Textual Problems of *Njáls saga*: One Work or Two?," 46.

²³¹ Miller, *Why Is Your Axe Bloody?*, 105.

²³² Tirosh, *Víga-Njall*, 224.

²³³ This makes his not avenging the death of his brother Þorkell hákr in the later chapters even more baffling, but perhaps an older age has made Hǫskuldr more sedate, or Guðmundr's growing power in the district had become too vast after the victory over his two main opponents, Þórir Helgason and Þorkell hákr.

²³⁴ ÍF 10:7 [ch. 2].

seclusion would be his undoing), he is married and has a daughter who makes sure that his death is avenged, even at the expense of the lives of her husband and, eventually, her son.²³⁵ Skarphéðinn gets no such satisfaction. He can only be avenged through the mechanisms of Kári, a man who by the end of the saga and the deaths of his own wife and son, no longer has any physical ties to the Bergþórshváll kin group. Þorkell hákr and Skarphéðinn's confrontation is a sum of the connections between the story of the Bergþórshváll dwellers and the *Ljósvetninga saga* conflicts. When Skarphéðinn accuses Þorkell of being a mare's ass-eater, he both accuses him of breaking with Christian tradition,²³⁶ and with being *argr*,²³⁷ in essence breaking with the pagan tradition of masculinity. The family of the lawspeaker who ended the rule of paganism in Iceland, then, is openly accused of both a form of child exposure—killing one's children—and of eating horse-flesh, from the son of a father who similarly exposes his children to fire, and who himself is accused of 'eating ass.'

As mentioned above, Björn Sigfússon argued that the *Njáls saga* author must have had access to or knowledge of *Ljósvetninga saga*'s C-redaction when working on his own text. An important point established is the higher volume of connections between *Ljósvetninga saga*'s C-redaction and *Njáls saga* over the A-redaction, manifest in, for example, Sörli Brodd-Helgason's dealings with Flosi, or the *taparox* connecting Njáll and Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði. This opens up the possibility that even if *Ljósvetninga saga*'s A-redaction is firmly dated before *Njáls saga*, the C-redaction could have been written in response to it. This kind of argument is not unprecedented in saga scholarship, as a similar sequence of writing has been argued in connection with *Gísla saga*'s two versions and *Eyrbyggja saga*.²³⁸ With

²³⁵ Guðrún Þorkeldsdóttir has rarely been compared with the more active female players of the *Íslendingasögur* and *fomaldarsögur*, probably because she plays such a minor role. Nevertheless, her sacrifice of her husband and son in the name of vengeance for her beloved father is noteworthy. One can only imagine how she reacted when news of her son's—Hallr Koðránsbani—death arrived at her doorstep. Did she think of her namesake Guðrún Gjúkadóttir? On Guðrún, see also Ela Sefčíkova, "The Women of *Ljósvetninga saga*," 61–63.

²³⁶ *Origines Islandicae*, 353.

²³⁷ Miller, *Why Is Your Axe Bloody?*, 105.

²³⁸ Cf. Lethbridge, "Dating the sagas," 97.

this, Barði Guðmundsson’s argument below on the possibility that *Ljósvetninga saga* is a response to *Njáls saga* becomes somewhat more convincing. While his analysis of the saga as a *roman à clef* is farfetched, we should not follow Njáll’s example and throw the baby out with the bathwater. While this sub-chapter re-affirmed the connections between *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Njáls saga*, it does not offer an ultimate solution to what was written first. However, as Else Mundal pointedly points out, “the relationship between written sagas” is ultimately tied to their previous existence as oral tradition, and the connections that these inherently entail.²³⁹ Sometimes what we see as literary connections were already present in the oral forms of these stories, and are therefore presently undateable.

2.4 Conclusion

Despite Björn Sigfússon’s claims otherwise, in both of the *Ljósvetninga saga*’s redactions, the focal point is Guðmundr inn ríki and the Möðruvellingar rather than the Ljósvetningar, to the extent that Bååth suggested that the saga should have been called “Möðruvellingasaga.”²⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the earliest extant title of the saga is found in the medieval AM 561 4to 32v, in faded red ink: “liofuetninga f.”—*Ljósvetninga saga*. The earliest post-medieval manuscripts of the C-redaction are variations of “Ljósvetninga saga eður Reykdæla;”²⁴¹ “hier hefur søgu af þorgeyr goþa, Gudmunde ríjka, z þorkel hák;”²⁴² “Ljósvetninga saga;”²⁴³ and even “hier biríast saga sá er

²³⁹ Else Mundal, “The Dating of the Oldest Sagas about Early Icelanders,” 43.

²⁴⁰ Björn Sigfússon, *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*, 5; Bååth, *Studier öfver Kompositionen*, 2. Björn M. Ólsen solved this by suggesting that the first part where Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði’s sons battle Guðmundr inn ríki should be called *Ljósvetninga saga*, while the part that focuses on Guðmundr should be called *Möðruvellinga saga*. The parts of the saga were later put together. “Um Íslendingasögur,” 371. See also *Soga om Ljosvetningane*, trans. Magerøy, 9.

²⁴¹ E.g.: Isl papp 35 fol; AM 554 e 4to; JS 624 4to; BL ADD 4867 4to; NKS 1714 4to; Kall 616 4to; Kall 621 4to; Lbs 1629 4to; Thott 984 I–III fol.; AM 395 fol.

²⁴² E.g., AM 514 4to; NKS 1704 4to (second copy); and NKS 1798 4to. Note that these three manuscripts are part of the branch marked as the B-redaction because of their different ending, but otherwise seem to stem from the same copy of AM 162 c fol., as all other C-redaction manuscripts.

²⁴³ E.g., AM 485 4to and NKS 1785 4to.

Reikdæla heiter.”²⁴⁴ With these title changes, various post-medieval and, presumably, medieval scribes tried to deal with the unclear focus of these texts, and either shifted it to the main actors, Guðmundr, Þorgeirr, and Þorkell, or expanded the field of action to include a larger segment of the Northeast—Ljósavatn and Reykjadalur.

If the saga’s scribes found it difficult to settle on the name ‘*Ljósvetninga saga*,’ its nineteenth- and twentieth-century editors struggled to decide which group of texts actually comprise the saga. Attempting to create definitive texts for use of scholarship and the general public, editors of normalized editions make choices that influence the way a certain saga is perceived, as discussed in the thesis’s conclusion. Emily Lethbridge has shown in the case of *Gísla saga Súrssonar* how an edition’s choice to prioritize a certain redaction over another, as well as stylistic editorial choices of prioritizing different readings when the base-text does not match the editors’ expectations, can skew our understanding of a saga.²⁴⁵ The same is true for *Ljósvetninga saga*. Guðmundur Þorláksson’s edition from 1880, which was meant for the general public, was the first critical edition of the text since Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason’s 1830 edition, which was based mostly on the post-medieval manuscript AM 485 4to. Despite being a reliable edition in that it marks most—though not all—significant manuscript variants,²⁴⁶ Guðmundur’s edition has been criticized for its creation of a composite text that combines the A-redaction and C-redaction manuscripts, as well as its chapter headings that influenced readers to think of the saga in parts or *þættir*.²⁴⁷ In chapters 1–4 and 19–21, where both redactions of the saga agree, Guðmundur used the A-redaction rather than the post-medieval C-redaction manuscripts. Yet in chapters 5–18, he used the

²⁴⁴ NKS 1704 4to (first copy).

²⁴⁵ Lethbridge, “*Gísla saga Súrssonar*. Textual Variation, Editorial Constructions and Critical Interpretations.”

²⁴⁶ Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell say of this “there are too many worthless various readings,” *Origines Islandicae*, 348.

²⁴⁷ See Bååth, *Studier öfver Kompositionen*, 1–2; Erichsen *Untersuchungen*, 70; Björn Sigfússon *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*, 4–5; Björn M. Ólsen, “Íslenzkar fornsögur,” XXIII, n. 1. Note that Björn Sigfússon criticizes Erichsen because her conclusions are based on Guðmundur Þorláksson’s division. See also Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 10, 13.

medieval C-redaction manuscript when possible, and the post-medieval ones when not. The same goes from the end of chapter 21 that is not in the A-redaction until the end of the saga. Guðmundur also divided the saga into *Guðmundar saga* and *Eyjólfs saga*, and further divided Guðmundr's bulk into *þættir*. This composite text was the most useful edition of *Ljósvetninga saga* for the next 60 years or so.

What has become the standard when dealing with *Ljósvetninga saga*, Björn Sigfússon's Íslenzk fornrit edition, prioritizes the A-redaction over the C-redaction. In the variant chapters 13–18, the A-redaction is printed in large letters, while the C-redaction text is printed below it and in a smaller font. This decision does not reflect the extant material: once the two redactions converge in chapter 18, they tell us the same story in almost the same words. But once the story breaks off in the A-redaction, we have no way to know what followed, or if anything followed at all. Keeping the large letters after the break is an editorial decision that makes it seem certain that the A-redaction included chapters 22–31. In addition, the three segments designated as *Sorla þáttr*, *Ófeigs þáttr*, and *Vøðu-Brands þáttr* are taken out of the main text and presented separately. The final, fragmentary *Pórarins þáttr ofsa* is placed after the saga, with only an unnumbered footnote that indicates its connection with *Ljósvetninga saga*. This underplays the importance of these episodes to the integrity of the saga's C-redaction. These two editions of *Ljósvetninga saga* on the one hand create a false impression of unity where this does not exist, and on the other create an impression of disunity when this is not necessarily the case.

Guðmundur Þorláksson's edition gives the reader the impression that the text is a patchwork of sorts, an assortment of stories put together. Björn Sigfússon's edition gives a similar impression for the saga's C-redaction, that the saga's *þættir* were added unnecessarily by its redactor. These editions of *Ljósvetninga saga* have each naturally formed the way the saga was received by scholarship. In 1885, based (though not uncritically) on Guðmundr's edition, Swedish poet and scholar A.U. Bååth developed his theory that the *Íslendingasögur* were composites of *þættir* put together by their

redactors, with *Ljósvetninga saga* as an early and somewhat raw manifestation. While this perception of saga composition was eventually rejected, it signaled what was to come. Guðmundur's edition helped to establish the notion that the *þettir* about Sqrli, Ófeigr, Vøðu-Brandr, and Þórarinn were external to the main narrative. When the Freeprose scholars Erichsen and Liestøl advanced a theory of oral variation between these two redactions, with preference for the C-redaction, Björn Sigfússon blamed Guðmundur Þorláksson's edition for this. Björn therefore set out to promote his own Bookprose understanding of *Ljósvetninga saga* with the A-redaction as the saga's main text, as outlined above. Despite his attempt to redeem the saga, Björn's edition helped mostly to re-affirm the spurious nature of the saga's narrative structure. Theodore Andersson's work on the saga and his re-prioritization of the C-redaction has not managed to entirely change the discourse that surrounds it, and its transmission is still considered complicated. Andersson and Miller's decision to keep the *þettir*'s names in their translation did not help to establish them as integral to the text.

The dating of *Ljósvetninga saga* is built on false premises as is the entire project of dating sagas as it is currently understood. Recent decades of Old Norse scholarship have questioned the overcommitment of dating to a grand narrative where the loss of independence to the Norwegian king is an inherently traumatic social event, along with a style-based analysis that was conjectural, at best. One such example is the case of *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Brennu-Njáls saga*, where the assumption was that the author of *Njáls saga* must have known *Ljósvetninga saga*'s C-redaction to write about Sqrli or Guðmundr. While the literary connection exists between the two texts, it is far from certain that *Ljósvetninga saga* would have come before *Njáls saga*. Furthermore, *Ljósvetninga saga* has two redactions with an unclear time of composition. It is possible that the A-redaction would have already existed for some time and then—following the popular *Njáls saga*²⁴⁸—someone would have revised the saga into the C-redaction. This newer redaction then incorporated the oral tales upon which *Njáls saga* based its

²⁴⁸ See, e.g., Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, "Introduction," xiii.

characterizations of Guðmundr and Sqrli. Both redactions have their own logic and consistency, discussed below, and the possibility exists that *Njáls saga* chronologically separates the two extant redactions of *Ljósvetninga saga*. The characterization of Þorgeirr and Njáll (and to a certain extent Guðmundr), as well as of Þorkell hákr and Skarphéðinn Njálsson are all much more multifaceted and intriguing when looked at through the prism of the connection between these two texts. The advantage of an oral culture is that it allows for the authors of both to have known the other text as they composed their own. It is likely that the connection between *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Njáls saga* was a well-established fact long before either ever saw the skin of a calf.

Another point of contention regarding critical reception of *Ljósvetninga saga* is the variance between its two redactions. This helped support the early twentieth-century Continental school of Freeprose, and their assertion that the *Íslendingasögur* stem from an oral tradition. They asserted that the discrepancies in names and details between the two versions reflect differing oral traditions. The mostly Icelandic Bookprose school argued that the variances in *Ljósvetninga saga* stem from literary choices made by conscious authors of varying literary capacities. Since, according to Björn Sigfússon, the C-redaction featured more illogical narrative choices, it is the lesser one, and must have derived from the higher quality A-redaction. The question of the *Ljósvetninga saga*'s redactions' internal coherence and consistency remains open to this date. It was important for Björn Sigfússon to establish a literary connection between the two redactions in order to cancel out the possibility of variant origins, as it was also for Andersson, so he could promote his vision of combined oral and literary influence. Establishing the primacy of one redaction means denouncing the other as inconsistent—with the exception of Borggreve. This thesis rejects that approach in favor of one where both redactions have their own intrinsic value, a more fruitful approach that reveals the meanings and motivations behind the choices made by their authors.

3. Are Each of the Redactions Internally Consistent?

Before *Ljósvetninga saga* manuscript's role from the perspectives of memory and genre are discussed, it is important to consider whether the two redactions each represent an internally-consistent narrative. The basic test of this is whether the extant text of each manuscript tradition exhibits unity of theme and plot. An intense examination of where the A-redaction and the C-redaction diverge has been done very competently by Hallvard Magerøy in 1957.¹ Another very extensive examination of motifs and literary techniques in *Ljósvetninga saga* and the *Íslendingasögur* in general can be found in Heinzel's 1880 *Beschreibung der Isländischen Saga*, though he does not address the saga's A-redaction. The present examination seeks to determine how differences between the redactions create meaning. It will be shown that even if—as nineteenth-century scholarship argued—the components of these texts had separate origins, by the time they reached their extant A-redaction and C-redaction form, both of them had developed a complex and consistent narrative and characterizations. This is a reaction to arguments of scholars from the nineteenth and twentieth century who argued that either the A-redaction or the C-redaction is somehow lesser, or a less worthy work of art. Both redactions will be shown to be self-contained literary works, their meanings not dependent on the other.

The text has been divided into subsections that reflect varying concordance between the redactions. The beginning chapters (1–4)² are extant both in the A-redaction (though the ending is missing) and the C-

¹ Hallvard Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet i Ljósvetninga Saga*.

² To avoid confusion the following discussion will follow the C-redaction chapter count presented in the 1830 *Ljósvetninga saga* edition, as well as marked in brackets in the Íslenzk fornrit edition of the saga. Andersson and Miller use this chapter count in their translation of the saga.

redaction. This section is followed by the *þættir*, i.e., *Sprla þáttir*, *Ófeigs þáttir*, and *Vöðu-Brands þáttir*. After the *þættir* are the highly divergent chapters 13–18 and the highly similar chapters 19–20. The story of Eyjólfur Guðmundarson’s struggles with the Ljósvetningar are only extant in the C-redaction, and finally *Þórarins þáttir ofsa* is also only extant in the C-redaction. Although this division re-enforces the feeling of *Ljósvetninga saga*’s episodic nature, it is not an admission of its *þættir* nature. One does not follow the other. Carol Clover’s concept of ‘stranding’ as a narrative technique is useful in this case. Clover defines stranding as “a shift of narrative focus from part to part, usually in a way that entails the discontinuous telling of something that could just as well, and more naturally, be told all at once.”³ If something is discontinuous it does not mean that it is interpolated, but could rather be part of the author’s design. The episodes that concern Northeastern politics constitute a break from the saga’s main feud between the Mǫðruvellingar and the Ljósvetningar in the C-redaction. Clover, however, stresses the “separability” of *Ljósvetninga saga*’s (as well as other sagas’) *þættir*,⁴ while the following analysis will stress their thematic and narrative connections.

The core of this examination is the portrayal of Guðmundr inn ríki. The argument is that his portrayal is negative in both redactions of *Ljósvetninga saga*.⁵ As we have seen, this is not the scholarly consensus about the saga, as Björn Sigfússon has argued that Guðmundr’s representation in *Ljósvetninga saga*’s C-redaction is more positive than the A-redaction,⁶ and Bååth argued that the chieftain’s character is not consistent throughout the saga’s parts.⁷ Both of these arguments have been contested.⁸ Finnur Jónsson offers a reading of Guðmundr inn ríki’s character opposed to the

³ Carol Clover, *The Medieval Saga*, 65.

⁴ Clover, 35.

⁵ For my earlier discussions of the portrayal of Guðmundr inn ríki, see **The Fabulous Saga*, and “Argg Management,” 242–243, n. 10, along with “Trolling Guðmundr.”

⁶ Björn Sigfússon, *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*, 27–38

⁷ See discussion above.

⁸ Cecilia Borggreve, “Der Handlungsaufbau in den zwei Versionen der Ljósvetninga saga,” 240, n. 8.

one presented here.⁹ He reads Guðmundr as an honorable, peaceful man who reluctantly enters battle but gallantly fights his enemies when his name is smeared. Likewise, Finnur considers Guðmundr's son Eyjólftr to be treated as an overall positive individual by the text. It is understandable where Finnur Jónsson's reading stems from: what is read here as cowardly, Finnur reads as honorable; what is read here as manipulative, Finnur could read as legal acumen. This is based on the way in which the society in which the story takes place is approached, especially when it comes to the treatment of masculinity throughout Old Norse literature in general, and specifically in *Ljósvetninga saga's* portrayal of Guðmundr inn ríki.¹⁰

This comparison is restricted to elements that are relevant to the discussion of Guðmundr inn ríki. The chapter is best read alongside Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason's edition of *Ljósvetninga saga*. This edition is used for the saga's C-redaction, but page numbers for the Íslenzk fornrit edition are also provided, as this is the standard edition used in scholarship today. In addition, readings of the C-redaction are supplemented by Jón Helgason, Björn Sigfússon, and Guðmundr Þorláksson's readings of AM 162 c fol., since Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason's investment in AM 485 4to at times made them prefer its readings over the medieval manuscript. In the case of chapters 1–4, citations from the C-redaction manuscripts are provided when the difference in wording is potentially significant. Recognizing the debate over Björn Sigfússon's choice of JS 624 4to as the base-manuscript for his Íslenzk fornrit edition of *Ljósvetninga saga*, several places where other C-redaction manuscripts—especially AM 485 4to—offer a more interesting reading will be highlighted.

⁹ Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 2nd ed., vol. 2:498–499.

¹⁰ On this, see Tirosh “Argr Management,” and “Trolling Guðmundr.”

3.1 Chs. 1–4: Where the Feud Between Guðmundr inn ríki and the Sons of Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði Is Initiated

These four chapters are the part of *Ljósvetninga saga* where the two redactions offer an almost identical text. The variations between the A-redaction and the C-redaction are of the same nature as copyist variations of the same text. Guðmundr is not the main character in this sequence of events, or alternatively plays the role of a more of a behind-the-scenes kind of protagonist.¹¹ Still, some of the differences, as slight as they might be, reveal meaning. As will be shown with the texts' shifting generic roles—which is dependent on context—the process of reading changes the meaning of the same line's interpretation for the audience.¹² Therefore, the same line or word can be understood in a different light if it appears in a different place in each redaction.

3.1.1 Qlvir's Daughter, Sölmundr, and Ófeigr

As pointed out in The Part About the Critics, it is commonly noted by scholars that Guðmundr inn ríki is not given a proper introduction in *Ljósvetninga saga*. This was used as evidence by Erichsen to show that chapters 1–4 were an abbreviation of a previously existing text: why else would such a prominent character in the saga not be introduced? Björn Sigfússon offered the plausible solution that Guðmundr would have been well-known enough to warrant no introduction,¹³ and Benedikt Sveinsson attributed this to the saga's early date, which means both that the author was not accustomed to the genealogical introductions of saga-style, and that Guðmundr's family-ties would have been well-known to an early audience.¹⁴ Such solutions underplay the artistic abilities of the saga's authors. In *Morkinskinna's Hreiðars þáttr*, for example, Þórðr is the first character to be introduced, rather than his brother Hreiðarr, the *þáttr's* real

¹¹ Cf. Elín Bára Magnúsdóttir, *Eyrbyggja saga: Efni og höfundareinkenni*, 40–49.

¹² See e.g., Iser's description of the process of re-evaluating a text's possible meanings in the reading process, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach."

¹³ Björn Sigfússon, *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*, 8.

¹⁴ *Ljósv.* 1921, X–XI.

protagonist. Hreiðarr therefore needs only a short introduction because his brother would share the same genealogy. However, by introducing Þórðr first and Hreiðarr later, we are party to a playful bait and switch on the side of the kings' saga author.¹⁵

In *Ljósvetninga saga*, it could be argued that the lack of a proper introduction to Guðmundr is substituted with the story of Qlvir. Another point to consider in the saga's introduction is that, while in the A-redaction Sölmundr's brother is named Söxólfr, in the C-redaction his brother is named Eyjólfur.¹⁶ The C-redactor, then, chose a tradition that helps tie the narrative together: this Eyjólfur who goes against societal norms that demand that the household retains control over women, is later echoed in the Eyjólfur of chapters 21–32 (including *Þóraríns þáttur ofsa*), who goes against the societal norms that oppose honor-based violence.

The first chapter of *Ljósvetninga saga* presents the plight of one Qlvir from the farm Reykja. Qlvir is “búandi góðr”¹⁷ and “hafði átján þræla.”¹⁸ Qlvir is in an unfortunate situation: Sölmundr Viðarsson has taken notice of his daughter and begins to frequent her at their farm, despite the wishes of her kinsmen. While at no point do we hear the unnamed woman's voice in this matter,¹⁹ the A-redaction says she is offered no protection due to “lítilmennsku föður hennar.”²⁰ The C-redaction is slightly more accusatory towards Qlvir's kinsmen: “ok ná vilja frænda, ok fékst þó engin

¹⁵ See Yoav Tirosh, “Icelanders Abroad.”

¹⁶ ÍF 10:3 [ch. 1], and n. 6; *Ljósv.* 1830, 3, n. 4. See also *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 113, which settled this dilemma by having both brothers' names, based on Gísli Konráðsson's Lbs 143, 4to.

¹⁷ ÍF 10:3 [ch. 1]. “A good farmer,” 121. C-version has it as “góðr bóndi.” *Ljósv.* 1830, 3. See, e.g., AM 485 4to 1v and JS 624 4to 26r.

¹⁸ ÍF 10:4 [ch. 1]. “had eighteen slaves,” 122. *Ljósv.* 1830, 4.

¹⁹ This woman's silence is the exception rather than the rule in *Ljósvetninga saga*, where Guðmundr's daughter Þórdís clearly shares Sörlu's interest with her, while the narrative implies that Friðgerðr is active in her seeking out the attention of men. The narrative seems to have sympathy towards Friðgerðr and her father's plight of an unacknowledged pregnancy. Brandr Gunnsteinsson does not deny having slept with her, and the narrative introduces her as “kona væn ok ættgóð ok sköruglig, sýslumaðr mikill,” 73 [ch. 22]; Beautiful, of great lineage and imposing, hardworking (my translation). In addition, this text gives much agency to Guðmundr's wife Þórlaug: at first, she initiates a feud, and later, she forces Guðmundr not to seek retribution for his dead companion Rindill. On female agency in this saga see also Ela Sefčíkova, “The Women of *Ljósvetninga saga*.”

²⁰ ÍF 10:4 [ch. 1]. The feebleness of her father (my translation).

forstaða af lítilmenni,”²¹ though this could stem from a scribal mistake between *án* and *ná*, it could also emphasize the family’s feebleness, since in this version the text does not note that they were explicitly opposed. Ólvir must then seek out the help of Ófeigr Járngerðarson,²² who is described as “höfðingi ok garpr mikill.”²³ When Sölmundur and his brothers arrive at the farm to snatch Ólvir’s daughter, the eighteen slaves either feel incompetent or are indifferent to this illicit act, stating: “Hvat gerðu vér nú átján, er þeir Viðarssynir kómu at þrír?”²⁴ The dauntless Ófeigr, however, who is also present in the farm, immediately jumps up, takes his weapons, and runs after the brothers, and the two sides play a tug-o-war of sorts with the woman. At this stage of the saga, a contrast is created between the rich, but weak Ólvir, and the courageous, admired Ófeigr. In the A-redaction, the implications on Guðmundr’s character are faint. It could be argued that when Ófeigr threatens Guðmundr with his fist at the end of Guðmundr’s part of the saga, the act corresponds with this earlier display of courage,²⁵ and in turn Guðmundr’s feebleness is foreshadowed by Ólvir’s, but this is less pronounced in the narrative. In the C-redaction, however, the similarities between Guðmundr and Ólvir are more prominent. In *Sörla þáttr*, Guðmundr is introduced into the saga, where we are told that he “hafði 100 hjóna ok 100 kúa.”²⁶ Despite the difference in wording (*þræla/hjóna*), these descriptions of Ólvir and Guðmundr could suggest a connection between the two. In *Sörla þáttr*, it is related how Guðmundr’s daughter Þórdís is frequented by a youth named Sörlri Brodd-

²¹ *Ljósv.* 1830, 4 [ch. 1].

²² ÍF 10:3, n. 5; *Law and Literature in Medieval Iceland [...]*, eds. Theodore M. Andersson and William Ian Miller, 121, n. 3; and Magerøy, *Studiar i Bandamanna saga*, 262, designate him as Guðmundr’s *þingmaðr*, but this is not explicitly stated at any stage of the text. See Tirosh, **The Fabulous Saga*, 37, n. 65.

²³ ÍF 10:3 [ch. 1]. A prominent leader and greatly courageous (my translation).

“Höfðingi mikill ok garpr,” *Ljósv.* 1830, 3 [ch. 1].

²⁴ ÍF 10:4 [ch. 1]. What can us eighteen do, when the three Viðarssynir come? (My trans.) “Hvat munum vér nú 18, ef þeir koma til 3 Viðarssynir,” *Ljósv.* 1830, 4 [ch. 1].

²⁵ Interestingly, this takes place at Tjörnes, where Friðgerðr and her father also come from. Thus, the two narratives are possibly tied together in the C-redaction story.

²⁶ *Ljósv.* 1830, 13 [ch. 5]. He has a hundred (120? ÍF 10:109, n. 2) servants and a hundred (120?) cows (my translation), ÍF 10:109.

Helgason. These interactions are not to Guðmundr’s liking, and yet he is helpless to stop them. When he sends Þórdís to his brother’s farm in Þverá, the latter does nothing to stop the young lovers’ interactions, and even promotes Sqrli’s case as a suitor. In the C-redaction, then, Qlvir could be looked at as a stand-in for Guðmundr, whose ability to control his own household is put into question. This is reinforced by how the later *Ófeigs þáttur* follows *Sqrli þáttur* in presenting Ófeigr as the sensible voice that puts Guðmundr in his place. In addition, Guðmundr’s antagonist Þórir Helgason’s introduction as “garpr mikill,”²⁷ in the part of chapter 13 that is now only extant in the C-redaction, supports this parallel between Guðmundr and Qlvir.

3.1.2 Jarl Hákon Enlists Guðmundr inn ríki and Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði’s Help

When Sölmundr is exiled for three years after he and his brothers kill a Norwegian, he appears before jarl Hákon who decides to promote his return to Iceland after only two years. This act is gratuitous, and is more a display of power from the jarl than a reflection of any real necessity.²⁸ The jarl then decides to send gifts to Guðmundr inn ríki and Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði. The A-redaction and C-redaction have a very slight variation in how he does this. According to the A-redaction: “Hann sendi út hatt girzkan ok taparøxi þeim Guðmundi ok Þorgeiri goða til trausts.”²⁹ According to the C-redaction: “Hann sendi girzkan hatt Guðmundi enum ríka, en Þorgeiri Ljósvetningagoða taparøxi.”³⁰ The difference between the

²⁷ *Ljós.* 1830, 36 [ch. 13]; ÍF 10:16. “A forceful man,” 162.

²⁸ Sölmundr is “fýstisk út” (‘most eager to come out’ [i.e., back to Iceland]), but a little patience rarely killed anyone.

²⁹ ÍF 10:6 [ch. 2]. He sent a greek hat and a small decorative axe to Guðmundr and Þorgeirr goði for support (my translation). Andersson and Miller’s assertion in their translation is interesting, that “this sentence is found only in the A redaction,” 125, n. 12. This is misleading, as it implies that, in the C-redaction, it is only Þorgeirr who receives the gifts, thus making Guðmundr’s support in the case rather curious.

³⁰ *Ljós.* 1830, 6 [ch. 2]; ÍF 10:6, n. 6 He sent a greek hat to Guðmundr inn ríki, and a small decorative axe to Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði (my translation).

two sentences seems immaterial at first, and yet it is significant that in the C-redaction one gift is specifically assigned to Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði, and one is specifically assigned to Guðmundr. In addition, in the C-redaction we are told that Sölmundr “færði Þorgeiri þá ena góðu grip, er jarl hafði sendt honum.”³¹ As Magerøy points out, there is much ambiguity in the representation of the events in the A-redaction. In his analysis, Guðmundr claims that Þorgeirr alone was sent the gifts from the jarl when they were, in fact, sent to both of them. In the C-redaction, Magerøy argues, the point of the story is missed, since if the gifts were given to both chieftains, the ambiguity is lost. But then there remains a contradiction, since one gift was supposedly given to Guðmundr.³² It is possible that besides the hat and the axe other gifts were brought, and these were merely the ones highlighted. The C-redaction features an unclear contradiction here, though, which is difficult to explain away as a narratological decision. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that the C-redaction makes more of a point to share the blame of the regional and familial tensions that arise from the following events between Þorgeirr and Guðmundr, perhaps even leaning towards Þorgeirr. The implications are minute: in both cases Guðmundr is represented as the manipulative go-getter that continuously presses for family discord in order to have the lawspeaker on his side. In the A-redaction, however, the blame on Þorgeirr’s side is lessened, since he is possibly tricked by Guðmundr to assist Sölmundr’s case.

When, in the C-redaction, Þorgeirr gives Guðmundr legal advice, he advises: “Sé ek ráð til, segir Þorgeir, at við komum honum á þínar sveitir, á Eyfirðinga leið, ok Reykdæla leið, ok Ljósvetninga leið, ok höldum saman leiðum öllum þeim öllum, þótt mínir þingmenn sé meirr norðr þar, ok mun þá maðrinn vera friðheilgaðr, ef svá gengr.”³³ This is interesting because of the double meaning of the word *leið*. While here *leið* obviously means a local assembly, the fact that the word could also mean ‘way’ could

³¹ *Ljós.* 1830, 3 [ch. 13]; ÍF 10:6, n. 7. He (Sölmundr) then gave Þorgeirr the valuable gifts that the jarl had sent him (my translation).

³² Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 23–4.

³³ *Ljós.* 1830, 7 [ch. 2]; ÍF 10:7, n. 4.

be a set up for the rest of the saga: Guðmundr must participate in power struggles in Eyjafjörður, Reykjadalur, and the Ljósavatn area before he could rest peacefully in control of the district. The variant A-redaction “Þverár leið”³⁴ could imply also that Guðmundr is yet to deal with his own brother, Einarr, whose residence is in the farm of Þverá.

When Arnórr comes to Þorgeirr for his support, the latter replies: “Mér þykkir þú illt ráð hafa upp tekit, at leggja sœmð sína í virðing við eins manns mál útlends, ok sé sá þó látinn nú. Og mun ek Guðmundi veita.”³⁵ It is unclear whether Þorgeirr is actually scolding himself and Guðmundr here,³⁶ or if this is an ironic device on the side of the author. Hákon jarl³⁷ is a foreigner to whom Þorgeirr has tied his honor, though not quite dead yet. Sölmundr might not be a foreigner but he will be dead soon in the very next scene following Arnórr and Þorgeirr’s dialogue. In addition, in the next A-redaction episode and the one following the C-redaction *þættir*, Guðmundr inn ríki will wager his honor in legal support of the seemingly foreign Helgi Arnsteinsson/Ingjaldr,³⁸ when a *þingmaðr* of Þórir Helgason gives him a raw deal—the pot calling the kettle black.

³⁴ ÍF 10:7, n. 4. AM 514 4to has it as “þrjár leiðir,” *Glúma og Ljósveitinga saga*, 118.

³⁵ ÍF 10:8 [ch. 2]. I think you have made a bad decision, to lay your honor in legal support of one man, a foreigner, and one who is now dead. I will continue to support Guðmundr (my translation). Notice the slight variations in the C-version, most significantly “dauðr” instead of “látinn,” *Ljósv.* 1830, 7 [ch. 2]; *Glúma og Ljósveitinga saga*, 119.

³⁶ This double-scolding is not unprecedented, for example, in *Valla-Ljóts saga* when Boðvarr is scolding an unclear target (presumably his guide) for losing their way in the snow, but also seems to be scolding himself, ÍF 9:249 [ch. 6].

³⁷ Also, interestingly, named Hákon inn ríki in *Heimskringla*, ÍF 27:221 [ch. 129].

³⁸ While Björn Sigfússon argues that Helgi Arnsteinsson would have been an Icelander, and an historical one to boot, ÍF 10:22, n. 3 and Björn Sigfússon, *Um Ljósveitingu sögu*, 35–36, nothing in the text implies this. It is clear from the text that the C-redaction’s Helgi has no home when coming to Iceland, since Guðmundr tells him: “Þat er mitt erendi, Helgi! at bjóða þér heim hvört sinn, er þú ert hær á Íslandi,” *Ljósv.* 1830, 41 [ch. 13]; ÍF 10:22, C-redaction. The A-redaction’s Ingjaldr is even more clearly a foreigner, since he is referred to as “Austmaðr” and “Austmaðrinn” in the text, ÍF 10:23, A-redaction. See also Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 29–31, who suggests that the story of the lesser known foreigner Ingjaldr could have been put on the more historical Helgi Arnsteinsson, as is sometimes wont to happen in folklore.

3.1.3 Guðmundr and Þorgeirr Contend with the Þorgeirssynir

As Magerøy and Andersson have noted, bad family relations are a strong motif in this saga.³⁹ Besides the obvious dispute between Þorgeirr and his sons, a subtler friction is revealed between the *goði* and his brother Þórðr. Þórðr gives the Þorgeirssynir advice that is hostile to his brother, and later scolds the lawspeaker for going into battle against his sons. This anticipates Einarr of Þverá's long-lasting discord with his brother Guðmundr inn ríki, and Eyjólfur Guðmundarson and his brother Koðrán. In the center of it all is Guðmundr, who sows family discord amongst the Ljósvetningar, between himself and his brother Einarr, and with his wife Þórlaug and son Halldórr, who he is at one point willing to burn in a farmstead. The instability of his sons' relations attest to this as well.

In the C-redaction, when Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði and Guðmundr inn ríki challenge Þorgeirr's sons at court, Þorgeirr uses his status as lawspeaker to argue that his sons did not summon the jury correctly. The Þorgeirssynir in turn approach Arnsteinn, who controls a third of their chieftaincy alongside them and their father, and they complain to him that: “ok kalla þeir oss ómæta í kviðinum.”⁴⁰ In the A-redaction, this is given as: “og kalla þeir oss ómaga, er í kviðinum eru.”⁴¹ This could contain a pun on the words *magi* (stomach) and *ómagi* (helpless, incapable),⁴² which is reinforced by the double meaning of the word *kviðr* as ‘jury’ and ‘stomach.’ In the C-redaction phrasing of this clause this wordplay is slighter, but *ómætr* could mean ‘void’ but also ‘worthless.’ In a later scene in the saga, Þorkell hákr, the son of Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði, is waving his spilled-out intestines at Guðmundr, saying “Enda ráðstú nú hingat ok

³⁹ Magerøy, “Den indre sammenhengen i Ljósvetninga saga,” 74–77; *Law and Literature*, 89–90, 110–113. “It is surely not coincidental that each subsection of the saga is prefaced with the story of a seduction, that is, a threat to family integrity,” 110.

⁴⁰ *Ljós.* 1830, 10 [ch. 4]; ÍF 10:12. They say our summoning of the jury is void (my translation). *Kviðburðinum* in JS 624 4to 30v.

⁴¹ ÍF 10:12, n. 1. They say we are incapable in the summoning of the jury (my trans.).

⁴² Cf. Clover's “Regardless of Sex,” 14, for her interpretation of *magi* and *úmagi* as contradicting terms in her proposed one-gender model, though she does not address *Ljósvetninga saga* in this context.

finnumst við,⁴³ þvíat nú liggja úti iðrin mín, þar hefir þér jafngjarnt verit, er þik lysti þessa”⁴⁴ in the C-redaction. The A-redaction is shorter, ending the sentence with “úti liggja nú iðrin mín.” I have suggested elsewhere that Þorkell waving his intestines could be likened to him waving his genitalia at Guðmundr.⁴⁵ To this it can now be added that in both redactions, Þorkell makes reference to him and his brother’s former dispute with Guðmundr, his laid out phallic intestines being the obvious resolution to the matter raised by the chieftain and Þorkell’s father Þorgeirr years before. The connection is strong in both redactions: the C-redaction makes explicit a possible phallic interpretation of Þorkell’s intestines, whereas in the A-redaction, before Guðmundr offers Rindill the position of a spy, he says to him “ok má þó vera, at þú metisk eigi til ómaga.”⁴⁶ This creates a lexical connection between the two scenes, that in turn anticipates Þorkell’s A-redaction taunt: here are my guts, Guðmundr, come at me.

3.2 The “Þættir”: Where Guðmundr inn ríki Gets Involved in the Northeastern Inner-Family Dispute

As discussed in the previous chapter, the connection between this three-story segment and the ‘main’ story of *Ljósvetninga saga*—namely the battle between the Møðruvellingar and Ljósvetningar—has been widely contested. Adolfine Erichsen treats these as secluded narratives, not connected to each other.⁴⁷ Finnur Jónsson has furthermore argued that *Ófeigs þátr* and *Vöðu-Brands þátr* treat Guðmundr more negatively than the main text because of different regional origins of the story,⁴⁸ while Björn Sigfússon has argued that Guðmundr’s honor in the *þættir* is portrayed “hvergi

⁴³ JS 624 4to adds here “ef þú þorer,” 63v.

⁴⁴ *Ljósv.* 1830, 62 [ch. 19]; ÍF 10:52, n.4. “Come at me, Gudmund, and fight [...] for my guts are hanging out. That is what you wanted when you were so eager to meet,” 193.

⁴⁵ Tirosh, **The Fabulous Saga*.

⁴⁶ ÍF 10:45[ch. 8 (18)]. “And then perhaps you won’t be considered such a burden,” 253.

⁴⁷ Erichsen, *Untersuchungen [...]*, 5–6; “Jeder der Þættir 2–4 erzählt eine in sich abgeschlossene Handlung, die keine Beziehung hat zu den Ereignissen der andern,” 6.

⁴⁸ Finnur Jónsson, *litteraturs historie*, 2nd ed., vol. 2:498.

minni” than in the main text.⁴⁹ Here it is argued that, rather than this-or-that, it is both: regardless of the origins of these stories, they constitute a consistent portrayal of the Eyjafjörður chieftain. Furthermore, it will be shown that all three *þættir*, whether or not composed together, function together both thematically and in relation to the story’s plot development.

3.2.1 *Sqrli þáttur*

When the youth Sqrli Brodd-Helgason tries for the hand of Guðmundr’s daughter Þórdís, Guðmundr’s opposition to Sqrli’s engagement makes little sense. Björn Sigfússon came closest to a logical historical explanation when he suggested that Guðmundr would have been opposed to a match based on love since it went against the way society worked in those days.⁵⁰ However, there are still question marks regarding this narrative, and Guðmundr’s reactions stand out. The final dialogue in which Þórarinn guesses Guðmundr’s mindset reveals much about the chieftain’s character:

Fór Þórarinn á fund Guðmundar, ok fékk hann þar góðar viðtökur; síðan gengu þeir á tal; þá mælti Þórarinn: Hvárt er svá, sem komit er fyrir mik, at Sqrli Brodd-helgason hafi beðit Þórdísar dóttur þinnar? Satt er þat, segir Guðmundr. Þórarinn mælti: [“Hverju léztu svarat verða?” “Eigi sýndisk mér þat,” kvað hann. “Hvat kom til þess? Hefir hann eigi ættina til, eða er hann eigi svá vel mannaður sem þú vill?”] Guðmundur mælti: ekki skortir hann þá hluti, ok gengr þat meirr til, at ek vil ekki gefa þeim Þórdísi, er orð hefir áðr áleikit um hag þeirra. Þórarinn mælti: einskis er þat vert; annat berr til, at þú annt honum ekki ráðsins, ok veit ek þat, þótt þú látir á þessu brjóta. Guðmundr mælti: eigi er þat satt. Þórarinn mælti: ekki muntu mega leynast fyrir mér, ok veit ek, hvat í býr skapinu. Guðmundr mælti: ekki

⁴⁹ ÍF 10:LI.

⁵⁰ ÍF 10:LI. Cf. Steblin-Kamenskii, *The Saga Mind*, 89–90, for a more skeptical reading of the love story, though he does not provide an alternative reading of the scene and *þáttur*.

kann ek nú hlut í at eiga, ef þú veist þetta gjörr, enn ek. Þórarinn mælti: far þú svá með [ná]! Guðmundr mælti: forvitni er mér á, hvat þú ætlar mér í skapi búa. Þórarinn mælti: eigi mundir þú mik tilspara at kveða þat upp, er þér þikir. Guðmundr mælti: Þar er nú komit, at ek ætla at ek vil þat. Þórarinn mælti: svá skal ok vera; því viltu eigi at ráðahagrinn takist, at þú sér fyrir landsbygðinni, at eigi verði sá maðrinn fæddr, at hann sé dótturson þinn, er maðrinn ert ríkastr, ok ætlar þú, at landsbygðin megi eigi bera ríki þess manns hær á landi, er svá göfugra manna er. Guðmundr mælti ok brosti at: því munum vér nú ekki gjöra þetta þá at álitamálum?⁵¹

If Þórarinn Nefjólfs­son's reputation proceeds him, we know him as the cunning Icelandic courtier of king Óláfr helgi, made famous in the pages of *Heimskringla*. In this dialogue, the real reason behind Guðmundr's decision is left unaccounted for. Guðmundr does not seem like a person concerned with the welfare of the district so much that he would begrudge his

⁵¹ *Ljósv.* 1830, 15–16 [ch. 5]. Readings from AM 162 c fol., based on in ÍF 10:111–112 and “Syv sagablade,” 43–44, are provided in square brackets. “Thorarin went to meet with Gudmund and was given a good reception. They sat down to talk. Then Thorarin said, ‘Is it true, as I have heard, that Sorli Brodd-Helgason has asked for your daughter Thordis?’ ‘It is true,’ said Gudmund. ‘What sort of a reply did you give?’ asked Thorarin. ‘It didn’t seem right to me,’ he said. ‘What was the reason for this? Does he not have an adequate lineage, or is he not as accomplished as you wish?’ Gudmund replied, ‘He is not lacking these qualities. The reason for my not marrying Thordis to him is that there has been some talk about their relationship.’ ‘That’s of no account,’ said Thorarin. ‘There is another reason why you begrudge him the marriage. I’m sure of it even though you give a different reason.’ ‘It’s not so,’ said Gudmund. ‘You can’t hide the truth from me,’ Thorarin said, ‘I know what’s on your mind.’ ‘There is nothing I can say about it if you know it all better than I do,’ replied Gudmund. Thorarin said, ‘You may act on the assumption that I do.’ ‘I am curious to know what you think is on my mind,’ said Gudmund. ‘I didn’t think you would spare me from revealing your thoughts,’ Thorarin said. Gudmund said, ‘Apparently that’s what I want.’ ‘And so it shall be,’ said Thorarin. ‘Because you oversee the welfare of the countryside, you are unwilling that a grandson should be born to such a mighty man as you. You think the people will not be able to endure the power of a man with such a noble ancestry.’ Gudmund smiled and said, ‘Why shouldn’t we take this matter under advisement?’” 137–138. The comical structure of this dialogue hints at Þórarinn’s role as a possible court jester at the court of king Óláfr helgi, an issue that warrants future research.

daughter an eligible suitor. If anything, the thought of his lineage expanding its scope is what convinces him to allow the wedding rather than to refuse it. It is not beyond probability, then, that the reason Guðmundr initially opposes a marriage between Sqrli and his daughter Þórdís is due to his attraction towards, or even love of, the male youth as Gunnar Karlsson suggested.⁵² At any rate, Þórarinn Nefjólsson's prediction is somewhat accurate, as Sqrli and Þórdís's descendants end up marrying into the powerful family of the Oddaverjar.⁵³

Þórarinn Nefjólsson's presence in the story is significant as well, since in *Heimskringla* he functions as the mediator who tries to acquire Grímsey for king Óláfr helgi. In this debate, Guðmundr and his brother Einarr are pitted against each other, the former arguing for giving the island to the king, the latter warning in a long and persuasive speech about the dangers of giving Norwegian monarchy a foothold in Iceland.⁵⁴ Earlier in the C-redaction narrative, Einarr of Þverá states that “en opt virðir Guðmundr annarra manna orð ekki minna enn mín.”⁵⁵ That Þórarinn Nefjólsson is the man who finally convinces Guðmundr to allow Þórdís to marry Sqrli is valuable to our analysis. Guðmundr not only prefers other *men* than Einarr—i.e., prefers people unrelated to him over his kin—but he also

⁵² It is possible that Guðmundr's stated reason is indeed the source of his initial refusal, and that Þórarinn's manipulation changes his mind. This is a matter of interpretative choices. However, the evasiveness of Guðmundr's responses to Þórarinn and the initial refusal itself both support that something else is lying behind this decision.

⁵³ *Ljósv.* 1830, 16–17 [ch. 5]; ÍF 10:113 and n. 1. The genealogy is fragmentary, so it could have included other historically dramatic figures besides Sæmundr inn fróði.

⁵⁴ Which one could compare with the Biblical “king's speech” by Samuel before appointing a king over the Israelites. This speech is important since it clearly shows that some Icelanders felt a sense of opposition to Norwegian rule and influence. Paul Schach states that “this episode and various other confrontations between the two brothers rather cast a shadow on Guðmund's character and intelligence,” “Character Creation,” 265. The episode certainly casts shadow on Guðmundr's character, in connection with how much he has the Icelandic people's interest close to his heart. However, it is only read as a sign of lack of intelligence if one does not take into account Guðmundr's striving to become a major representative of the Norwegian rulers in Iceland, which is also clear from *Ljósvetninga saga*. See Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Age of the Sturlungs*, 159ff.

⁵⁵ *Ljósv.* 1830, 14; ÍF 10:110. But often Guðmundr values the words of other men no less than mine (my translation). Andersson and Miller translate this sentence as “But Gudmund often honors the words of other men more than mine.” 136. Which is much more firm than the way that I read this sentence.

prefers a man who would be a symbol of Norwegian influence, if not in the entirety of Iceland, then certainly in the Eyjafjörður region. Guðmundr's disregard for kinship ties—already apparent when he encouraged strife between Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði and his sons—both fuels and is fueled by his disregard for the interest of his fellow countrymen. This is epitomized in his disregard for his brother Einarr of Þverá and his opinion. Bååth pointed out that the narrative delays informing the audience that Einarr and Guðmundr are brothers.⁵⁶ This is symbolic of the tension between them.

In JS 624 4to, it is said about Sqrli that he “fór af þingi með Guðmundi.”⁵⁷ This is the same language used for Rindill in the A-redaction: “Ok fór hann með Guðmundi af þinginu.”⁵⁸ In the C-redaction Rindill's path to Guðmundr's home is made more complicated, so it is interesting that Sqrli's introduction in JS 624 4to and Rindill's introduction in the A-redaction are made similar. If a literary connection between the two redactions is advocated, it is clear that Sqrli and Rindill are meant to fill the same function in the text as Guðmundr's love interest. However, since this reading is only offered in JS 624 4to and its connected manuscripts,⁵⁹ it is probably not more than an interesting coincidence, and it would mainly indicate a similar function in the sense of a dependency on Guðmundr.

3.2.2 Ófeigs þátr and Vøðu-Brands þátr

Bååth argues that Guðmundr's portrayal in *Vøðu-Brands þátr* is consistent with *Ófeigs þátr* to the degree that the two “höra organiskt sammen; den senare är författad i samband med den förra.”⁶⁰ Nevertheless, of all the

⁵⁶ Albert Ulrik Bååth, *Studier öfver Kompositionen i Några Isländska ättsagor*, 4.

⁵⁷ JS 624 4to, 32v; see also ÍF 10:109. Traveled from the þing with Guðmundr (my translation). Other C-redaction manuscripts have it as “af þingi riði með Guðmundi,” *Ljósv.* 1830, 13 [ch. 5], *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 127.

⁵⁸ ÍF 10:43. And he traveled with Guðmundr from the þing (my translation).

⁵⁹ E.g., BL ADD 4867 4to, 158v.

⁶⁰ Bååth, *Studier öfver Kompositionen*, 9.

parts of *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Vøðu-Brandr þáttr* is the most difficult to fit into a coherent scheme of Guðmundr's negative portrayal. It depicts Guðmundr as a worthy opponent, feared not only for his numerical superiority in his supporters, but also for his legal acumen. In addition, Guðmundr's insistence on outlawing Vøðu-Brandr sounds convincing: "ok er landhreinsan at slíkir menn séu afráðnir at lögum."⁶¹ Guðmundr's refusal to take money in order to ensure the safety of the district is ironic when contrasted with its immediate antecedent in *Ófeigs þáttr*, which shows a Guðmundr with little concern for his *þingmenn* and district. Since no other reason for his refusal is provided, we are forced to accept this part of the saga as the odd-text-out, where a capable and more district-concerned side of Guðmundr is shown.

But another reading of this is possible. Later on in the C-redaction, when Guðmundr prosecutes Þórir Helgason for concealing sheep given to him illegally by Akra-Þórir, Einarr says: "Þat ætla ek, at Guðmundr hyggi at reka þat fjandskapar við þik, er honum er sagt frá orðum þínum, meira enn honum gáangi siðvendi til við héraðsbyggð, þó Akra-þórir næði eigi at sitja hjá mönnum í byggð fyrir honum."⁶² Andersson and Miller translate this as "‘In my opinion,’ replied Einar, ‘because of what you said about him, Gudmund intends to pursue his vendetta against you with greater vigor than he is otherwise accustomed in the district, though it is true that Akra-Thorir could not maintain himself in the region in the face of his opposition.’"⁶³ Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell, on the other hand, translate this as: "I think this, that Gudmund means to avenge thine enmity toward him, since he was told of thy words, more than that he cares about ridding the country-side, although Acre-Thore . . . to stay here in the country before him."⁶⁴ Guðbrandur and Powell's translation shows

⁶¹ *Ljósv.* 1830, 28; ÍF 10:131 [ch. 10]. "And using the law to eliminate such men would be a good riddance for the land," 152.

⁶² *Ljósv.* 1830, 49 [ch. 15]; ÍF 10:35.

⁶³ *Law and Literature*, 78.

⁶⁴ *Origines Islandicae [...]*, eds. Gudbrand Vigfússon and F. York Powell, 403. The three dots in this translation stand out as an odd choice, and imply a lacuna though such is not the case in the extant manuscript.

more clearly that Einarr does not think that Guðmundr's motivation is to rid the district of a negative individual. It is not Guðmundr's wont, it appears, to care much for his district, though one should be careful to remember that this is reported by a man hostile to Guðmundr's intentions, his brother Einarr. What, then, could Guðmundr's motivation be?

An explanation can be found if we decide to take *Vpðu-Brands þáttr* not in isolation, but rather in the context of the full saga. After all, two *þættir* before, we read that Guðmundr has just aligned himself with Sqrli Brodd-Helgason by marriage. Sqrli is the brother of Bjarni Brodd-Helgason, who has famously feuded with his relative Þorkell Geitisson.⁶⁵ While Sqrli is not recounted in the extant corpus as having been involved in the dispute against Geitir Lýtingsson and his son Þorkell, the fact that Brodd-Helgi is called “føður Sørla”⁶⁶ in *Íslendingadrápa* is indication that Sqrli was not far from anyone's mind in the context of that family connection.⁶⁷ As Gísli Sigurðsson points out about *Ljósvetninga saga*:

No attempt is made to explain the dispute between Bjarni and Þorkell; instead, it is referred to as if it were already well-known to the audience. The same is true of Bjarni himself; he is not specifically introduced into the saga but spoken of like some generally known character. It thus appears that the author here assumes that the audience has a wide enough knowledge of the tradition for them to [be] able to provide the extra information needed to make sense of the story being told.⁶⁸

This holds true for Sqrli as well, who would have been well-known enough to be included as part of a kenning for his father. In fact, this also sheds

⁶⁵ For a discussion of Bjarni Brodd-Helgason's literary representation in the Old Norse corpus, see Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition*, 146–157. For a discussion of Þorkell Geitisson, see 161–184.

⁶⁶ *Den Norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, vol. 1:556, stanza 3.

⁶⁷ On the oral traditions reflected in the poem, see Jónas Kristjánsson, “Íslendingadrápa and Oral Tradition,” esp. 90–91.

⁶⁸ Gísli Sigurðsson, *Medieval Icelandic Saga*, 148. See also ÍF 11:XVIII.

light on Guðmundr's refusal to allow Sqrli and Þórdís to marry. It is possible that Þórarinn is not far off the mark after all, and that, while Guðmundr does not have the district's best interest in mind, he is also thinking in terms of regional politics and that if he aligns himself to a son of Brodd-Helgi, he must choose a side in a dispute he has thus far avoided.⁶⁹ In Bjarni Brodd-Heglason's admonishment of Guðmundr, Bjarni reminds the chieftain of his avoidance to help him achieve a reconciliation with his kinsman Þorkell Geitisson. The marriage between Einarr's daughter Jórunn and Þorkell Geitisson, then, allows the two sides to be re-established as kinsmen and work towards reconciliation, facilitated, according to the saga, by Jórunn herself. It is likely that Guðmundr enjoyed having his powerful neighbors to the east at loggerheads, which allowed him to focus on the consolidation of power in his own neck of the woods. Indeed, seen in an even larger context, the feud between Guðmundr and the local strongmen Þórir Helgason and Þorkell hákr Þorgeirsson that follows the *þettir* could be explained by the chieftain's need to exert more power over his own region, now that the East was stabilized through Þorkell Geitisson and Bjarni Brodd-Helgason's renewed alliance. This also supports the argument that Þorkell Geitisson would have played the same function in the A-redaction as Vigfúss Víga-Glúmsson in the C-redaction's telling of the legal dispute between Þórir Helgason and

⁶⁹ This is true to the current generation, as Guðmundr was involved in the dispute between Geitir Lýtingsson and Brodd-Helgi that originated the current conflict, as is made clear in *Vápnfirðinga saga*. Finnur Jónsson argues that it is Brodd-Helgi's failure to pay Guðmundr for his legal support and his move to supporting Geitir are the motivation behind the Eyjafjörður-chieftain's refusal to accept the marriage, *litteraturs historie*, 2nd ed., vol. 2:496. This is further supported by the presence of both *Vápnfirðinga saga* and *Ljósvetninga saga* in the AM 162 c fol. manuscript. However, as is apparent from his invitation to host Sqrli Brodd-Helgason, his friendship with Vigfúss Víga-Glúmsson in the C-redaction, his alliance with Þorgeirr against his sons, and the threatened burning of his own son, Guðmundr's loyalties are generation-specific. Kinship does not matter much to Guðmundr inn ríki.

Guðmundr inn ríki at the *alþingi*,⁷⁰ though it is odd why Þorkell would oppose his father-in-law Einarr in such a violent manner.⁷¹

Voðu-Brands þáttir also highlights Guðmundr's hypocrisy. If, in chapters 1–4, he employed all of his figurative might to allow for a violent and troublesome youth to return to Iceland, in the *þáttir* he does the opposite:⁷² here he tries to mundify the land of a troublesome youth with fake invocations of the country's best interest. His only motivation in both cases is power and how it can be enhanced by each individual affair.

Overall, the *þættir* add to the saga an understanding of how Guðmundr inn ríki became as powerful as he is—*ríki*. His invitation of youths like Sqrli Brodd-Helgason to Möðruvellir shows that he knows to create the necessary ties with important political figures, while his refusal to commit to a side in the dispute between Bjarni Brodd-Helgason and Þorkell Geitisson shows him to be manipulative and inclined to perpetuate his power through the feuds of others. Why Guðmundr eventually takes a side in the dispute seems to be tied to his familial relationship with Sqrli Brodd-Helgason, but this is complicated by Bjarni Brodd-Helgason's begrudging behavior.⁷³

3.3 Chs. 13–18: Where Guðmundr inn ríki Plots Against Þórir Helgason and Þorkell hákr Þorgeirsson

As shown in The Part About the Critics, chapters 13–18 of *Ljósvetninga saga* constitute the most widely discussed segment of the saga because they

⁷⁰ But see Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 85, who opens up the possibility that Vigfúss's absence is due to the manuscript's lacuna.

⁷¹ It could be suggested that if Þorkell Geitisson did align with Guðmundr in this scene, his support could have been removed following an offer of marriage with Jórunn Einarsdóttir. Highly speculative, but a thought worth considering, nonetheless. Andersson suggests that Þorkell Geitisson is portrayed over-positively to downgrade Guðmundur, *Law and Literature*, 91.

⁷² See Heinzl and his observation that both Sqlmundr and Sqxólfir/Eyjólfir, and Voðu-Brandr are “Unverträglich, streitsüchtig,” *Beschreibung der Isländischen Saga*, 77 [181]. On Sqxólfir/Eyjólfir's two possible names see ÍF 10:3 n. 6 and *Law and Literature*, 122, n. 4.

⁷³ This is consistent with the image of Bjarni in *Vápnfirðinga saga* and *Þorsteins þáttir stangarhöggs*, as a peace-loving individual who is forced into violence but evades it when possible, according to Gísli Sigurðsson, *Medieval Icelandic Saga*, 146–157, esp. 155.

display a similar plot but different narrative in the redactions, and are framed by segments that are almost identical in their wording (though with noteworthy variances). It is important to restate that discussions of chapters 13–18, with the slight exception of Magerøy, frequently ignore the *þettir*, which constitute an additional dramatic difference between the A-redaction and C-redaction.

3.3.1 The Wedding and the Insult

Since I have discussed the wedding—during which Þórir Helgason and Þorkell hákr Þorgeirsson’s insult against Guðmundr inn ríki’s masculinity is revealed—elsewhere,⁷⁴ only a few points will be touched upon. What is interesting to reiterate is that the scene is only extant in the C-redaction, but would have, in all likelihood, appeared in one variation or another in the A-redaction. There is, sadly, no way of knowing if this segment would have been identical to the C-redaction’s representation of the events like chapters 1–4, or entirely different, like the segment that follows. At the point where the A-redaction picks up the narrative, though, the differences are already significant. Due to the extant similarities in the plot of both redactions’ chapters 13–18, it is likely that there was a wedding in the A-redaction as well. However, the discussion above regarding the connections between *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Njáls saga* puts this into slight but significant doubt. It could be that if *Ljósvetninga saga*’s C-redaction was written after *Njáls saga*, it would have borrowed the wives’ dispute motif to explain the feud. The point is that it is impossible to tell what form and shape the insults against Guðmundr’s masculinity would have taken in the A-redaction; nevertheless, these most likely appeared.⁷⁵ Therefore, while all that can be said about the A-redaction is that there would have been insults directed at Guðmundr’s masculinity, in the C-redaction it is possible to

⁷⁴ Tirosh, *The Fabulous Saga of Guðmundr inn ríki*, “Argg Management.”

⁷⁵ Sadly, the Þórir-Guðmundr *alþingi* confrontation is also no longer extant in the A-redaction so we cannot know if Þórir addresses the sexual insults, as he does in the C-redaction, though it is likely that he would have.

look at their nature, though this remains intentionally elusive until the confrontation between Þórir Helgason and Guðmundr at the *alþingi*.⁷⁶

During the wedding, Geirlaug reveals the insult against Guðmundr's masculinity to Þórlaug that had been circulating in the district: “þá værir þú vel gefin, ef þat væri einmælt um, at bóndi þinn væri vel hugaðr eða snjallr.”⁷⁷ This is translated by Andersson and Miller as: “You would indeed be well married if there were general agreement about your husband's manliness,”⁷⁸ while Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell translate this as: “Thou wert surely well married, if the common talk would allow thy husband was brave and bold.”⁷⁹ Andersson and Miller's translation is more interpretative while Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell's is more literal. From Þórlaug's reaction, it is clear that Geirlaug says something unspeakable.⁸⁰ Gunnar Karlsson implies that Fritzner's glossing of *úsnjallr*⁸¹ as “uforstandig” (unreasonable) or “uøvet” (unpracticed) is insufficient.⁸² Björn Sigfússon suggests that “*úsnjallr* gat þýtt ragur, og ragur gat þýtt kynvilltur,”⁸³ but as Andersson and Miller point out, there is an “indirection” in the insult.⁸⁴ Geirlaug is not explicitly saying that Guðmundr is *argr*. Rather, she is saying that he lacks courage and finesse. The fact that Þórir later addresses having spoken “*ránngliga*”⁸⁵ of Guðmundr immediately

⁷⁶ To what extent the insults that Þorkell hákr showers at Guðmundr in their final confrontation reflect the original insults will remain a mystery.

⁷⁷ *Ljósv.* 1830, 38 [ch. 13.]; ÍF 10:18.

⁷⁸ *Law and Literature*, 165.

⁷⁹ *Origines Islandicae*, 391.

⁸⁰ Gunnar Karlsson, *Ástarsaga Íslendinga að fomu*, 280–281. Erichsen reads this unspeakable nature of the insult as insufficient, and it is another piece of evidence that causes her to argue that chapters 1–4 are abbreviated versions of a no longer extant introduction, *Untersuchungen*, 67.

⁸¹ Johan Fritzner, *Ordbok over Det gamle norske Sprog*, vol. 3:807.

⁸² Gunnar Karlsson, *Ástarsaga*, 280.

⁸³ ÍF 10:18 n. 4. Magerøy follows suit in his translation of *Ljósvetninga saga*, 142, n. 45. On the various meanings of the concept of *ragr* and *ergi* see, e.g., Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly Man*, 32, and Ármann Jakobsson, “The Trollish Acts of Þorgrímr the Witch: The Meanings of troll and ergi in Medieval Iceland,” 55–57.

⁸⁴ *Law and Literature*, 165 n. 76. Erichsen has gone so far as to call the insult evidence that chapters 13–21 do not stand alone, and that the insult would have been explained in the now abridged (according to her) chapters 1–4, *Untersuchungen*, 67.

⁸⁵ *Ljósv.* 1830, 52 [ch. 16.]; AM 485 4to 30r.; *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 176. Notice that ÍF 10:40—based on JS 624 4to 56v—reads this as “*raglega*,” meaning “spoke of Guðmundr's *ragr*.” This reading, preferred by both Guðmundur Þorláksson and Björn

before he challenges him confirms the weight of the insults.⁸⁶ And indeed, throughout the segment only preserved in the C-redaction, Guðmundr's lack of courage is exemplified in various ways; his hesitation to meet Þórir Helgason at his power base in Hörgárdalur, his unwillingness to acknowledge Þórir's insult when he teases him during a *hestaping*,⁸⁷ his preference not to attend the wedding itself, and his regretting having left the wedding are all signs of weakness of character and cowardice.⁸⁸ Consistent with the way he deals with Sǫrli's courting, Guðmundr wishes to remain as non-confrontational as possible.⁸⁹

3.3.2 Guðmundr's Case against Akra-Þórir

When Einarr of Þverá rides to meet his brother and discuss the matter of Akra-Þórir, in most C-redaction manuscripts Guðmundr replies: “eigi ann ek þess Þóri, at fara sektalausum af þessu máli,”⁹⁰ and later: “engin vorkunn þiki mér þat þèr, at þú leggir hlut þinn við mál okkar Þóris, er hann ok ekki bundinn í vináttu við þik.”⁹¹ In his Íslenzk fornrit edition,

Sigfússon, is more explicit than one would expect from the usually soft-spoken Þórir Helgason. However, since it represents the climax in the conflict between the two chieftains, it is not beyond probability that he would speak in this manner. Since Guðmundur Þorláksson and Björn Sigfússon base their readings on the JS 624 4to tradition, though, I prefer the AM 485 4to reading “rángliga.”

⁸⁶ *Law and Literature*, 165, n. 76.

⁸⁷ See Tirosh, “Arg Management,” 250–251, where I argue that Þórir Helgason's words (or the saga's author's) echo the reason for Einarr's recent fallout with his brother over Guðmundr's overbearing demeanor.

⁸⁸ The last act could be read as more cunning and shrewd—still, the fact that Guðmundr does not want to ‘show his cards’ might be the more politically savvy move, but certainly not the more courageous one.

⁸⁹ This is also apparent in his choice of words. When his wife insists that they go home, he says “en fúsari væri ek at kyrt væri á meðan boð þetta stæði,” *Ljósv.* 1830, 39 [ch. 13]; ÍF 10:19; “but I'd prefer that everything run its normal course for the rest of the feast,” 167. When Þorlaug reveals to him the insults, he says: “nú þætti mér ek betr ráðit hafa, at við hefðum hvorgi farit, ok væri þá óhættara við orðum manna,” *Ljósv.* 1830, 39 [ch. 13], ÍF 10:19; “I think now it would have been better if I had prevailed and we hadn't left, [...] That would have given less grounds for gossip,” 167. Both statements encourage a non-confrontational approach, which could be understood as cowardly. See for example, Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, 271–284, and 368, n. 20.

⁹⁰ *Ljósv.* 1830, 45 [ch. 14]; *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 167. See also ÍF 10:32, n. 5.

⁹¹ *Ljósv.* 1830, 45 [ch. 14]; *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 167–168. See also ÍF 10:32, n. 5.

Björn Sigfússon decided to adopt JS 624 4to's "Þóri" to "Akra-kegg" and "Þóris" to "Akra-keggs,"⁹² but this choice misses the point that the other C-redaction manuscripts make: Guðmundr may be speaking about Akra-Þórir, but he is *also* speaking about Þórir Helgason. This is indicated by several signs. Guðmundr's ultimate goal with Þórir Helgason is his expulsion from the district. Why Þórir is not on Guðmundr's hit-list despite being the person in whose household the insult was discovered and despite being an equal partner to Þorkell hákr's blame is a matter of speculation, but we can provide an educated guess: though Þorkell hákr's home was isolated, Guðmundr has expressed hesitancy earlier in the saga to venture so deep into the valley where Þórir Helgason has such a significant power base. Risking an attack there could be a dangerous misstep on his part, since it might spark retaliation from other neighbors associated with the chieftain. That Þórir Helgason is a *goði* is another reason why he does not make for an easy target. By first removing Þórir from the political map in a legal way that would not spark vengeance, Guðmundr clears the way for dispensing with Þorkell hákr without the fear of retaliation from the northwest. The vengeance from his southern neighbors (Eilífr dispatching Rindill) is limited and half-hearted, which makes Guðmundr's exaggerated reaction even more curious. The sentence "Er hann ok ekki bundinn í vináttu við þik" also clarifies the artistry of the C-redaction usage of the two Þórar. Akra-Þórir is indeed not bound in friendship to Einarr of Þverá, but his chieftain Þórir Helgason certainly is.⁹³ This double-entendre is made possible by the C-redaction's choice to call Akra-Þórir rather than Þorgils; it allows Guðmundr to speak of one Þórir while thinking about the other.⁹⁴ Similar to how Einarr is slighted by the fact that Guðmundr listens to other men's advice rather than his, Guðmundr shares the same jealous sentiment.

⁹² ÍF 10:52, n. 5.

⁹³ ÍF 10:16; On this see *Law and Literature*, 174, n. 95.

⁹⁴ This use of a character with a similar name as a representation of its namesake is not unique to *Ljósvetninga saga*. Torfi Tulinius has, for example, exemplified it on *Egils saga Skallagrímsson* and the protagonist's killing of a boy named Grímr, like his violent father Skallagrímr, *The Enigma of Egill*, 281–282.

When, in the C-redaction, Guðmundr brings Akra-Þórir to court, Þórir Helgason points out the difference in power between himself and Guðmundr inn ríki. To this, Akra-Þórir responds both in reported and in direct quotation, to quote Íslenzk fornrit: “Akra-Þórir kvað þá mjök undir fótum troðna. ‘Ok væri betr, at menn talaði við Guðmund með varygð heldr en láta sœmð sína.’”⁹⁵ Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason’s edition gives the first part of the sentence as: “Ok væri betra, at menn tali þat við Guðmund varliga.”⁹⁶ Andersson and Miller, who use the Íslenzk fornrit edition as the basis for their translation, read this as: “Akra-Þórir said that Gudmund was running roughshod over them: ‘It would be better to proceed warily against Gudmund instead of sacrificing our honor altogether.’” They then add a footnote that explains Akra-Þórir’s sentence as tactical advice to Þórir Helgason. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell’s translation reads this as “But Acre-beardie declared they were much trodden under foot, ‘and it would have been better that men had talked warily of Gudmund than to lose one’s honor *as thou art doing*.’”⁹⁷ While the italicized text is the translators’ interpretation, Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell’s reading remains more likely; Akra-Þórir reproaches his *goði* for not holding his tongue and speaking without caution about the powerful Guðmundr. Hallvard Magerøy points out that this is too soon in the narrative to reveal the suspicion that Guðmundr acts out of revenge. Einarr of Þverá will only later offer this reasoning to Þórir Helgason,⁹⁸ and that “Denne replikken er mistenkjeleg.”⁹⁹ Magerøy’s reading is somewhat limited; it could be suggested that the wedding scene, Akra-Þórir’s words and then Einarr of Þverá’s words are each used to anticipate

⁹⁵ ÍF 10:33.

⁹⁶ *Ljósv.* 1830, 46.

⁹⁷ *Origines Islandicae*, 400–401. Italicized in the original.

⁹⁸ He also suggests that here the C-redaction is making use of the A-redaction’s phrasing earlier in the narrative: “Nú er ok öllum kunnigt, hvé mjök Þórir lætr sína sœmð, er hann mátti ekki þingmenn sína halda. Ok fekk hann af því óvirðing mikla, er hann helt eigi sína þingmenn,” ÍF 10:21 [ch. 5 (13)]; “It now became apparent to everyone how much Thorir was losing face because he couldn’t protect his thingmen. His failure to protect them earned him great dishonor,” 246.

⁹⁹ Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 36.

Þórir Helgason's outburst about speaking *ránghlga/raghlga* about Guðmundr. Thus, what the C-redaction adds here is that the rumors of Þórir Helgason's words against Guðmundr were widespread, and were discussed amongst his *þingmenn* (e.g., Akra-Þórir) and friends (Geirlaug, Einarr of Þverá). Thus, both Geirlaug's statement that the insult is spoken by every man "er tungu hrærir"¹⁰⁰ and Þórir Helgason's reproach of Guðmundr (in the C-redaction) for singling him out for those words "er margir mæla"¹⁰¹ and "sem vèr höfum áðr orðum tilkomit ok allmargir hafa sagt fyrir oss"¹⁰² are validated.

3.3.3 Guðmundr's Case Against Þórir Helgason

When Guðmundr inn ríki discovers that Þórir Helgason had concealed sheep from him after the judgement against Akrakarl, he has the legal excuse to prosecute this powerful rival. The differences between the two redactions in the description of the sheep's concealment and their revelation are significant. Hallvard Magerøy would argue that the *Íslendingasögur* "krev jamt det av lesarane sine at dei kan leggja saman to og to. Dei likar å lata oss slutta til dei røynelege samanhengane i staden for å seia alle ting beint fram og naivt."¹⁰³ The way the A-redaction dialogue between Guðmundr and Oddr the shepherd unfolds, he argues, shows a deception that is meant to be understood by the audience. The C-redaction representation of the event, according to him, is much less damning of Guðmundr.¹⁰⁴ In the C-redaction, Akra-Þórir explicitly gives Þórir Helgason his sheep, while in the A-redaction this is not explicitly mentioned. Another detail that supports the conspiracy between Oddr the shepherd and Guðmundr in the A-redaction is in the words that the chieftain uses: "En þér, Oddr, mun verða annat hvárt at þessu gipta eða

¹⁰⁰ *Ljósv.* 1830, 38 [ch. 13]; ÍF 10:18.

¹⁰¹ *Ljósv.* 1830, 52 [ch. 16]; ÍF 10:40.

¹⁰² *Ljósv.* 1830, 53 [ch. 16]; ÍF 10:40.

¹⁰³ Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 39.

¹⁰⁴ Magerøy, 39.

ógæfa.”¹⁰⁵ These words are much like those that Guðmundr says later on in the A-redaction to his co-conspirator Rindill: “Ok mun þér verða at því annathvært gæfa eða höfutbrot.”¹⁰⁶

In the A-redaction, when Guðmundr reproaches Þórir Helgason for hiding Akra-Þórir’s sheep, the Hörgárdalur chieftain responds: “Eigi vissa ek þetta. En nú er ok bæði, at þú ferr at geustr, enda má vera, at eigi hafi vel verit til gørt.”¹⁰⁷ This reads like an admission of an illicit act. In a footnote Björn Sigfússon writes: “Hér víkur Þórir að illmælinu.”¹⁰⁸ But this is due to his apparent interpretative assumption that Þórir is meant to be understood as the ‘good guy,’¹⁰⁹ and thus could not be guilty of the crime Guðmundr accuses him of. Therefore, Þórir must be admitting to another crime, that of spreading the rumors impugning Guðmundr’s masculinity. Magerøy, though, reads this otherwise. According to him, Þórir Helgason is voicing a suspicion that there is a ploy afoot.¹¹⁰ It could just as easily be suggested that there is intentional ambiguity, reflected in Þórir Helgason’s words: “Enda má vera, at eigi hafi vel verit til gørt.”¹¹¹ Indeed, as Magerøy pointed out, the sagas invite reading between the lines. But they also invite ambiguity and multiple interpretations.¹¹² The fact that Þórir Helgason’s guilt is made more explicit in the C-redaction does indeed reflect better on Guðmundr’s character there. In addition, the fact that Guðmundr mysteriously comes to his brother Einarr before news can arrive about the legal case against Þórir Helgason supports the argument that he is being much

¹⁰⁵ ÍF 10:26 [ch. 6 (14)]. “And you, Odd, stand to gain either good fortune or bad from this information,” 248.

¹⁰⁶ ÍF 10:46 [ch. 8 (18)] & n. 1. “They will bring you either good fortune or death,” 253.

¹⁰⁷ ÍF 10:26 [ch. 6 (14)]. Andersson and Miller translate this as “I did not know about this, [...] But now the fact is both that you are proceeding belligerently, and that I am perhaps not without fault,” 248, though notice that this is more of an interpretation of Þórir’s words as an admission of guilt. A more direct translation could be the more passive: “it is indeed possible that not all was done properly.”

¹⁰⁸ ÍF 10:26, n. 1.

¹⁰⁹ On these kinds of roles in the *Íslendingasögur*, see Daniela Hahn and Andreas Schmidt, *Bad Boys and Wicked Women*, and Ármann Jakobsson, *Ílla fenginn mjöður*, 56–60.

¹¹⁰ Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 42.

¹¹¹ ÍF 10:26.

¹¹² Ármann Jakobsson, “Some Types of Ambiguities in the Sagas of the Icelanders.”

more devious in the A-redaction than in the C-redaction, where he approaches his brother before he even takes action against Akra-Þórir.¹¹³

Looking at Guðmundr's interactions with his brother Einarr, the chieftain appears to be more blatantly manipulative in the A-redaction than the C-redaction. However, it is not as if Guðmundr is not cunning in the C-redaction representation of the events, it is simply that he shows more premeditation (or was perhaps advised to do so by his collaborator Einarr Kónalsson). In this sense, both redactions portray him in a similarly bad light—as one who would manipulate his brother for his own ends—but the A-redaction shows him making a more on-the-spot decision to align himself with his brother, while in the C-redaction it is a much more calculated action. The description of the meeting in which Einarr returns the cloak that represents their alliance is noteworthy. The A-redaction provides the following description: “Guðmundr gengur út í dyrr ok heilsar Einari bróður sínum. Hann tók því vel. Einarr vildi ekki af baki stíga, en Guðmundr gekk eigi út ór durunum, og töludusk þeir svá við.”¹¹⁴ This is a somewhat comical situation, both brothers refusing to budge, which is also the fate of the cloak that is left on the floor, the reader left to ponder on the object's fate.¹¹⁵ But this situation might have a social-legal meaning as well. The doorway is a legal site, where certain actions take place, as is exemplified in the doorway trial from *Eyrbyggja saga*.¹¹⁶ It is possible that besides the obvious comic effect of the two brothers refusing to budge, Guðmundr remains at the doorway because of a possible legal implication that we are not privy to; by remaining in the doorway, Einarr's disavowal of their alliance is negated.¹¹⁷ If so, Guðmundr's action shows legal

¹¹³ Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 44–47.

¹¹⁴ ÍF 10:36 [ch. 6 (15)]. “Gudmund [comes to the door and greets] his brother Einar. Einar responded in kind. Einar didn't want to dismount and Gudmund didn't leave the door, so they conversed as they were,” 251, my revision.

¹¹⁵ Björn Sigfússon, *Um Ljósveitninga sögu*, 30. It is possible that the fate of the cloak was left out by the 37v post-medieval scribe due to a lack of space.

¹¹⁶ ÍF 4:151–152.

¹¹⁷ For the legal significance of doorways, see Marianne Hem Eriksen, “The Powerful Ring. Door Rings, Oath Rings, and the Sacral Place,” 81.

acumen, though it remains a pusillanimous act.¹¹⁸ When, in the A-redaction, Einarr throws down the cloak, Guðmundr's response is: "Engi skal hana hér upp taka minna manna, ok missir þú bæði drengskapar [míns] ok skikkjunnar."¹¹⁹ Interestingly, "míns" is amended to "þíns" by Björn Sigfússon,¹²⁰ though Guðmundr Þorláksson kept it as is.¹²¹ This wording is from the AM 561 4to 37v redactor, and therefore could be an emendation or a novelty introduced by that individual; the AM 561 4to 37v redactor's misreading of the faded letters is unlikely, considering how substantially different 'm' and 'þ' are in the original AM 561 4to script, but it is possible that the entire word or letter had been lost or smudged to non-recognition. The mistake is, however, interesting, and while Björn's emendation is logical, it closes off possible readings. What do we gain from the reading: "missir þú bæði drengskapar *míns* ok skikkjunnar"? Björn Sigfússon argues that "það væri ótrúlegt oflæti af Guðmundi, þótt ekki væri dæmalaust að fornu, að tala hér um sinn eigin drengskap (ásamt skikkjuni) sem gjaldeyri fyrir væntanlega aðstoð Einars í deilunum."¹²² This justification of the emendation is problematic—could it really be said that Guðmundr's vanity knows any bounds? Guðmundr's treatment of his honor as a prized commodity that could be lost by someone else is exactly the kind of behavior we have come to expect from the powerful chieftain. While *þíns* makes sense, *míns* is actually more in character for Guðmundr inn ríki. Another, less likely, reading could be offered, which is that here Mundi had a slip of

¹¹⁸ Einarr's action should equally be seen as more than humorous. It is possible that remaining on the horse is simply a 'power move,' remaining taller than his brother on top of his steed. It could also be meant to illustrate that the two brothers treat themselves as almost violently hostile, one ready to hide inside his house at any given moment, the other ready to gallop away at the first sign of danger. Yet another possibility is that if Einarr would have gotten off his horse he would be seen as accepting Guðmundr's hospitality: could it be that the act of throwing the cloak to the ground could be equally negated if he were to become his brother's guest at Möðruvellir?

¹¹⁹ ÍF 10:37 [ch. 6 (15)]. "None of my men will pick it up and you will lose both my honor and the cloak," 251–252.

¹²⁰ ÍF 10:37 n. 1.

¹²¹ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 266. Note that Guðmundur Þorláksson published his edition with the A-redaction as an appendix (though, confusingly enough, he used the A-redaction as the basis for his chs. 1–4. See *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, XX–XXI).

¹²² ÍF 10:37 n. 1.

the tongue. If we follow Björn's logic, Guðmundr, who is known to not have much self-control,¹²³ could perhaps have meant to say *þíns* but instead said *míns*, which fits with a man so self-obsessed. This is not unprecedented in the *Íslendingasögur*, most famously in *Bjarnar saga Hítldælakappa*, where one character's slip of the tongue is addressed within the text itself.¹²⁴ That the parallel segment in the C-redaction contains the phrase “þèr verði at bæði heimaska ok klækiskapr”¹²⁵—echoing *Bjarnar saga's* *klekishogg*—is probably nothing more than a coincidence. In addition, Einarr's C-redaction comment “þat er honum eigi opt tíðt, at ríða sveinalausum”¹²⁶ is both another point that establishes the chieftain as a coward, and could also be construed to refer to Guðmundr's possible attraction to the presence of young men in *Sorla þátr*, discussed above.

The story of Einarr and Guðmundr's childhood flashback is often discussed in the context of its possible folkloric background.¹²⁷ Magerøy went into detail about the differences between the two redactions' accounts of this story. According to him, the story in the A-redaction makes much more sense than the C-redaction one.¹²⁸ In the A-redaction Einarr gives ambiguous advice, which Guðmundr botches. In the C-redaction, however, according to Magerøy, Einarr's advice is downright cruel, and Guðmundr's reaction is not meant for the benefit of the foster father.¹²⁹ Magerøy thinks that Guðmundr's behavior in this scene is consistent with the rest of the saga, accusing Einarr for what he himself had done.¹³⁰ Interestingly, in the A-redaction we are told that “en sveinninn sat undir

¹²³ E.g., in the following scene (only extant in the C-redaction), when Guðmundr laughs at a farting child and thus gives away his and Vigfúss's plan. But see the discussion below that suggests that this laugh could be calculated.

¹²⁴ ÍF 3:201–202 [ch. 32].

¹²⁵ *Ljósv.* 1830, 50 [ch. 15]; ÍF 10:37; “I think you stand to earn both ridicule and disgrace,” 179.

¹²⁶ *Ljósv.* 1830, 43 [ch. 14]; ÍF 10:25; “It isn't his custom to ride without a retinue,” 171.

¹²⁷ See discussion in The Part About the Critics.

¹²⁸ Magerøy, *Sertektsproblemet*, 47–9. Erichsen believes that this story was interpolated into the narrative, as it does not serve the main plot, *Untersuchungen*, 78, 81. The saga Erichsen envisions as *Ljósvetninga saga's* original form would have been a boring saga, indeed. See also Jan de Vries, “Een indisch Exempel in een ijslandsche Saga,” 47, 64.

¹²⁹ Magerøy, *Sertektsproblemet*, 48

¹³⁰ Magerøy, 48

höfðum honum,”¹³¹ while this detail is missing from the C-redaction. Einarr may be seen as reacting to what he deems too close a relationship between the foster-son and foster-father, emphasized by the A-redactor’s note that the bald foster-father was lying on Guðmundr’s lap. In other words, even though this case leads Guðmundr to state that Einarr does not always have his best interest in mind, it may be that the latter simply wants to control his brother’s behavior that he is uneasy with. This is consistent with his conduct in *Sorla þáttr* as well, when Einarr keeps in check what he considers Guðmundr’s rash decision by allowing Sorli’s visits to occur under his own supervision at Þverá.

Gísli Sigurðsson argues that the overall portrayal in the sagas of Einarr is as a check for Guðmundr’s wrath.¹³² This fits with *Ljósvetninga saga*’s specific portrayal of Einarr, though clearly it is not only his brother’s wrath that he checks. Without reading too much into the use of the verb *unna*—since it is often used to describe the love that can exist between two men or more—the adding of the ‘mikit,’ could suggest strong emotions that would bother Einarr. In both redactions it is related that the foster-father was *skollótr* (bald). This baldness, although it has a function in the narrative and could be an influence from the folkloric origins of the tale, may also convey something about the character. Baldness, especially at old age, could indicate a loss of virility and sexual potency,¹³³ and thus, a blurring of the gender boundaries that separate the masculine from the feminine.¹³⁴ Both loss of hair and loss of virility come with old age, both

¹³¹ ÍF 10:29; “And the boy had his head in his lap,” 249.

¹³² Gísli Sigurðsson, “*The Immanent Saga,” 216. Later in the saga, after Guðmundr’s son Eyjólfur ignores a certain Einarr’s warnings against confronting an enemy, the latter causes him to fall off a horse so that the fight is postponed, ÍF 10:86. Miller reads this character as Einarr Eyjólfsson, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, 67; *Law and Literature*, 225–226, 320–321, though Björn Sigfússon glosses him as Einarr Þvereingr Járn-Skeggjason, Einarr Eyjólfsson’s grandson, ÍF 10:267. Whether this is the grandfather or grandson, it is clear that the Þvereingar continue to function as a check for the leader of the larger Møðruvellingar faction. See also Magerøy, “indre samanhangen,” 77, who states that this is Einarr Járn-Skeggjason.

¹³³ Carl Phepstead, “Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow,” 6–8.

¹³⁴ Cf. Clover, “Regardless of Sex,” and its criticism; Björn Bandlien, *Man or Monster? Negotiations of Masculinity in Old Norse Society*, 10–11; Gareth Evans, *Men and Masculinities*, 12–15; as well as Miriam Mayburd, “Helzt þóttumk nú heima í millim...” 123, n. 3, and, generally, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature* [...].

involve the loss of an ability to make something grow. Baldness is not always equal to femininity: consider Skalla-Grímr, Egill's father, whose masculinity *Egils saga* does not question. But Skalla-Grímr is also descended of what appears to be a werewolf, and similar monstrous elements are observable in his character as well. These elements make him a liminal character, a shape-changer whose identity can be flexible, which goes along with the liminality associated with his baldness.¹³⁵ Notice that later we are told that Guðmundr's son Eyjólfur similarly has a foster-father who interprets a dream for him. He is introduced with: "Eyjólfur átti sér föstra,"¹³⁶ a phrase not found elsewhere in the saga corpus besides here and in both the A-redaction and the C-redaction's telling of the foster-father and the fly.¹³⁷ In this parallel between father and son, *Ljósvetninga saga* takes a stab at the relatively more balanced individual that is Eyjólfur, using the same language to describe the son as his much-humiliated father.

One of the more problematic speculations of Björn Sigfússon is that Vigfúss Víga-Glúmsson would not have appeared in the A-redaction.¹³⁸ Despite the fact that he opens up the possibility that Vigfúss would have appeared,¹³⁹ Björn states about the C-redaction that "í stað [...] Þorkels Geitissonar, virðist koma Vigfús Víga-Glúmsson."¹⁴⁰ While not explicitly stated, this could imply that Vigfúss is meant to play in the C-redaction the role of Þorkell in the A-redaction, and that the challenge against Einarr could have been made by Þorkell instead. Guðmundr's alliance with Vigfúss Víga-Glúmsson, though, speaks volumes. While Þorkell is an out-of-the-district player with ties to the Møðruvellingar, Vigfúss Víga-Glúmsson is an enemy of Einarr Eyjólfsson, Guðmundr's brother. Vigfúss openly resents the manner in which Einarr took away Þverá from him and his

¹³⁵ Cf. the sexuality of the shape-changing Loki, though in his case he changes genders as well, so his sexual liminality is more apparent. Bandlien, *Man or Monster?* 69–72.

¹³⁶ *Ljósv.* 1830, 91 [ch. 26]; ÍF 10:85 [ch. 16 (26)].

¹³⁷ Rísamálheildin, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, (under headings: fornrit, einföld; search term "sér föstra"), accessed 10 Nov. 2018, <http://malheildir.arnastofnun.is/>; ÍF 10:28 [ch. 6 (14)] and 37 [ch. 6 (16)].

¹³⁸ Björn Sigfússon, *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*, 37. Magerøy disagrees, *Sertekstproblemet*, 85.

¹³⁹ Björn Sigfússon, *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*, 37, n. 1

¹⁴⁰ Björn Sigfússon, 37.

father Víga-Glúmr Eyjólfsson.¹⁴¹ Guðmundr’s alliance with Vigfúss, then, appears highly illogical.¹⁴² As Björn Sigfússon points out about Vigfúss: “Vinátta hans við Guðmund, þrátt fyrir fjandskap við Einar á Þverá, er hvergi skýrð. En sættir hafa tekizt með ættunum einhvern tíma eftir dauða Glúms.”¹⁴³ This explanation ignores the bad blood that still exists between Vigfúss and Einarr. The alliance, though, is consistent with Guðmundr’s behavior elsewhere in the text. After all, like his alliance with Þórarinn Nefjólfsson, the alliance with Vigfúss shows a preference to courtly ties over those of kinship: like Guðmundr, Vigfúss Víga-Glúmsson was allied with Hákon jarl and even fought alongside him in the battle of Hjörungavágr against the Jómsvíkingar.¹⁴⁴ Another consideration is that in *Víga-Glúms saga* and *Reykðæla saga*, Einarr and Guðmundr’s father Eyjólf was an ally of Víga-Glúmr. While Einarr’s takeover of Þverá hindered the families’ friendship, Vigfúss and Guðmundr could have taken up old family alliances to vie for district power. Guðmundr’s alliance is thus not irrational or indicative of a corrupted saga, but rather simply not looked at through the correct prism by previous studies.

Scholars have not paid much attention to the fact that Þorkell Geitisson’s appearance in the A-redaction is confined to the seventeenth-century summary in AM 561 4to’s 37v. We know that the leaf would have reached the *alþingi* scene thanks to Guðbrandur Vigfússon’s reading of the manuscript’s faded lines.¹⁴⁵ Since his appearance is so abrupt and out of place, it might be worth raising the question of whether this is somehow a corruption: the scribe could not read the name Vigfúss Víga-Glúmsson properly and thus replaced it with another famous Icelander. This is not entirely convincing, especially when considering that the manuscript also

¹⁴¹ ÍF 9:87–89 [ch. 26] and ÍF 10:41. See also *Law and Literature*, 184, n. 108.

¹⁴² Erichsen thought as much, *Untersuchungen*, 67.

¹⁴³ ÍF 10:39, n. 2.

¹⁴⁴ ÍF 33:115–116, 118, and *The Saga of the Jómsvíkingar A Translation with Full Introduction*, trans. and introduction by Alison Finlay and Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir, 143, 145.

¹⁴⁵ *Origines Islandicae*, 430. Namely his reading of the passage “ætla þu þetta upp at taka,” which the 37v post-medieval scribe read as “ætla þu þetta upp at bera,” ÍF 10:39. My reading of the images at <http://digitalesamlinger.hum.ku.dk/Home/Samlingerne/5016> (accessed 30 Nov. 2018) is consistent with Guðbrandur’s “taka.”

contains *Reykðæla saga*, and thus the name Vigfúss Víga-Glúmsson would have been a likelier guess than Þorkell. The abrupt presence of Þorkell Geitisson in the A-redaction is strengthened by the character’s abrupt presence in most paper copies of *Reykðæla saga*, which are derived from AM 561 4to.¹⁴⁶ There, Björn Sigfússon amended “Þorkell Geitisson” to “Þorkell Þorgeirsson,” due to the latter’s later appearance in the plot,¹⁴⁷ and Finnur Jónsson amended it to “Þorgeirr” for reasons of chronology.¹⁴⁸

In the A-redaction, when Þórir Helgason declares his intention to challenge Guðmundr, Einarr’s response is “Mikit ráð er þat.”¹⁴⁹ In the C-redaction, he says, “Þat er ørendi ó\gott, en eigi lítilmannligt.”¹⁵⁰ The first part of the sentence echoes Ólvir’s *lítilmennska* or his family’s *lítilmenni* from the saga’s first chapter, which contrasts Þórir Helgason’s ‘manliness’ with Guðmundr’s lack thereof. The scribal variation in the second part of the sentence creates two significantly different interpretations. In JS 624 4to, Einarr uses the word “ógott” (76v) or BL ADD 4867’s “úgott,” while AM 485 4to and AM 554 e 4to’s have it as “gott” (29r; 19r). With the “ógott” reading, Einarr clearly states that this is a bad, yet needed challenge; his brother’s overbearing behavior has gone too far and he must be stopped. The alternative “gott” is rather cold to the prospect of Guðmundr dying. When Vigfúss shares his plan to counter-challenge Einarr, Guðmundr’s reaction is likewise outwardly unmoved by the possibility of his brother’s death in case Vigfúss’s plan backfires and an actual duel does take place: “Slíka menn getr varla til vitrleiks, sem þú ert, þótt menn eigi góða marga kosti.”¹⁵¹ While neither Einarr nor Guðmundr do anything to stop the

¹⁴⁶ But see Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson’s note that further research into the assertion that all of the paper manuscripts are derived from AM 561 4to is warranted, “AM 561 4to og Ljósvetninga saga,” 85.

¹⁴⁷ ÍF 10:156, n. 2.

¹⁴⁸ *Reykðæla og Valla-Ljóts saga*, 10.

¹⁴⁹ ÍF 10:39

¹⁵⁰ ÍF 10:38; *Ljósv.* 1830, 51 [ch. 16].

¹⁵¹ *Ljósv.* 1830, 54 [ch. 17]; ÍF 10:41. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell translate this as: “There are no such men for wisdom as thou, though men have many good choices,” *Origines Islandicae*, 184; and Miller and Andersson provide a similar reading “There are not many men as resourcesful as you, [...] even though there are plenty to choose from,” 184.

challenge against their brother, Guðmundr's reaction portrays him as neglecting the ties of kinship, if contrasted with "ógott."

Noteworthy, however, is that Guðmundr breaks into laughter following the child's fart. While fart jokes are most entertaining,¹⁵² Guðmundr could have 'let loose' as a conscious decision. Aware of the hostility Vigfúss has for his brother and thus the actual danger to Einarr's life, Guðmundr could be allowing himself to laugh while fully conscious of the implications. Einarr may see into his brother's mood and that this will force his hand to convince Þórir Helgason to give Guðmundr what he wants. This interpretation is one possibility, but it is clear that Guðmundr can control himself when needed, as is illustrated at the beginning of the chapter when he appears in high spirits despite being frightened of his coming battle with Þórir Helgason. On the other hand, that he let loose on account of a fart—which is emitted from the anus—could be a telling sign that Þórir's accusations of his unmanliness and the implied sodomitic nature that comes with it are rather true.¹⁵³ Similarly, in the A-redaction, Einarr's question to Þórir Helgason, "Nær ætlar þú þetta upp at bera/taka?"¹⁵⁴ could indicate that Einarr was planning on figuring out a way to help his friend Þórir without his brother Guðmundr getting hurt. Also noteworthy about this scene is Þórir's statement: "Eigi hefi ek varorðr verit við Guðmund, sem margir aðrir."¹⁵⁵ This is found in the C-redaction but not in the A-redaction, and it further supports the proposition that, in the C-redaction, the

¹⁵² *Law and Literature*, 184–5, n. 110. On the humor of farts in medieval times, see also Anatoly Liberman, "Gone with the Wind," 102–103. A very similar fart-and-laugh scene takes place in *Droplaugarsona saga*. While Liestøl asserts that *Ljósvetninga saga* rather than *Droplaugarsona* must be the original, *The Origin of the Icelandic Family Sagas*, 161; it would have been interesting to compare with the no-longer extant part of *Ljósvetninga saga*'s A-redaction's manuscript that does not contain *Droplaugarsona saga*—between leaves 37v and 38r—and see whether or not the scene would have been there as well. See also ÍF 9:172 [ch. 13] and Heinzel, *Beschreibung*, 55 [159].

¹⁵³ Since I have discussed Guðmundr's sexuality in depth, I will not expand much on the topic here; see Tirosh, **The Fabulous Saga*; "Argr Management"; and "Trolling Guðmundr."

¹⁵⁴ ÍF 10:39 and *Origines Islandicae*, 430 "When do you intend to announce it?" 252.

With *taka* it could be translated: "do you intend to raise the matter soon?" (My trans.)

¹⁵⁵ *Ljósv.* 1830, 51 [ch. 16]; ÍF 10:38.

rumors against Guðmundr were widespread, at least according to the biased account of Þórir Helgason.

As discussed, most of what pertains to the legal dealings and *hólmganga* challenge between Þórir Helgason and Guðmundr inn ríki has been lost in the A-redaction, and only remains in the C-redaction paper manuscripts. We can speculate that the A-redaction would probably have been subtler about the insults against Guðmundr, keeping in line with the rest of that redaction. Þórir Helgason's speech has been said to not fully reveal the insult directed at Guðmundr, and as such needs to be fully addressed:

Þórir mælti hátt: eigi mun ek enn láta þrjóta boðin við þik, Guðmundr! Þvíat ek veit at þér þikir annat miklu stórmannligra við mik, enn um haframerkingina Þóris Akrakarls, þvíat ek veit at þú kennir mēr þat, er margir mæla, ok eru eigi minna afvaldir, at ek hafi mælt rángliga við þik; vil ek þat nú reyna at þat eru eigi sannmæli, því ek vil skora á þik til hólmgaungu, at þú komir á 3 náttu fresti í hólm þenna, er liggr í Öxará, ok menn hafa áðr vanir verit á hólm at ganga, ok berjumst þar, svá sem forn lög liggja til; ætla ek, áðr enn þeim fundi ljúki, at færast skal af tvímælit, hvort sannara er, at þú sért maðr snjallr ok vel hugaðr, eðr sè hinn veg, sem vèr höfum áðr orðum tilkomit, ok allmargir hafa sagt fyrir oss, at þú sèrt eigi snjallr.¹⁵⁶

This passage indicates that there is little basis for Erichsen's argument that something is missing in Þórir's insult, which would have been explained in

¹⁵⁶ *Ljósv.* 1830, 52–53 [ch. 16]; ÍF 10:39–40. “Then Thorir spoke for all to hear: ‘I haven’t gotten to the last of my offers yet, Gudmund, for I know that you have a lot more against me than just the marks on Thorir Akraskegg’s goats; I know that you blame me alone for saying what many say, though others are no less implicated, namely that I have called you an effeminate pervert. I now wish to test whether that is true or not, so I am challenging you to single combat to be held in three days on the islet in Oxar River where duels used to be fought. Let the two of us do battle according to the ancient laws. Before that encounter is over, I suspect the doubts will be removed about whether you have an altogether manly disposition or whether, as I have mentioned before and a great many have already stated, you are not a man.’” 182–183.

an earlier passage.¹⁵⁷ The wedding scene and the challenge scene work perfectly together, and one builds up to the other, both narratologically and in word choice. As for the indirection of the insult that Andersson and Miller argue for,¹⁵⁸ both Geirlaug and her husband Þórir Helgason were actually rather explicit.¹⁵⁹ Þórir Helgason’s double use of “því at ek veit” could be read as an echo of *Sorla þáttur*, where Þórarinn Nefjólfsón hints at a hidden meaning to Guðmundr’s actions as well. There, as discussed, one possible reading of his purportedly irrational behavior is his love for the young Sorli Brodd-Helgason and, consequently, his being *ragr*.

After Guðmundr receives Þórir Helgason’s challenge, he appears cheerful, but Vigfúss Víga-Glúmsson claims to be able to see into his real mood: “Þú ert verr enn dáðlauss,”¹⁶⁰ he tells him. Like Þórir Helgason a few lines earlier, Vigfúss shows that he can see the thoughts Guðmundr is hiding. As with Þórarinn Nefjólfsón, here a courtier of a Norwegian ruler sees through him. This moment is charged with irony. Þórir Helgason argues that he knows Guðmundr’s true intentions—that he means to avenge the words spoken against him. Vigfúss argues that he knows Guðmundr’s true mood—that he is hopeless against the challenge. It is also important to bear in mind while reading this that just a few lines after being challenged to prove that he is “snjallr ok vel hugaðr,” Guðmundr’s ally Vigfúss implicitly tells him that he is neither *snjallr* nor *vel hugaðr*. Guðmundr is ridiculed by Vigfúss and, in turn, the author: he is so afraid of Þórir’s challenge to prove that he is not a coward that he does not realize it when he is called a coward by Vigfúss. This has happened before, when Guðmundr went to the *hestapiing*—a place in *Íslendingasögur* literary conventions where confrontations are sparked—simply to avoid confrontation. In *Vöðu-Brand’s þáttur*, we are told that Guðmundr would rather give up his life than lose his honor. Guðmundr indeed appears unwilling to lose his honor and seems

¹⁵⁷ Erichsen, *Untersuchungen*, 68. On this, see Björn Sigfússon *Um Ljósveitninga sögu*, who argues that “hún skilur ekki list sögunnar í meðferð níðsins,” 10.

¹⁵⁸ *Law and Literature*, 165 n. 76.

¹⁵⁹ Though the JS 624 4to branch reading “ragliga” would be more explicit than the other C-redaction manuscript readings “rángliga.”

¹⁶⁰ *Ljósv.* 1830, 53 [ch. 17]; ÍF 10:40; You are worse than pathetic (my translation).

to be facing death at the hands of Þórir Helgason, who is described as “garpr mikill” when introduced into the saga.¹⁶¹ It is interesting that “sástu eigi at feldarröggvagnar hrærðusk, er hann hló?”¹⁶² are the words Einarr uses to describe his brother when he gave himself away by laughter. The “hrærðusk” could echo the “hvörr maðr mælir þat sá, er tungu hrærir”¹⁶³ that Geirlaug, Þórir Helgason’s wife, says about the rumors circling around Guðmundr’s masculinity. It is revealing that Guðmundr’s revelation of himself comes in the same verb, as if the accusation and the proof are of the same making.

3.3.4 Guðmundr Uses Rindill Against Þorkell hákr

Another noteworthy difference between the two redactions is that, in the A-redaction, it is Rindill who approaches Guðmundr in his booth, while in the C-redaction it is Guðmundr who notices Rindill as he travels between booths. He spots Rindill amongst the Svínfellingar, the antagonists of *Njáls saga*. This fact is significant even if *Ljósvetninga saga*’s C-redaction was written before *Njáls saga*, since the timing of the events in the former makes them contemporaneous to the events related in the latter. While it is not argued here that every mention of the Svínfellingar is a reference to *Njáls saga* (they are also featured in *Droplaugarsona saga*, for example), the connections between the C-redaction and *Njáls saga* imply that this story, whether written or oral, was on the author’s mind. Thus, Rindill’s association with the ‘baddies’ could be something that detracts from his character. As we shall see in the discussion of memory below, Rindill’s appearance in the Svínfellingar booth could support Barði’s argument of *Ljósvetninga saga*’s opposition to the Svínfellingar’s Þorvarðr Þórarinnsson. In the A-redaction, there is hint of Rindill’s problematic nature when it is stated that “hann kvezk vera sekr maðr.”¹⁶⁴ As Magerøy pointed out, Guðmundr

¹⁶¹ *Ljósv.* 1830, 36 [ch. 13]; ÍF 10:16.

¹⁶² *Ljósv.* 1830, 55 [ch. 17]; ÍF 10:42; “Didn’t you see the fibers on his cloak ripple when he laughed?” 185.

¹⁶³ *Ljósv.* 1830, 38 [ch. 13]; ÍF 10:18.

¹⁶⁴ ÍF 10:42 [ch. 7 (17)]. He said he had been declared an outlaw (my translation).

is more active in the C-redaction, since he is the one approaching Rindill there. This builds up his character as having more control over the events of the saga than in the A-redaction. Magerøy questions Guðmundr's C-redaction logic. There, instead of taking him along following the *alþingi*, as he does in the A-redaction, Guðmundr has Rindill approach him in the *Eyfirðinga leið*, where he takes him under his employ. In the local *þing*, all can ascertain that Guðmundr had taken Rindill in, which goes against the secrecy that the chieftain aimed for.¹⁶⁵ This is a fair point, but it should also be noted that when Guðmundr instructs Rindill to approach Þorkell, he tells him: “En þú ert öngvum mönnum jafnlíkr, sem þeim, er komit hafa austan úr Hálfánartungu, ok skaltu látast þaðan vera.”¹⁶⁶ He is relying on Rindill's out-of-district appearance to keep his identity a mystery. It is also possible that to take a man as a worker at the *alþingi* as Guðmundr does in the A-redaction could have raised more eyebrows and be seen as a more noteworthy event than if he does this in his own district's *þing*.

When Guðmundr notices Rindill he says to Vigfúss: “Hefir þú nokkut þann sèt, at síðr sè nokkrs verðr, enn þessi maðr?”¹⁶⁷ When Vigfúss agrees to the lowliness of the man, Guðmundr continues: “Eigi hefi ek sèt þann mann, at betr er fallinn til flugumanns.”¹⁶⁸ Guðmundr has not seen many men, then, because when he tells Rindill about the true reason he was hired, his response in the C-redaction is: “Þessu muntu fyrir trúnaði þínum atráða, en hugat mun mèr at gæta lífs míns, ok treysta vil ek því, at ek mun vera þèr trúr; en ef hætta er í sendiförum, ok vilir þú þat fyrir mik leggja, þá mun ek um njósna, en áræði er ek ekki trúr.”¹⁶⁹ This could be a logical misstep by the author, but it could also be another opportunity to ridicule

¹⁶⁵ Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 67–68.

¹⁶⁶ *Ljósv.* 1830, 58 [ch. 18]; ÍF 10:48 [ch. 18]. “And since you resemble no one quite so much as the men who come from the west from Halfdanartongue, you should say that you come from there,” 189–190.

¹⁶⁷ *Ljósv.* 1830, 56 [ch. 18]; ÍF 10:44. “Have you ever seen a more worthless man than this?” 188.

¹⁶⁸ *Ljósv.* 1830, 56–57 [ch. 18]; ÍF 10:44. “I haven't seen a man better suited to be an assassin than this one,” 188.

¹⁶⁹ *Ljósv.* 1830, 58 [ch. 18]; ÍF 10:46–47. “It's up to you to decide whether you will act in good faith or not, but I will take care to guard my own life. I count on being loyal to you; but if there is a risk in the job you want to give me, I can't be counted on for direct action, although I will spy and inform,” 189.

Guðmundr and his lack of ability to read people. Vigfúss agrees that Rindill appears to be useless, but we do not hear his opinion on the matter of his worthiness as a *flugumaðr*. The opinion of a famous warrior such as Vigfúss on the matter is priceless, and his silence speaks volumes.

As mentioned above, in the A-redaction, Guðmundr suggests that Rindill take on a position of messenger: “Ok má þó vera, at þú metisk eigi til ómaga.”¹⁷⁰ This sentence, beyond its connection with Rindill facilitating Porkell’s impending doom—and of the spilling of his *magi*—also hints at Rindill’s fate to be killed by a spear that will enter “á Rindil miðjan.”¹⁷¹ This reading suggests that Guðmundr leads the outlaw to certain death, either through his own mechanisms, or through the foreshadowing of the author.¹⁷² The elaborate plans that Guðmundr has for Rindill echo (or are echoed by) *Njáls saga*’s description of Njáll laying out plans for Gunnarr to retrieve Auðr’s dowry.¹⁷³ Njáll’s predictions have more to do with a deep understanding of the ways of men and how they operate; the frustrations are bigger when these plans are foiled by chaotic unexpected elements. Therefore, when Guðmundr overreacts following Rindill’s death and threatens to burn the house where his wife and son are present, this could also be connected with the chieftain’s deep frustration at the loss of control over the fate of his chess-pieces, to the extent that he loses his ability to distinguish between the socially-accepted difference of the significance between an ally and family members, preferring to avenge Rindill over keeping his wife and son alive.

In the A-redaction, Guðmundr is rather honest with Rindill, promising him good fortune or danger as a result of his deeds and warning him not to deviate from his plan at the cost of death. Despite the dangers,

¹⁷⁰ ÍF 10:45 [ch. 8 (18)]. “And then perhaps you won't be considered such a burden,” 253.

¹⁷¹ ÍF 10:55.

¹⁷² Though if he were aware of the death that would result in his actions, why would he appear so genuinely infuriated and grief-stricken by Rindill’s death?

¹⁷³ ÍF 12:58–65 [ch. 21–23]. This kind of trickery is not unique to Old Norse literature. See, for example, the tale of Pwyll in *The Mabinogion* and how Rhiannon instructs him in detail how to disrupt an unwanted marriage between her and a deceitful suitor, *The Mabinogion*, trans. Sioned Davies, 12–14.

Guðmundr expects his just deserts for the favors he has awarded Rindill, and is quite honest about his motivations.¹⁷⁴ In the C-redaction, Guðmundr is much more ingratiating, fitting with his initial approach to Rindill in this redaction, when he promises him, “ok er eigi örvænna, at ek gjöri þik tignum mönnum kunnugan.”¹⁷⁵ Magerøy suggests that this refers to Þorkell hákr, and points out that this is not much of an accurate description of the poor farmer.¹⁷⁶ Magerøy had perhaps not seen enough Hollywood films in his time to recognize the promise of high society as a common incentive used to exert one’s power over one’s dependents. Even if Guðmundr refers to Þorkell ironically, he also promises Rindill a form of social currency and connections unavailable to him in his current status.

Another small note on the employment of Rindill in the A-redaction pertains to the comment, “fannsk mönnum mjök orð um þat ok þóttusk vita, at nokkut myndi undir búa.”¹⁷⁷ It has been argued that the whispers about Guðmundr and Rindill were both in connection with the plot on Þorkell hákr’s life as well as about the intimate nature of the two.¹⁷⁸ One argument for this claim is that we are again referred to the opinion of other people in all things Guðmundr: that people speak about Guðmundr *ránnglaga/raglaga* behind his back. On the other hand, this is a common expression in Old Norse. The same expression is used in the C-redaction’s chapter 23 by Eyjólfur Guðmundarson—“en þú skalt vita hvat undir býr”¹⁷⁹—in the context of sending out a spy. There is presumably no textual connection between the two scenes, since they appear in *Ljósvetninga saga*’s separate redactions.

Guðmundr’s prediction of how things play out is more accurate in the C-redaction, as Magerøy notes, especially when it pertains to Þorkell hákr’s unpleasantness. This is consistent with the *þettir*’s portrayal of Guðmundr’s

¹⁷⁴ Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell’s translation is the bluntest: “for I am minded to get some return for my maintenance of thee,” *Origines Islandicae*, 413.

¹⁷⁵ *Ljósv.* 1830, 58 [ch. 18]; ÍF 10:46. “I might just acquaint you with some high society,” 189.

¹⁷⁶ Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 72.

¹⁷⁷ ÍF 10:48 [ch. 8 (18)]. “People took notice of it and suspected that something was afoot,” 254.

¹⁷⁸ Tirosh, **The Fabulous Saga*.

¹⁷⁹ *Ljósv.* 1830, 80 [ch. 23]; ÍF 10:72. “And I will tell you what I have in mind,” 212.

abilities and *forspár*, and sheds some positive light on the character. This unpleasantness manifests in an amusing stream of questions that are aimed at Rindill by Þorkell: “Hvörr er sá herramaðrinn, eðr því komstu hær, eðr hvört skaltu fara, eðr hvar áttu heima?”¹⁸⁰ The attentive saga reader will notice similarities with the well-known and clearly comical *Morkinskinna* redaction of *Snegla-Halla þátr*, where the unidentified king Haraldr shoots out an exhausting stream of questions at the unidentified *skáld* Sneglu-Halli: “Hverr stæyrir skipinu, eða hvar váru þér í vetr, eða hvaðan ýttu þér, eða hvar kómu þér við land, eða hvar váru þér í nótt?”¹⁸¹ Andersson has argued for a connection in the literary production of *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Morkinskinna*, and quotes like this support the argument.¹⁸² The contrast between Haraldr, a king who is in a position to demand such information, and Þorkell hákr, a poor farmer with, admittedly high social connections, sheds a light on the kind of revenge that Guðmundr takes. If he thought half-hearted exile to be a sufficient punishment for the relatively powerful Þórir Helgason, he comes with a large force of twenty—even sending a scout beforehand to ensure that not a single thing goes wrong—against the poor farmer Þorkell. On the other hand, Þorkell himself is somewhat ridiculous here, a poor farmer using the rhetorical techniques of a king. Even if we were to dismiss that this stems from a literary connection between *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Morkinskinna*, there is something overly demanding and comical about Þorkell’s stream of questions, and it certainly gives a sense that he is being both (justifiably) paranoid, and (unjustifiably?) self-important. Finally, this comic moment also helps to endear Þorkell to an audience that has never met the character before. His use of the hilarious term “fretkarl” (Fart-Man) has a similar effect, as well

¹⁸⁰ *Ljósv.* 1830, 59 [ch. 18]; ÍF 10:49. “Who are you, why have you come here, where are you headed, and where do you come from?” 190.

¹⁸¹ ÍF 23:270 [ch. 47]. “Who commands the ship, and where were you last winter? Where did you embark, and where have you landed? Where were you last night?” *Morkinskinna* [...], eds. Theodore Murdock Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade, 244.

¹⁸² This is not the only scene that is shared with *Morkinskinna*; Hallr Ótryggsson’s death has been much discussed in this context. See ÍF 10:XXXIV–XXXVII and *Law and Literature*, 79–80 for differing explanations on literary connections between these scenes.

as his moment of father-daughter tenderness with Guðrún,¹⁸³ and, perhaps, his taunts against Guðmundr in his final moments.¹⁸⁴ Ultimately, in the C-redaction Þorkell hákr's character is much more endearing than the A-redaction one, but also more complex. This works to further taint Guðmundr's character in both narratives—the more likeable his victim is, the more reviled the chieftain is for killing him.

3.4 Chs. 18–21 (Including the Part Only Extant in the C-Redaction)

At this point the redactions converge again and the same story is told of Guðmundr: his killing of Þorkell hákr, vengeance of Rindill, and of his final days.

3.4.1 Þorkell's Death

It is almost needless to say that Þorkell hákr goes at great lengths to humiliate Guðmundr in his last moments.¹⁸⁵ When Þorkell mocks Guðmundr for the last time, his words in the A-redaction are: “Enda rázk þú nú hingat, Guðmundr; úti liggja nú iðrin mín.”¹⁸⁶ In most C-redaction manuscripts the text reads: “Enda ráðst þú nú hingað ok finnumz vit,¹⁸⁷ því at nú liggja úti iðrin mín. Þat/þar hefir þú jafngjarn á verit er þik lysti þessa.”¹⁸⁸ This last sentence stands out in the manuscript transmission of the C-redaction.¹⁸⁹ Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell write about this that “something is missing; meaningless is það hefer þer iafn-gjarnt vert er þik lyste þessa.”¹⁹⁰ Their edition and Björn Sigfússon's *Íslenzk fornrit* move

¹⁸³ *Law and Literature*, 191, n. 122.

¹⁸⁴ Though, in a forthcoming article I will discuss the complex reaction to this death scene in its medieval and post-medieval manuscript context.

¹⁸⁵ I have discussed Þorkell's death at length elsewhere, both in **The Fabulous Saga*, and in “Argr Management.”

¹⁸⁶ ÍF 10:52 [ch. 9 (19)].

¹⁸⁷ JS 624 4to (*Látrabók*) and BL ADD 4867 4to add: “ef þú þórir.”

¹⁸⁸ *Glúma og Ljósvefninga saga*, 187 and ÍF 10:52, n. 4.

¹⁸⁹ See Lucy Keens, “Scenes of a Sexual Nature,” 198, online at UCL Discovery, University College London, accessed 11 Jan. 2019, <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1529348/>.

¹⁹⁰ *Origines Islandicae*, 418.

this sentence to the footnotes. Andersson and Miller instead chose to grapple with this sentence directly in their translation, noting that “this sentence is translated only approximately because the readings in the manuscripts are unclear.”¹⁹¹ They render it as: “That is what you wanted when you were so eager to meet.”¹⁹² Þorkell implicates Guðmundr in a desire to be penetrated by him, thus rendering him *argr*.¹⁹³ As is clear from the manuscript sentence’s transmission outlined above, some of the saga’s audience reacted with dismay and others with humor to Þorkell’s bold display. Nevertheless, this serves to both further Guðmundr inn ríki’s humiliation in the C-redaction, and to establish Þorkell as a witty fellow who makes a grandiose exit upon his death.

When Guðmundr and Einarr Konálsson approach Þorkell’s brothers Tjörvi and Høskuldr, the two offer very faint resistance, with Høskuldr stating that “ótrúligar munu sættir várar verða, þótt Guðmundr hafi nú ríki mikit.”¹⁹⁴ To the casual, one-time reader of *Ljósvetninga saga* this seems like an empty threat; Guðmundr’s death is rather peaceful, after all. But if it is looked at more attentively, it is clear that this death is a result of a deliberate action by the brother of Þorkell who is not accounted for in the compensation scene, *Drauma-Finni*, as will be expounded below.

3.4.2 *Vengeance for Rindill*

Before direct vengeance against Guðmundr himself is exacted, it is first related how his spy and hot-pot companion Rindill is killed. In this case, a brother of one of the killers, Brúni, is not only connected to Þorkell hákr but also to Guðmundr by marriage. The fact that he supports vengeance for Þorkell’s death—though it is his brother who does the stabbing—is

¹⁹¹ *Law and Literature*, 193, n. 126.

¹⁹² *Law and Literature*, 193.

¹⁹³ Tirosh, “Argr Management,” 259–260. But see Lucy Keens’s opposite interpretation, where Guðmundr’s desire is to penetrate Þorkell, in “Scenes of a Sexual Nature.”

¹⁹⁴ ÍF 10:53 [ch. 9 (19)]. “Our reconciliation will not be reliable even though Gudmund has all the power now,” 194.

revealing in terms of Guðmundr's lack of success to achieve a good alliance within his expanded kin group.¹⁹⁵

After the killing, when Eilífr arrives at Hlenni's with a plea for protection, the old man's reaction in the A-redaction is short: he will help him if he can, and indeed does. In the C-redaction, though, Hlenni is much wittier: "Hvat er til saka, Eilífr, eða hefir þú skotit Rindil?"¹⁹⁶ When Eilífr affirms this, Hlenni says: "Lítill mannskaði." Hlenni's character could be having a 'senior moment' here, since he asks what Eilífr and his companion did after they "sögðu honum, hvat þeir höfðu gørt."¹⁹⁷ But both Guðmundur Þorláksson and Björn Sigfússon read the statement about "shooting Rindill" as a pun on the nickname's meaning, 'wren.'¹⁹⁸ The fact that Hlenni's reaction is to make a pun and then follow it with a direct estimation on the lowliness of the deceased man's worth is a stain on the honor of poor Rindill, as well as on Guðmundr, whose over-reaction to the spy's death becomes even worse with these insults on his character in mind.

In general, Hlenni comes out of *Ljósvetninga saga* with much wit and a very rich character.¹⁹⁹ The fact that in the C-redaction, Guðmundr's son Koðrán is fostered by Hlenni and is consequently "einn beztu maðr úr Eyjafirði,"²⁰⁰ works to discredit Guðmundr's honor, since his other son Eyjólfur—not fostered by Hlenni—is much less popular, though as powerful and well-allied as his father.²⁰¹ When Guðmundr arrives at Hlenni's farm, the blind man says—after noting that Rindill's death was not a

¹⁹⁵ For a discussion of the sexual meaning of the stabbing scene, see Tirosh, "Argr Management," 260–262.

¹⁹⁶ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 191.

¹⁹⁷ ÍF 10:55 [ch. 20]. "Told him what they have done," 195.

¹⁹⁸ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 191 and ÍF 10:55, n. 2. According to Guðmundur Þorláksson, AM 485 4to and Kall 621 4to attribute this play on words to Eilífr. While it takes a bit of the flair from Hlenni's character, it is still a smear on Rindill, and consequently Guðmundr's honor, to be commemorated with a demeaning pun. See also *Origines Islandicae*, 421, where the pun was missed, though it still attributes the quote to Eilífr.

¹⁹⁹ The portrayal of Hlenni is so positive that it was used by Barði Guðmundsson to support his argument that *Ljósvetninga*'s author came from there. See discussion below.

²⁰⁰ *Ljósv.* 1830, 87 [ch. 24]; ÍF 10:81. The best man from Eyjafjörður (my translation).

²⁰¹ "Eyjólfur var ríkastr maðr fyrir norðan land," *Ljósv.* 1830, 72 [ch. 22]; ÍF 10:62. Eyjólfur was the most powerful man in the North (my translation).

“harmsaga”²⁰²—that he prefers that the killers of Rindill will be executed elsewhere: “betra þykki mér, at þeir sé eigi fyrir augum mér drepnir nú.”²⁰³ As Guðmundur Þorláksson shows in his critical apparatus, some manuscripts of the C-redaction removed the word “augum” from the sentence.²⁰⁴ That this word was in the common ancestor of both the A-redaction and the C-redaction is self-evident since it is present both in AM 561 4to and some of the C-redaction paper copies, such as Kall 616 4to, Kall 621 4to,²⁰⁵ JS 624 4to,²⁰⁶ and BL ADD 4867 4to.²⁰⁷ The comical effect of a blind-man asking for something not to happen before his eyes is obvious. Hlenni’s solution to have the killers hidden in a cart is rather ingenious, since it allows him to both tell Guðmundr the truth and nevertheless save their lives. When he gives the instructions, there is a moment when Hlenni changes his audience from Eilífr and his comrade to his own servant without any textual indication of the change: “En ef þig berr skjótt fram hjá, þá kipp þú þegar knappinum ór hripsgrindinni.”²⁰⁸ In their editions Guðmundur Þorláksson explained: “*p. e. húskarlínn.*”²⁰⁹ and Björn Sigfússon found it necessary to clarify: “húskarlínn.”²¹⁰ Andersson and Miller bypassed the issue by changing the text: “And if the farmhand gets by, he should pull the release in the pack frame and fate will take its course.”²¹¹ Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell avoid dealing with the issue and provide a vague translation: “And if ye get a good start, then do ye slip the latch out of the drop of the hamper, and may luck be with you.”²¹² Þorgeir Guðmundsson and Þorsteinn Helgason choose the C-redaction “skífðu

²⁰² ÍF 10:55 [ch. 10 (20)]. Tragedy (my translation). Most of the other C-redaction manuscripts read this as “hrein saga,” *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 191.

²⁰³ ÍF 10:56 [ch. 10 (20)]. I think it is better if they were not killed now before my eyes (my trans.).

²⁰⁴ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 191.

²⁰⁵ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 191.

²⁰⁶ ÍF 10:56 [ch. 10 (20)].

²⁰⁷ 172r.

²⁰⁸ ÍF 10:56 [ch. 10 (20)].

²⁰⁹ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 192.

²¹⁰ ÍF 10:56, n. 2.

²¹¹ *Law and Literature*, 196.

²¹² *Origines Islandicae*, 422.

þegar” rather than the A-redaction’s “kiptu þegar,”²¹³ but alone of all the critical editions do not mark anything as out of the ordinary in Hlenni’s words. Hallvard Magerøy supposes that this confusing sentence stems from the common ancestor of the A-redaction and the C-redaction, or perhaps even the archetype.²¹⁴ Given the self-aware humor exhibited by Hlenni before this moment, though, this may be a moment when the *Ljósvetninga saga* author plays with narrative conventions to make his audience be in the blind man’s show for a few moments. While a blind man would nonetheless direct his speech to different people, this could be less pronounced in the flow of a conversation where plans are being hatched. As such the author does not feel the need to provide us with a ‘sagði húskarlinum.’ Finally, when Hlenni’s servant arrives at the designated meeting place supposedly without Rindill’s killers, Guðmundr demands to know where the two are. The servant’s reply, “Ek ætla, at þeim þykki eigi til ǫls boðit,”²¹⁵ is so witty that it can either be explained by a sentence rehearsed by Hlenni himself, or that the farmer’s servants are as witty as their master. Either way, the whole affair is designed to elevate the blind farmer’s honor, and consequently diminish Guðmundr’s own.

In discussing the foiled burning, I have pointed out that the *Ljósvetninga saga* narrative plays with the burning type-scene and provides a reversal of the literary convention. Rather than being a passive head of household who allows his house to burn with little ceremony, Guðmundr is as active as they come: he is the one doing the burning.²¹⁶ As mentioned in the context of the *hestaping*, this is not the first time the *Ljósvetninga saga* author subverts literary convention to highlight Mundi’s ridiculousness. When Guðmundr approaches the house where the killers are hiding, Brúni criticizes him in the A-redaction for his threats of violence: “Ok kynligt er, at

²¹³ *Ljósv.* 1830, 65.

²¹⁴ Magerøy, *Sertekstproblemet*, 21.

²¹⁵ ÍF 10:56 [ch. 10 (20)]. Andersson and Miller’s translation takes out some of the flair: “I suppose they don’t feel they’ve been invited to a party,” 197. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell’s translation is more on-point: “I guess they do not think they are bidden to an ale banquet,” 422. Note that they connect this line with the poem *Bjarkamál*.

²¹⁶ Tirosh, “Feel the Burn,” 38.

þér sýnisk at hafa stórvirki á várum frændum ok leita eptir svá frekt um men skíka, er einskis eru verðir.”²¹⁷ In the C-redaction manuscripts, he rather says, “ok endimlegt er þat.”²¹⁸ While the meaning is similar, Brúni’s word choice takes us back to the opening episode of the saga, when Arnórr declares the alliance between Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði and Guðmundr inn ríki as “kynlig veizla, ok at illu mun verða.”²¹⁹ There both Arnórr (directly) and Þorgeirr (indirectly) are criticized for allying themselves with an *útlendingur*, and Þorgeirr specifically for aligning himself with Guðmundr inn ríki. The A-redaction points to this same sentiment with the same words; there is something unnatural about Guðmundr and Rindill’s alliance, and the fuss that Guðmundr makes seems inappropriate considering that his targets are from his kin group. The use of the type-scene makes all of this even more pronounced.²²⁰ The three foiled attempts to catch Eilífr and his comrade, and especially his threat on two of these occasions to burn down the farm-house where the killers hide, give the impression that the narrative is connected with folktale type AT-124 “Blowing the House In,”²²¹ its most famous instance being the Three Little Pigs. Given the discussion of genre below, it is important to remember that these texts often echo or make use of common folktale motifs.

Following these events, there is a calm in Guðmundr’s life. The expression that is used to illustrate this is “Guðmundr sat yfir metorðum mestum í heraðinu.”²²² Again *Ljósvetninga saga* exhibits self-referentiality: when Guðmundr and Einarr’s tense relationship is first discussed in chapter 13, it is reported that it arised “þvíat Guðmundr sat mjök yfir metorðum manna norðr þar.”²²³ Since the corresponding passage in the

²¹⁷ ÍF 10:57 [ch. 10 (20)]. “It’s strange that you have such great designs against our kinsmen and take the part of worthless men with such determination,” 197.

²¹⁸ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 193.

²¹⁹ ÍF 10:8 [ch. 2]. “That’s a strange alliance, [...] No good will come of it,” 127.

²²⁰ See also Knut Liestøl, who compared Signý’s dying words in *Völsunga saga* to Bergþóra in *Njáls saga*, *Orðin*, 177). He then goes on to connect this refusal to leave a burning home to *Ljósvetninga saga* as well, though his approach to the matter is far less ironic than my own.

²²¹ See Aarne and Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale*, 50–51.

²²² ÍF 10:57 [ch. 10 (20)]. Guðmundr was most oppressive over the district (my translation).

²²³ *Ljósv.* 1830, 36 [ch. 13]; ÍF 10:16. Because Guðmundr oppressed the people of the North (my translation).

A-redaction is no longer extant, it is impossible to know whether or not this phrasing appeared in the A-redaction as well. But it is safe to say that the C-redaction closes this episode of Guðmundr's life with a bit of a moral: all of this happened because he was lording it over the area. It is not beyond possibility that the A-redaction would have used a similar phrasing; it certainly would have expressed a similar sentiment.

3.4.3 Guðmundr's Death

While the dramas of Guðmundr's life might have calmed down, his inner demons have not. Guðmundr was a friend of Þórhildr the pagan witch, who is introduced into the saga as “forn í lund.”²²⁴ When the two meet, Guðmundr asks her whether or not there will be vengeance for his killing of Þorkell hákr. Dressed in breeches, a helmet, and carrying an axe, she asks Guðmundr to join her in the fjord: “Hon óð út á vaðlana, ok hjó hon fram øxinni á sjóinn, ok þótti Guðmundi þat enga skipan taka.”²²⁵ Þórhildr then replies: “Eigi ætla ek, at menn verði til at slá í mannhefndir við þik, ok muntu sitja mega í sœmd þinni.”²²⁶ The C-redaction's reading is slightly different, replacing “menni” with “maðr” and “slá” with “sjá.”²²⁷ Indeed, as Þórhildr predicts, it is not a *man* that eventually brings about the death of Guðmundr, but a dream. Its dispatcher, Drauma-Finni Þorgeirsson, has a connection to the paranormal which could make him something other than a man. Sverrir Jakobsson argues that the dream interpreter's powers in the *Íslendingasögur* are actually in understanding the symbolic meanings of dreams rather than in seeing the future,²²⁸ thus the assertion that the interpretation of dreams is necessarily connected with the paranormal is uncertain. Indeed, there is an interesting parallel

²²⁴ ÍF 10:59. “[S]he was still a heathen in spirit,” 199.

²²⁵ ÍF 10, 59. “She waded out into the shallows and struck her ax into the water, and Guðmund could observe no change,” 200.

²²⁶ ÍF 10:59. “I don't think there will be men to take up vengeance against you. You will be able to maintain your honorable position,” 200.

²²⁷ *Glúma og Ljósveitninga saga*, 197.

²²⁸ Sverrir Jakobsson, “Galdur og forspá í ríkisvaldslausu samfélagi,” 79.

between the saga's earlier mention that Drauma-Finni was "skygn" (had good eyesight) and the C-redaction's use of the same words to describe Einarr, Guðmundr's brother.²²⁹ As both men are dream interpreters, both demonstrate a certain understanding of the paranormal. However, in *Finnboga saga ramma* we learn that Finni was Finnish from his mother's side.²³⁰ That Finni was considered a foreigner, and a Finn to boot, lowered his social status and made him more easily defined, and used, as an Other.²³¹ As Ármann Jakobsson has argued in regards to *Grettis saga*, "monster fighters . . . are not and can never be normal,"²³² they are always *outside* of society, always an Other. Finni is arguably not entirely a man. By implication and association, Guðmundr is not as well. Guðmundr's Otherness is emphasized by the ominous paranormal forebodings that lead up to Guðmundr's death and subsequently the way his body is treated: "Síðan kom Einarr ok veitti honum umbúnað."²³³ As Andersson and Miller note, this treatment of a dead person's body is something the saga audience usually encounters in the context of ghost hauntings.²³⁴ It is noteworthy that in some C-redaction manuscripts, Þórhildr is named Þórhalla instead.²³⁵ This similarity with the name Þórhallr/Þórhalli²³⁶ works to frame Guðmundr's death: Þórhalla tells Guðmundr that something other than a man will bring about his death, and Þórhallr is the Othered Finni's messenger, delivering the killing dream.

²²⁹ *Ljósv.* 1830, 8 [ch. 2] for Finni; 44 [ch. 14] for Einarr. ÍF 10:9, 30, respectively.

²³⁰ ÍF 14:268. In *Landnámabók* we only hear that Finni's mother is called "Lekný/Lækný," and that she is "útlend," rather than Finnish, ÍF 1:273; Sturlubók ch. 241; Hauksbók ch. 206. The fact that Finni is Finnish comes in a scene where the name Finnbogi is passed on by its rightful owner to Urðarköttur, so perhaps the choice of the mother's origins had something to do with this repetition of 'Finn.' *Finnboga saga ramma* shares AM 162 c fol. with *Ljósvetninga saga*. This means that *Ljósvetninga saga*'s C-redaction audience would have an awareness of Finni's ancestry, even if not mentioned in *Ljósvetninga saga*—its fifteenth-century audience, at any rate.

²³¹ Ármann Jakobsson, *The Troll Inside You*, 101–11. On Finns in the *Íslendingasögur*, see Jeremy DeAngelo, "The North and the Depiction of the *Finnar* in the Icelandic Sagas."

²³² Ármann Jakobsson, "The Fearless Vampire Killers," 133.

²³³ *Ljósv.* 1830, 70 [ch. 21]; ÍF 10:61. "Einarr arrived and closed Gudmund's eyes and nostrils and attended to his corpse," 201.

²³⁴ *Law and Literature*, 201, n. 138.

²³⁵ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 196.

²³⁶ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 196.

Dreams are abundant in saga literature, and often involve the death of the dreamer or someone connected to them.²³⁷ In *Ljósvetninga saga*, however, the dream itself does not only prophesize death, but actually appears to be its cause. In chapter 21, Guðmundr relates his dream to Drauma-Finni, after he bribes him: “Ek þóttumk ríða norðr um Ljósavatnsskarð, ok er ek kom gagnvert bænum,²³⁸ þá sýndisk mér höfuð Þorkels háks á aðra hönd hjá mér, þá er at bænum vissi. Ok er ek reið norðan, sat höfuðit á annarri ǫxl mér, þeiri er þá horfði við bænum. Nú stendr mér ótti af þessu.”²³⁹ Drauma-Finni interprets Þorkell hákr’s floating head to be a reminder to Guðmundr of his killing, and of the fear that overcomes him with the knowledge that his relatives are close by in the surrounding farms. The immediate irony of this situation is obvious: Guðmundr’s having approached Finni with the contents of his dream is essentially the thing that eggs the half-brother to take vengeance. That Guðmundr asks Finni of all people to interpret the dream could either reflect a loss of common sense due to trauma and anxiety, or on the other hand a sly—yet poorly executed—attempt to bribe a representative of the *Ljósvetningar* into letting go of his resentments.²⁴⁰ As William Ian Miller shows, through the retelling of a dream, the dreamer has the power to both enlist and manipulate their audience.²⁴¹ Guðmundr wants to enlist Finni’s help by recounting his distressed dream, but ends up inciting him to vengeance instead.

Guðmundr’s dream reflects a tortured soul, perhaps filled with regret for the killing he committed, but mostly filled with fear for its

²³⁷ Paul Schach, “Symbolic Dreams of Future Renown in Old Icelandic Literature,” 51–2; Christopher Crocker, “To Dream is to Bury: Dreaming of Death in *Brennu-Njáls saga*,” 267.

²³⁸ In the A-redaction the farm is not named, but the C-redaction names it as *Øxará*, Þorkell hákr’s farm. See *Ljósv.* 1830, 67 and *ÍF* 10:58, n. 1.

²³⁹ *ÍF* 10:58. “I dreamed I was riding north through the pass at Ljosavatn, and as I came opposite the farm at Oxara, Thorkel Hake’s head appeared on the side of me which was facing the farm. And, when I rode from the north, the head sat on my other shoulder, still facing the farm. This has now filled me with fear,” 198.

²⁴⁰ It is possible that Guðmundr indeed did not realize what he was doing by approaching Finni due to his general disregard of kinship ties.

²⁴¹ Miller, “Dreams, Prophecy and Sorcery,” 106.

consequences.²⁴² The floating head in Guðmundr’s dream was likely as unnerving to a medieval audience as it is for a modern one, and the chieftain’s loss of common sense following this experience is understandable. Later on, after Þórhallr approaches Drauma-Finni and is shooed away to Guðmundr, it is related that “Einar bróðir hans lagðist niðr, ok sofnaði; hann dreymdi þat, at uxi gekk upp eptir héraðinu, skörugligr mjök ok hyrndr fast, ok kom upp á Möðruvöllu ok gekk til hvörs húss, er var á bænum, ok síðarst til öndvegis, ok féll þar niðr dauðr. Síðan mælti Einar: ‘Slíkt mun fyrir miklum tíðendum, ok er þetta mannafylgjur.’”²⁴³ *Fylgjur*—‘fetches’ that are usually tied to certain people or certain kin groups—prophesying death or an imminent attack are a common occurrence in the *Íslendingasögur*, either dreamed by the attacked person or someone who is associated with him.²⁴⁴ The fact that Guðmundr traces the *fylgja*’s steps—as well as the fact that it was his habit to enter every building of the farm²⁴⁵—implies that it is Guðmundr’s.²⁴⁶ This ties in to later on in *Ljósvetninga saga*, where another dream with an ox *fylgja* appears. Eyjólfur, the son of Guðmundr inn ríki, describes the following dream to his foster-father: “dreymt hefir mik í nótt: ek þóttist ríða norðr Háls, ok sá ek nautaflokk koma í móti mæ, þar var í oxi einn mikill rauðr, hann vildi illa við mik gjöra, þar var ok graðúngr mannygðr, ok margt smáneyti; þá kom yfir mik þoka mikil, ok sá ek eigi nautin.”²⁴⁷ Eyjólfur’s foster-father’s interpretation is highly reminiscent of his uncle Einar’s words: “þat eru

²⁴² *Origines Islandicae*: 349: “one notes, not without pleasure, that this one scene of not unprovoked slaughter haunts Gudmund to his dying day.”

²⁴³ ÍF 10:60 [ch. 11 (21)]. “His brother Einar lay down for a nap and fell asleep. He dreamed that a magnificent ox with great horns went through the district and came to Modruvellir, going to each building on the farm and lastly to the high seat, where he fell dead. ‘This must signify great tidings,’ Einar said. ‘Such are the fetches of men,’” 200–1.

²⁴⁴ E.g., Gabriel Turville-Petre, “Dreams in Icelandic Tradition,” 98–101. For the *fylgjur* see, most recently, Zuzana Stankovitsová, “Following up on Female *fylgjur*: A Re-Examination of the Concept of Female *fylgjur* in Old Icelandic Literature.”

²⁴⁵ *Ljósv.* 1830, 70 [ch. 21]; ÍF 10:60.

²⁴⁶ Turville-Petre certainly believes so, “Dreams,” 100.

²⁴⁷ *Ljósv.* 1830, 91 [ch. 26]; ÍF 10:85. “I seemed to be riding north by Hals, and I saw a herd of oxen coming towards me. In it was a large reddish ox, intent on doing me some harm. There was also a vicious bull and lots of smaller animals. Then a thick fog came over me and I could not see the oxen,” 224.

mannafylgjur, óvina þinna.”²⁴⁸ When *an* Einarr of Þverá appears in the following scene, it becomes clear that this similar phrasing is no coincidence. Whether or not this is Guðmundr’s brother or Einarr Jarn-Skeggjason remains uncertain, but if it is the latter, he is there to invoke the memory of Einarr Eyjólfsson.²⁴⁹ The outcome of Eyjólf’s dream is foggy because in ‘reality,’ once his enemies pass him by, an Einarr of Þverá strikes Eyjólf’s saddle with an axe, causing him to fall. That Einarr does not warn his brother Guðmundr, but instead resigns to making vague statements about paranormal beings, supports the argument that he does not always have his brother’s best interest in mind. This is especially true when compared with *Njáls saga*’s chapter 69 where a dream of *fylgjur* gets the normally passive Njáll up on his feet to protect his friend Gunnarr. The established connections between *Njáls saga* and *Ljósvetninga saga*, as well as certain similarities between the characters of Njáll and Einarr, highlight Guðmundr’s brother’s inaction in not warning him of his impending doom.

Axes and oxen come together in both these *fylgjur* scenes. Perhaps this is more than a coincidence. In the A-redaction, when Earl Hákon wants to enlist Guðmundr and Þorgeirr’s help at the beginning of the saga, he sends them “hatt girzkan ok taparøxi.”²⁵⁰ Thus, when Þórhildr strikes the water with an axe, the bloody water could represent the bloody repercussions of the feud for Guðmundr’s descendants,²⁵¹ but it could also be regarded as a symbol for the axe that initially caused the feud in the A-redaction, and the *viðarøxi* that will kill Koðrán Guðmundsson in the C-

²⁴⁸ *Ljósv.* 1830, 91 [ch. 26]; ÍF 10:85. “Those are the fetches of your enemies,” 224.

²⁴⁹ Andersson and Miller read him as Einarr Eyjólfsson, while Björn Sigfússon reads him as Einarr Jarn-Skeggjason, neither seeing this issue as problematic and thus not explaining their choice (see indexes of both editions). Knocking Eyjólf off his horse is ‘classic’ Einarr Eyjólfsson, and corresponds with his behavior with Guðmundr, especially since defending the outcome of a settlement is at stake. Einarr Jarn-Skeggjason’s father later tries to attack the *Ljósvetningar* when these are exiled in Norway following the Kakalahóll. However, as we have seen, in *Ljósvetninga saga* the son frequently does not follow his father’s footsteps.

²⁵⁰ ÍF 10:6. “A Russian hat and a battle-ax,” 125. Although Andersson and Miller’s translation is based on the C-redaction, they choose to translate this as well (with the use of square brackets), perhaps due to Miller’s interest in gift exchange.

²⁵¹ ÍF 10:60, n. 1.

redaction.²⁵² The C-redactor drives this connection home by the later Einarr of Þverá's use of an axe to stop Eyjólfur from doing battle with the Ljósvetningar.²⁵³ Further, the helmet Þórhildr puts on echoes the "hatt girzkan" given to Guðmundr by Earl Hákon. Considering the parallels between the appearances of *fylgjur* in Guðmundr and Eyjólfur's lives, it is interesting that the cattle *fylgjur* represent here the Ljósvetningar, rather than the Møðruvellingar. It is then unclear whether or not the *fylgja* is really Guðmundr's. The fact that the same animal is used to represent a person from the Møðruvellingar's opponents could, at least in the C-redaction of the text, imply a certain intentional ambiguity surrounding the *fylgja* that appears before Guðmundr's death. This could also explain why Einarr is coy as to whom the ox *fylgja* belongs to, using a proverb where an actual warning would be more helpful.

After Einarr handles his dead brother, he declares: "Kaldr hefir hann nú verit innan, er hann kendi sín eigi."²⁵⁴ This line implies an emotional coldness expressed by an estranged brother (at least to modern ears), but also that something was eerie in Guðmundr's body, Othered and weakened. This physical inferiority or weakness is anticipated in chapter 21 by a story about how Ófeigr Járngerðarson humiliates Guðmundr one last time. The humiliation that Guðmundr suffers is closely tied with Ófeigr's superior masculine body and his own fear.²⁵⁵ As Guðmundr occupies Ófeigr's seat of honor at the farm of Tjornes, Ófeigr responds with a display of his powerful fist, asks Guðmundr to comment on it and suggests that if he does not want it to strike him, he should vacate his seat. Guðmundr's paranormal ties, eerie body, and his unmanliness are thus regarded as going, figuratively, hand in hand.

²⁵² ÍF 10:80.

²⁵³ The place names *Øxará* (Þorkell hákr's abode) and *Øxnadalshéiði* are mentioned in the C-redaction's chapters 21 and 26 respectively, which also contribute to the mirroring of chapters.

²⁵⁴ *Ljósv.* 1830, 70 [ch. 21]; ÍF 10, 61. "He must have been cold inside already since he felt nothing," 201.

²⁵⁵ Arguments that Guðmundr is at this point old and frail are negated by the fact that Ófeigr is his likely contemporary, given that he has been an active player in the saga from its beginning in the late tenth century.

Given the similarities between the texts leading up to the end of the extant AM 561 4to, it is hard to imagine that the A-redaction of *Ljósvetninga saga* looked much different than the extant C-redaction. It is probable that Guðmundr's death scene in the A-redaction played out in very similar words, otherwise Einarr's dream about the ox fylgja would make little sense.

3.5 Chs. 22–31: Where Eyjólfur Guðmundsson Takes Over the Narrative

At this point Guðmundr is dead and since we get no news from the mound, we assume he has quietly left the building. But, despite arguments like those of Jon Erichsen's or Bååth's that this later section was composed separately and then the two sagas put together, there are many convincing parallels and connections between the two parts.²⁵⁶ Despite his absence, the events that unfold after his death reflect on Guðmundr inn ríki's character, and show a consistency in the themes and elements that are dealt with in the earlier parts of the saga.

3.5.1 Eyjólfur Guðmundarson Struggles with His Brother Koðrán to Inherit Möðruvellir

Once Guðmundr dies, the Guðmundarsynir prove that the apples do not fall far from the tree, and a dispute between the brothers arises around their father's inheritance. The brothers deal with the problematic sibling relationship between their father and uncle that they have seen during their childhood by recreating it. We are also told that the two *Ljósvetningar* troublemakers, Høskuldr Þorvarðsson and Brandr Gunnsteinsson, “áttu mikit lag við Þveræringa.”²⁵⁷ This sentence baffled Guðmundur Þorláksson, who pointed out that when Einarr Þveringr Járnskeggjason

²⁵⁶ These have been explored by both Magerøy in “indre samanhangen” and Tommy Danielsson “*Om Den Isländska Släktsagans Uppbyggnad*,” 33–34.

²⁵⁷ *Ljósv.* 1830, 73 [ch. 22]; ÍF 10:65. “had close relations with the people at Thvera,” 203.

appears in the saga he is allied with Eyjólfur,²⁵⁸ though Einarr knocking Eyjólfur off of his horse to stop him from attacking the Ljósvetningar could demonstrate a mixed loyalty. Björn Sigfússon said that this must be “Þverá í Dalsmynni í Fnjóskadal,”²⁵⁹ which makes sense since the place name appears elsewhere, connected with the Ljósvetningar.²⁶⁰ Björn is likely right, but the author’s explicit avoidance in naming which Þverá creates ambiguity and hints at the inner familial discord that characterized Mōðruvellingar–Þveræingar relations in the previous generations. Another function that the out-of-place mention of Þverá could have is to recall the events of *Sqrlla þáttr*: there Guðmundr tries to stop Sqrli’s wooing by sending Þórdís to Þverá. In this case, Ísólfur tries to stop the courting of his daughter Friðgerðr by sending her to Mōðruvellir, only to have her impregnated in a farm nearby another Þverá. As a side note, Friðgerðr is advised to go back home to *Fornastaðir* but instead decides to go to *Draflastaðir*. While *drafli* is connected to curdled milk, it is also etymologically connected to *drafl*, meaning tattling or chatting.²⁶¹ It is the wont of youth to prefer idle chatter over the dictates of the older generation.

When Ísólfur approaches Eyjólfur about the pregnancy of his daughter Friðgerðr, the Mōðruvellingar chieftain comes across just as preoccupied with honor as his father Guðmundr. While he is initially reluctant to take a course of action that is too aggressive against the individual who impregnated Friðgerðr, Eyjólfur changes his mind when Ísólfur hints at contacting men more honorable than him.²⁶² Later on he declares that he will pursue the case “sem föðurarf minn,”²⁶³ which is ironic considering the fact that he pried away his inheritance from his own brother.²⁶⁴ On the other hand, this also clarifies that Eyjólfur means business. Incidentally Koðrán dies in

²⁵⁸ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 201.

²⁵⁹ ÍF 10:63 n. 2.

²⁶⁰ *Ljósv.* 1830, 84 [ch. 24]; ÍF 10:76–77 and 77, n. 1.

²⁶¹ Vladimir Orel, *A Handbook of Germanic Etymology*, 73.

²⁶² *Ljósv.* 1830, 76 [ch. 22]; ÍF 10:67. His hints are so vague that Guðmundur Þorláksson prefers Scheving’s correction. *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 205; see also ÍF 10:67, n. 2.

²⁶³ *Ljósv.* 1830, 78 [ch. 23]; ÍF 10:69. “As if it were my own inheritance,” 209.

²⁶⁴ ÍF 10:69, n. 3.

the battle that arises from this dispute and his claims for their father's inheritance are thus voided. It is stressed that Koðrán could have been saved if it was not for Eyjólfur's mismanagement of his brother's wounded body.²⁶⁵ While Koðrán's death was probably not what Eyjólfur was wishing for, his words and actions sing a different tune.

Hrafn Þorkelsson's hostility towards his own kinsman Þorvarður Høskuldsson reveals inner kin group tensions that are hinted at earlier as well. During the battle with Guðmundr inn ríki, only Høskuldr and Tjørvi are reported as actively against the alliance of their father and the powerful chieftain. Later, it is Þorkell hákr's half-brother Finni who makes sure vengeance is delivered, while Høskuldr and Tjørvi merely voice some vague threats and accept money as compensation.

3.5.2 The Battle at Kakalahóll

The battle at Kakalahóll is preceded by two appearances that make little sense chronologically: Þorsteinn inn rammi, who was present at Þorkell hákr's killing,²⁶⁶ and Þórir Finnbogason, who according to Björn Sigfússon, would have been born in the mid-tenth century. Neither would be in any form to fight (if even alive) in the mid-eleventh century,²⁶⁷ yet these two men help Eyjólfur when his horse gets stuck in the river.²⁶⁸ Since this is literature, it does not need to conform with historical truth; it does, however, comport with saga tradition, where Þórir was said to have joined the ranks of the Møðruvellingar in *Finnboga saga's* Melrakkahólsbardaga,²⁶⁹ which is most likely another name for the battle in Kakalahóll.²⁷⁰ As for Þorsteinn, Andersson and Miller suggest that his appearance invokes the killing of

²⁶⁵ *Ljósv.* 1830, 88 [ch. 24]; ÍF 10:82.

²⁶⁶ *Ljósv.* 1830, 80 [ch. 23]; ÍF 10:72, and n. 1. Guðmundur Þorláksson and Finnur Jónsson gloss him as Þorsteinn inn rammi, *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 292.

²⁶⁷ *Ljósv.* 1830, 80 [ch. 23]; ÍF 10:72, and n. 2.

²⁶⁸ *Ljósv.* 1830, 82 [ch. 24]; ÍF 10:74.

²⁶⁹ ÍF 14:324 [ch. 38].

²⁷⁰ Kakalahóll is now called Orrustuhóll, according to ÍF 14:324, n. 1, and the locals of the area (personal communication), so the fluidity of the hill's name is not surprising. *Kakali*, the sound of an animal, is associated with the gobble of birds.

Þorkell hákr,²⁷¹ where his excellence in battle highlighted Guðmundr’s feebleness. The father’s shame now extends to the son and spotlights the similarities between the two. The same function arises from the mention of Hlenni the Blind making an assessment on Eyjólf’s actions; Hlenni should be long dead by this point.²⁷² His presence reminds us how Guðmundr was outwitted by the man many decades before.

Þórir and Þorsteinn helping Eyjólf and his horse is the first in a series of instances when Eyjólf’s mishandling of his horse hinders his advancement. First, they are attacked by the Ljósvefningar and the horse gets caught in the river, then the horse is stuck in the marsh as the battle at Kakalahóll begins, and later Eyjólf is knocked off the horse by his kinsman Einarr of Þverá. This could simply be a comical effect—Einarr is not a very good equestrian—but it is also be a stab at his masculinity and his competence as a leader. Finally, after the killing of Þórarinn Høskuldsson, Eyjólf stumbles off his horse. It is from this fall that he gets his famous limp, for which he is nicknamed Eyjólf halti. There is something almost lyrical to the description of his fall: “Þá hrapaði hestr undir Eyólfi, ok féll hann af baki.”²⁷³ The author’s alliteration sends us back to the moments before Eyjólf’s father killed Þorkell hákr: “En þá er Guðmundr hrapaði, hrapaði hann í mjólkrketilinn,”²⁷⁴ a connection made even stronger when considering that the A-redaction telling of this scene has “hrataði” rather

²⁷¹ *Law and Literature*, 212, n. 157.

²⁷² *Ljósv.* 1830, 81–82 [ch. 24]; ÍF 10:73–74, and 74 n. 1.

²⁷³ *Ljósv.* 1830, 104 [ch. 30]; ÍF 10:100. “Eyjolf’s horse stumbled under him, and he fell off,” 240. This is certainly not the only lyrical moment in *Ljósvefninga saga*. The scribe of NKS 1785 4to (a late eighteenth-century critical copy of AM 485 4to that marks variants from AM 162 c fol. and AM 514 4to) identified this moment from chapter 24:

“þá mælti Otriggur.
 Hiálmurinn úngi
 hver skal her í dag
 vig vekia?
 hver nema þú
 Hákr [sic] mágúr.”

NKS 1785 4to, 139r [marked as p. 275]. The scribe did not note anything specific regarding Guðmundr’s stumbling, NKS 1785 4to, 96r–96v [marked as pp. 191–192].

²⁷⁴ *Ljósv.* 1830, 61 [ch. 19]; ÍF 10:52. “Gudmund danced away and tumbled into the milk vat,” 193.

than the C-redaction’s “hrapaði,” which means that the choice of the verb could have been amended by the C-redactor to fit the events in the Mǫðruvellingar’s future.²⁷⁵ It is important to stress that Eyjólfr is unlike his father in the sense that he does not avoid military confrontation; he is even willing to face unlikely odds, in a manner that is “mikilmannligt [...] ok eigi ráðligt.”²⁷⁶ That this echoes Einarr’s C-redaction words to Þórir in chapter 16, “Þat er ørendi ó/gott, en eigi lítilmannligt,”²⁷⁷ shows that the *Ljósvetninga saga* C-redaction author does not spare Eyjólfr compliments when they are due. The apple may not fall far from the tree, but it may be significantly less wormy.²⁷⁸

3.5.3 Legal Proceedings After the Battle

Skegg-Broddi’s cold reply to Eyjólfr’s request of support after the battle at Kakalahóll could be a callback to the C-redaction Eastfjords *þættir*; the Mǫðruvellingar had not made very strong bonds following the events of *Vøðu-Brands þáttur*, despite the marriage ties with Sǫrli Brodd-Helgason (Skegg-Broddi’s uncle) and Þorkell Geitisson. One of Skegg-Broddi’s reasons for not promising to support the Mǫðruvellingar is actually their treatment of his wife Guðrún, who is their own kinswoman.²⁷⁹ When Hárekr of the Ljósvetningar approaches Skegg-Broddi and presents him with a ring for his support, he presents it to his wife Guðrún and tells her that it was sent to her by Þorvarðr.²⁸⁰ It is as if Skegg-Broddi says that, while the Mǫðruvellingar would not honor her, the Ljósvetningar would. This is a tease between husband and wife, since Guðrún can see clear as day that the ring was not sent for her, and says as much. Perhaps it is also a way to show that, while the Mǫðruvellingar offer no gifts and rely simply

²⁷⁵ *Ljósv.* 1830, 61, n. 4; *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 187 [ch. 29].

²⁷⁶ *Ljósv.* 1830, 82 [ch. 24]; ÍF 10:74. Very manly, but not recommended (my translation).

²⁷⁷ ÍF 10:38; *Ljósv.* 1830, 51 [ch. 16].

²⁷⁸ See also *Soga om Ljosvetningane*, trans. Magerøy, 14; and *Law and Literature*, 104–111.

²⁷⁹ ÍF 10:84–85 [ch. 15 (25)].

²⁸⁰ ÍF 10:85 [ch. 16 (26)].

on kinship bonds that they themselves do not respect, the Ljósvetningar are willing to put their rings where their mouths are.

As Þorvarðr and his men prepare for their exile, Eyjólfur has second thoughts and wishes to exact vengeance on them for his brother Koðrán's death. Eyjólfur arrives at his friend Þorkell's house and tells him his plans, to which he strongly objects. When night comes and everyone is asleep, "þá var barit á hurð, ok gekk bóndi út, ok kom inn apr. Eyjólfur spurði, hvörr kominn væri. Bóndi segir, at sá var útan úr Dalnum. Eyjólfur mælti: 'Hvat mun tíðt um Austmennina?' Bóndi segir þá hafa utan látit."²⁸¹ This causes Eyjólfur to give up his attempt on Þorvarðr's life, only to discover later that he had still been within arm's reach. This deception is reminiscent of Rindill's spying on Þorkell hákr's house before his killing: the name of the Hlíð farmer is likewise Þorkell, and the reporter is identified as "útan ór dalnum," like Rindill who presented himself as a man from Hálfðanar-tunga. The narrative pays back Eyjólfur for his father's actions and his planned violence. Unsurprisingly, when Þorvarðr hears of how Þorkell helped to stop the bloodshed, he sends him a stud horse and a twenty-gallon kettle—something for Eyjólfur to stumble into, if he ever attacks the place.

3.5.4 Chronological Discrepancies

Critics have noted that Þorkell Geitisson's appearance in the later part of the saga is anachronistic. He should not be alive or, at any rate, active during the *þing* meeting following the Kakalahóll battle.²⁸² It is noteworthy and ironic that we now have two abrupt appearances of Þorkell Geitisson: one in the A-redaction's 37v summary, the other in the C-redaction's chapter 27, where he is mentioned briefly and then dropped. In *Vøðu-Brands þáttr*, Þorkell Geitisson also threatens to summon Guðmundr to a *hólmganga* after

²⁸¹ *Ljósv.* 1830, 98 [ch. 28]; ÍF 10:93. "there was a knocking on the door; [the farmer] went out, then returned. Eyjolf asked who had come. [the farmer] said that it was a man from the lower valley. "What is the news of the Norwegian vessel?" asked Eyjolf. [the farmer] said that it had set sail," 232, my emendations.

²⁸² Björn Sigfússon says he would be in his hundreds. ÍF 10:101, n. 3.

the Eyjafjörður chieftain frustrates all of his legal options in a court case. Since his mention is so out of place and chronologically illogical, it may be there to highlight the changing of the times; in Þorkell Geitisson's heyday, a threat of *hólmganga* was the honorable course of action.

The mention of Þorkell Geitisson also traces a line between the problematic Guðmundr inn ríki and his now problematic son Eyjólfur halti. Þorkell Geitisson, to risk over-extending the metaphor, is the Newton who observes that the apple does not fall far from the tree. The scene provides another parallel with Guðmundr. When Skegg-Broddi calls for a peaceful end to the post-battle legal proceedings, he starts this by saying “má Eyjólfur heyra mál mitt?”²⁸³ This is the same phrase used by both Þorlaug and her son Halldórr (Eyjólfur's deceased brother) when Guðmundr inn ríki threatens to burn them in.²⁸⁴ This ostensibly mundane phrasing is actually rare in the saga corpus: according to the Árnastofnun Málheildir website, it only appears once more in the saga corpus, in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* chapter 57.²⁸⁵

This part of the saga is odd for the number of people who ought to be long dead, or at any rate inactive, and yet keep popping up. Björn Sigfússon names Hlenni the Blind, Skeggi the brother of Álfr úr Dölum, Þorkell Geitisson, Þórir Finnbogason, and even king Knútr inn ríki.²⁸⁶ In addition to these, there is the mention of a slave designated “Einars Guðmundar bróður,” who is compensated for well after the Þverá resident would have been dead. This anachronism caused Guðmundur Þorláksson to correct the name to “Einars Járnskeggjasonar” and Björn Sigfússon to correct the

²⁸³ *Ljósv.* 1830, 96 [ch. 27]; ÍF 10:91 [ch. 27]. “Can Eyjólfur hear my words?” 230.

²⁸⁴ *Ljósv.* 1830, 66 [ch. 21]; ÍF 10:57 [ch. 20].

²⁸⁵ This is tellingly before a threat of a duel. While I will not argue that the probably later *Ljósveitinga saga* had borrowed the phrase from *Egla*, it is noteworthy that Skegg-Broddi's expression comes at a time when a duel is imminent, not least because of Skegg-Broddi's kinship ties with Þorkell Geitisson (Skegg-Broddi is the son of Bjarni Brodd-Helgason). For the use of the phrase “má xxx heyra mál mitt,” see *Rísamálheildin, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar*, (under headings: fornrit, útvikkuð; orðmynd “má”; orð á milli: 1; orðmynd “heyra”), accessed 15 Oct. 2018, <http://malheildir.arnastofnun.is/>.

²⁸⁶ ÍF 10:XXVIII. See also *Law and Literature*, 78, and Finnur Jónsson, *litteraturs historie*, 2nd ed. vol. 2:497, where he suggests that much can be reconciled if it takes place during Knútr's lifetime. But then the mention of king Haraldr harðráði makes little sense.

wording to “Einars Þveræings.”²⁸⁷ While this may be chronologically more accurate, it does not reflect the extant manuscripts, and probably AM 162 c fol. Another odd appearance, discussed above, is Þorsteinn inn rammi’s prominent participation in the Kakalahóll battle, probably the same Þorsteinn inn rammi from the killing of Þorkell hákr who would therefore be quite old. As discussed above, Hallvard Magerøy also suggested that the Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson connected with the *veisubragð* could be a son of Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði. This would bring yet another player into the action who should have been dead or out of commission in the mid-eleventh century. Another example of odd chronology occurs when Þorvarðr refuses to join his son in battle and his wife threatens that she will not bear him any more sons. This is a peculiar threat when they already have at least one grown up son and are unlikely to still be in prime age for childbearing.²⁸⁸

Another element that contributes to this general sense of *unheimlich* connections between past and present is different characters with similar names appearing, each serving a similar function as their namesake: Einarr of Þverá Járnскеggjason knocks Eyjólfur off a horse to prevent him from foolishly attacking the Ljósvetningar and breaking an agreed truce; a certain Finni makes vague statements about *fylgjur*;²⁸⁹ an unruly son called Høskuldr and a Brandr make trouble in the district. Another feature of narrative repetition in *Ljósvetninga saga* is different characters with different names who play similar functions in the narrative as other characters from earlier on. Skegg-Broddi, for example, recreates the role of Ófeigr Járngerðarson by going against the Møðruvellingar despite being nominally allied to them. When Skegg-Broddi’s support of the Ljósvetningar is reported to Eyjólfur, he comments: “Fjandmaðr vorr gjörist Skeggbroddi; hefir hann nú tveim sinnum brugðizt mér. Skeggbroddi svarar: ek firrta þik ok næst á Hegrannessþingi vandræðum, sem von var at verða mundi, ef þú sæktir Þorvarð ok frændr hans; drapstu bróður hans, ok viltu þat nú öngvu bæta, eða hvar ætlar þú til? eru nú tveir kostir fyrir höndum, láta okkr Gelli ráða

²⁸⁷ *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 234, ÍF 10:92, n. 3.

²⁸⁸ Finnur Jónsson, *litteraturs historie*, 2nd ed. vol. 2:497.

²⁸⁹ *Ljós.* 1830, 104 [ch. 30]; ÍF 10:100–101.

ok dæma, eða hólmgangur munu framfara.”²⁹⁰ This echoes a similar dialogue between Guðmundr inn ríki and Ófeigr Járngerðarson in *Vopdu-Brands þáttr*, where the chieftain accuses the powerful farmer of hurting his honor, as he predicted would happen. Ófeigr replies “eigi hefi ek hallat virðingu þinni at heldr, þóat ek hafi fengit þèr mága betri ok fleiri enn áðr.”²⁹¹

This accusation-justification dialogue structure points to a connection in the representation between the two prominent farmers. When Hrólfr declares his intention to call for several *hólmgöngur* and states that he will challenge “Einarana tvo,”²⁹² Andersson and Miller translate this as “Einar Arnorsson, Einar Jarn-Skeggjason,”²⁹³ but it is likelier that the author chose to not name who these Einarar are as a callback to the earlier scene in *Ljósvetninga saga* when Vigfúss Víga-Glúmsson declares his intention to call Einarr Eyjólfsson to a duel. While sagas can be bad at chronology,²⁹⁴ these repetitions litter this part of *Ljósvetninga saga* to the extent that they are not signs of poor time-keeping, but rather they are meant to represent something. At times it feels as if the walls of reality are breaking down around the characters.²⁹⁵ *Pórarins þáttr ofsa*’s presence in the extant text witnesses out of its chronological place helps to support this sense of chronological disorientation, even if it had originally been located elsewhere, perhaps between Guðmundr’s death and Eyjólfir’s takeover of Möðruvellir. These discrepancies in time highlight an inter-generational continuity of the Möðruvellingar’s tendency towards forceful and violent district politics.

²⁹⁰ *Ljósv.* 1830, 106 [ch. 30]; ÍF 10:102. “You are again my enemy, Skegg-Broddi, [...] You have now failed me twice.’ ‘I got you out of the difficulty that threatened at the Hegranes thing if you had outlawed Thorvard and his kinsmen,’ Skegg-Broddi said. ‘Then you killed his brother, and now you refuse to pay compensation. What is it you have in mind? There are two choices available: to let Gellir and me determine and judge the issue, or proceed with the duels,’” 242.

²⁹¹ *Ljósv.* 1830, 34 [ch. 12]; ÍF 10:138. “I have not diminished your honor in the least by having secured you better and larger kinship connections than you had before,” 161.

²⁹² *Ljósv.* 1830, 195 [ch. 30]; ÍF 10:102.

²⁹³ *Law and Literature*, 241.

²⁹⁴ Finnur Jónsson, *litteraturs historie*, 2nd ed., vol. 2:497 argues that *Ljósvetninga saga* is rather good at chronology, but other scholars disagree, at any rate in regard to chapters 22–31. See e.g., ÍF 10:XXVII–XXIX and *Law and Literature*, 74–78.

²⁹⁵ See the epilogue of Tirosh, “Trolling Guðmundr.”

3.5.5 The Feud's End

The C-redaction narrative ends on a complex and ambiguous note in regard to both the *Møðruvellingar* and the *Ljósvetningar* in general, and *Guðmundr inn ríki* in particular. Oddi Grímsson is highlighted at the end of the saga by three anecdotes, all noteworthy. The first has him call out king *Knútr inn ríki* for his lack of generosity. This is meant to echo *Ófeigr* of *Ófeigs þátr* fame, in which the prominent farmer criticizes *Guðmundr inn ríki* for not being in touch with the needs of his *þingmenn* and for over-exploiting their hospitality. When king *Knútr* tries to shame Oddi in return by reminding him that he fought against his own kinsmen in the battle at *Kakalahóll*, the Icelander announces that he avoided hurting those men who are related to him.²⁹⁶ Two stories of forgiveness are then related: one of bishop *Ketill* who forgives Oddi's son *Guðmundr*, and one of Oddi himself who forgives the debt-slave *Þorsteinn* for reddening his scalp. Much earlier in the narrative, Oddi Grímsson is described as “sköllótt ok gamall.”²⁹⁷ This recalls the similarly bald foster-father of *Guðmundr inn ríki*.²⁹⁸ Furthermore, Oddi Grímsson is “í *Höfða*,”²⁹⁹ or “frá *Höfða*,”³⁰⁰ The placename *Höfði*, which translates as ‘headland,’ directing the audience’s attention to the Oddi’s head. What is the function of bringing back the bald foster-father into the narrative? Besides the general disruption of reality discussed above, the narrative works its way to forgiving *Guðmundr inn ríki* by having Oddi forgive the debt-slave who hit him on the head, mirroring the two scenes. But the text still stings: *Guðmundr* is likened to a debt-slave, albeit a noble-minded one.³⁰¹ Finally, the saga’s final words carry within them two meanings worth considering. When *Skegg-Broddi*

²⁹⁶ Note that since Oddi’s lineage is never told in the saga, we are never sure of his exact kinship ties, but according to *Björn Sigfússon* he seems to be a grandson of *Einarr Eyjólfsson*, and his connection to the *Ljósvetningar* remains uncertain, *ÍF* 10:105, n. 1.

²⁹⁷ *Ljósv.* 1830, 85 [ch. 24]; *ÍF* 10:78. Bald and old (my translation).

²⁹⁸ *ÍF* 10:37 [ch. 6 (16)].

²⁹⁹ *ÍF* 10:73 [ch. 14 (24)].

³⁰⁰ *ÍF* 10:80 [ch. 14 (24)]; a feature of the JS 624 4to branch, see *Glúma og Ljósvetninga saga*, 219.

³⁰¹ The Christian aspect of forgiveness that is clearly present in these scenes will not be expanded upon at present.

declares about Hárekr that “ekki þiki mèr þú sterkr, en drengr ertu góðr,”³⁰² he closes the circle on several similar sentences uttered previously. The connection between Oddi Grímsson’s “mikilmannligt [...] ok eigi ráðligt”³⁰³ with the C-redaction Einarr’s “þat er ørendi ó/gott, en eigi lítilmannligt” was pointed out above, but it should also be noted that later on, when Hrólfr declares his intentions to challenge the Møðruvellingar to a series of *hólmgöngur*, Skegg-Broddi replies: “þú ert hetja mikil! ok ertu eigi ráðlauss.”³⁰⁴ This sentence’s structure first praises the man’s prowess or manliness and then judges his character, and encapsulates the saga’s main theme—something that is prevalent and consistent throughout³⁰⁵—a discussion of the right way to exercise power.³⁰⁶ But this also takes the sentence out of its immediate context. Before the three Oddi Grímsson anecdotes, it is related that that upon his return to Iceland, Høskuldr Þorvarðsson intends to avenge his uncle by attacking Eyjólfur and his men. However, “Hrærekr hleypr eptir honum, ok grípr hann í fang sèr, ok mælti: still þik, vinr! þetta er ekki færi.”³⁰⁷ Skegg-Broddi is here either implying that Høskuldr Þorvarðsson—famous for authoring the “Veisubragð” that Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson found so amusing in his own day—did not really want to exact vengeance for his uncle, and let himself be stopped by Hárekr, or that Høskuldr’s strength is not that impressive. By challenging the nominal Møðruvellingr Skegg-Broddi, in such a strange way, the nominal Ljósvetningr Hárekr could be making an overture of peace, or a quip on the Ljósvetningar in the closing lines of the so-called *Ljósvetninga saga*.

³⁰² *Ljós.* 1830, 109 [ch. 31]; ÍF 10:106.

³⁰³ *Ljós.* 1830, 82 [ch. 24]; ÍF 10:74 [ch. 14 (24)].

³⁰⁴ *Ljós.* 1830, 105 [ch. 30]; ÍF 10:102. “You are tough and not unresourceful,” *Law and Literature*, 241.

³⁰⁵ And, as we shall see below, of the entirety of AM 162 c fol.

³⁰⁶ Compare also with the arm-threat scene from ch. 21, where Ófeigr threatens Guðmundr out of his seat of honor with a display of practical strongarming vs. Guðmundr’s political strongarming. See also Magerøy, “indre samanhangen,” 73–74, who connects this chapter’s closing sentence to Einarr’s statement about his brother’s coldness upon death.

³⁰⁷ *Ljós.* 1830, 107; ÍF 10:104. “Harek ran after him and got his arms around him and said, ‘Calm down, friend. This is no such chance,’” 244.

3.6 Ch. 32: Which Ends with an Abrupt

The A-redaction of *Ljósvetninga saga* is a much more straightforward tale of regional rivalry, which does not include the tales *Sorla þáttr*, *Ófeigs þáttr*, and *Voðu-Brands þáttr*, where Guðmundr must contend with his neighboring region's notable Þorkell Geitisson, and where he is taught lessons on checking his power and desires by Þórarinn and Ófeigr. During the earlier discussion of the saga's manuscripts, the possibility was raised that *Þórarins þáttr ofsa* would have been included in the A-redaction. It is worth considering what this *þáttr* would add. *Þórarins þáttr* is a tale that mirrors chapters 1–4 of *Ljósvetninga saga*. In the saga proper, Jarl Hákon uses gifts to persuade Guðmundr and Þorgeirr to help him re-introduce a negative character into Iceland. Similarly, in *Þórarins þáttr*, Guðmundr's son, Eyjólfur embarks on avenging the death of an ill-liked and negative character in service of king Óláfr helgi. Likewise, *Þórarins þáttr ofsa* would be a good frame for an expanded discussion of rulership in the A-redaction, in the same manner of the tale at the end of the C-redaction. The similarities between the beginning and the end of the saga are made stronger by the casual reference to Grettir sterki Ásmundarson.

This story at the end of the C-redaction, assuming this was indeed its location in AM 162 c fol., frames the saga with a tale of regency that elevates the discussion of the local chieftains' behaviors to a more significant statement about governance in general. The disorienting chronology created by putting this story at the end of a saga that is already, essentially, finished, is lessened by the inconsistencies that proceed it: king Knútr inn ríki appearing out of proverbial thin air in chapter 31, for example, can be equated to king Óláfr helgi's appearance in chapter 32. This can contextualize the inconsistencies for the audience, and allow the focus to return to the intended theme: proper rulership.

Finally, it is worth noting that ending *Ljósvetninga saga* with *Þórarins þáttr ofsa*, does not constitute a significant break from standard *Íslendingasögur* practice. This story brings the Moðruvellingar back into the fold of Christianity by serving the will of saintly King Óláfr. Many *Íslendingasögur*, such

as *Brennu-Njáls saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, *Grettis saga*, and even *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, end on a Christian note. The unpopularity of the man whose death King Óláfr demands Eyjólfur avenge is consistent with *Ljósvetninga saga*'s general partisanship against the Mǫðruvellingar. The author of *Ljósvetninga saga*, by including this story, would have achieved both the goal of finishing his *Íslendingasaga* with a Christian tone, while reminding the audience that the Mǫðruvellingar do not always have the safety of their district and country in mind.

3.7 Conclusion

In his study of the structure of *Ljósvetninga saga*, Theodore Andersson dispenses some harsh words:

Ljósvetninga saga shares with *Heiðarvíga saga* a transcendent interest in the intricacies of plot. There is no visible concern with moral, ethical, temperamental, or metaphysical issues. The merits of the conflict between Ljósvetningar and [Mǫðruvellingar] are not the center of discussion, and characterization is quite neglected, to the extent that the personalities are pale or disjointed, Þorgeirr goði is a sequence of not quite consistent actions with no unifying principle. Guðmundr is a powerful and effective chieftain, but the justice of the charge against him is left unsettled so that he remains in a dubious light, Þórir Helgason does not emerge as a personality at all; he is futile without being pathetic in his futility or arousing respect or sympathy by his posture, Þorkell hákr is impressive in his death, but this is a flash in an otherwise undeveloped personality. Eyjólfur likewise has no coloring. Only Þorvarðr has some personal dimension. He is imbued with that combination of

moderation and unflamboyant firmness particularly favored by the saga-writers (for example, Valla-Ljótr).³⁰⁸

This chapter hoped to prove Andersson's point wrong, at least to some extent. Þorgeirr goði's "unifying principle" is his dilemma between the will of his overlord Hákon jarl and the will of his sons, and perhaps a tinge of self-loathing, which makes him more relatable than many other violent fathers.³⁰⁹ The dubious light Guðmundr is left in is in no way a result of slack writing; it is one of the very points the saga has to make. Þórir Helgason is indeed a character meant mostly to orchestrate events, but what of it? He comes out of the narrative as a typical *goði* who is big with words and in managing his own business, but not so careful with protecting his *þingmenn*.³¹⁰ The statement about Þorkell hákr is baffling. His death scene and the scene that proceeds it constitute his only real appearance in the saga; he comes out as a colorful, redeemable character. If Schach's *Njáls saga* redeems Guðmundr after *Ljósvetninga saga* humiliates him, the opposite is true with Þorkell hákr: if he appears boastful and is humiliated in *Njáls saga*, he is transformed into a loveable introvert in *Ljósvetninga saga*. And Eyjólfur's lack of coloring is in the eye of the beholder, but his character may be seen as a compelling portrayal of a man who tries to be—and in many ways is—better than his father, but ultimately succumbs to his need for honor and unrestrained vengeance.

This chapter argues against the primacy of either the A-redaction or the C-redaction by pointing out the artistry and consistency of both. Undoubtedly, one redaction must have preceded the other. But this does not say anything about the intrinsic value of either of these redactions; both show a self-referentiality that indicates that whatever their origins, by the time they reached their extant forms, the redactions were already imbued

³⁰⁸ Andersson, *Icelandic Family Saga*, 259.

³⁰⁹ A similar description of Þorgeirr can be found in *Fünf Geschichten aus dem östlichen Nordland*, trans. W. H. Vogt and W. Ranisch, 11.

³¹⁰ See Marion Poilvez, "Discipline or Punish? Travels and Outlawry as Social Structures in Medieval Iceland."

with the qualities that qualify them as independent from each other. This is important to remember in the discussion of genre and the role of dating: quality does not indicate how close or far a saga is from its origins, and indicates nothing regarding its place within the generic system. The corrections of textual ambiguities by editors who have passed qualitative judgments on the redactions can serve to obscure original meanings. The best example of this is the fact that, in the C-redaction, Þórir Helgason's problematic *þingmaðr* is also called Þórir. This creates a situation where Guðmundr's anger at his brother Einarr's alliance with his slanderer is first taken out on an ersatz. By changing the name Þórir to Akra-Þórir to avoid confusion, Björn Sigfússon's *Íslenzk fornrit* lost touch with the ambiguity the saga sought to achieve. The connections between *Sqrli þáttur* on the one side, and *Ófeigs þáttur* and *Vøðu-Brands þáttur* on the other—usually considered separate in the debate of origins—become clearer with the realization that by allowing a wedding between Sqrli and his daughter Þórdís, Guðmundr inn ríki becomes more involved in Northeastern politics. Thematically and in regard to plot development, it was shown that these *þættir* are all an integral part of *Ljósvetninga saga's* C-redaction, as is the fragmentary *Þórarins þáttur ofsa*.

When the debate of the saga's origins is set aside, the internal logic of the different texts begins to surface. Most significantly, the function of the mirror characters, chronological inconsistencies, and repetitions found in the saga's final chapters are recontextualized to reveal their meaning in a way that is only possible if they are acknowledged as intentional. Characters that should be dead or inactive come back to life (without being undead) to comment on the saga's themes. Repetitions are meant to highlight characteristics that are inherent in a certain family; Eyjólfir's tendency to fall off horses, for example, points at his inherited incompetency from his father. The repetition of phrases that contrast physical power and character assessments also indicate the saga's aim to comment on the correct forms of behavior and leadership.

These repetitions should be kept in mind in the following discussion of memory. Since the saga points out so many connections between the tenth and eleventh century, it could also be hinting that the problems that face the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries are not so different from the past. Assuming that the contemporary medieval audiences knew to detect chronological inconsistencies just as competently as contemporary scholars, they would be able to notice the moments when people seemed out of place, and would have considered what this means for the story, and what this means for their own time. The literary interpretations suggested above and the connections found within each redaction would have been apparent to the audience who would ask themselves what the saga is saying about their own time, through their ancestors' successes and failures.

4. The Part About Memory

4.1 Introduction

The fact that *Ljósvetninga saga* was put to parchment, copied to paper, and eventually pressed to print means that in various points of history, it has meant something to someone. The process of copying, especially on expensive parchment, means that someone took the time to think about the component pieces of the saga, choosing them out of a larger repertoire of literature and oral tales. *Ljósvetninga saga*, as with other *Íslendingasögur*, takes place in Iceland at a specific geographical and temporal point and reflects the stories of the direct and/or cultural ancestors of the people who recorded it. This chapter discusses two authors whose investment in *Ljósvetninga saga* is apparent: the thirteenth-century author hypothesized by Barði Guðmundsson, and Ólafur Loftsson, the fifteenth-century scribe/compiler/author of AM 162 c fol. Their intent as authors is contrasted with the literary text's historical context—an historical context that is, however, only knowable through knowledge of the scribal hand. This difficulty is illustrated by the inability to say much about the context of AM 561 4to's *Ljósvetninga saga* A-redaction without more specific dating. The social difference between the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century is a dramatic one, with a significant portion of the population having been wiped out by a plague in between, and with new real estate and political opportunities emerging after.

Maurice Halbwachs's notion of collective memory is one of the more productive models for looking at the way that past and present interact. Collective memory as a theory looks at how society is constructed and unified through the use of memory. These memories can consist of literature and sacred texts, religious practices, calendar events, or architecture, and

all these serve to unite a people through a common heritage.¹ The most popular advancement of Halbwachs's concept came from the German scholars Aleida and Jan Assmann, who developed the concept of *cultural memory*:

The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity.²

The Assmanns further developed a distinction between *cultural* memory and *communicative* memory, which are both components of collective memory. They designate the span of communicative memory as no longer than 80–100 years into the past, and define its participation structure as diffuse, while cultural memory harks back to mythical times, and is only obtainable through specialized mediators, such as priests, rabbis, shamans, bards, or written texts.³

Collective and cultural memory have developed as concepts alongside the rise of memory studies as its own academic discipline since the 1980s, manifested in many volumes dedicated to presenting and theorizing on the topic of memory and cultural memory such as *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Memory Studies*, *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*, and many more. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, this field of research reached Old Norse scholarship as well, advanced initially by Thomas Fechner-Smarsly and Jürg Glauser,

¹ Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*.

² Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 132.

³ Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," 109–18.

and later most notably by Pernille Hermann.⁴ The special attraction cultural memory has to the study of Old Norse literature is largely in its ability to move scholarship beyond “the dichotomy between history and fiction.”⁵ This dichotomy has largely been tied up in the Freeprose-Bookprose debate,⁶ though the Freeprose investment in the sagas as historical texts is sometimes overstated.⁷ Collective and cultural memory studies, then, offer the possibility of shedding away the debates that have bogged down literary appreciation of the *Íslendingasögur*, with the focus shifting from the period when the story occurs to the periods that wrote down and transmitted these texts.

This chapter looks at the ways in which thirteenth- and fifteenth-century Icelanders dealt with their past, and examines various ways in which this past could have meant something to them. It offers a way to differentiate between author-focused interpretations of the sagas and an interpretation that mediates between different periods of times—one that seeks to understand what the story of eleventh-century Iceland meant for its fifteenth-century descendants. To better understand the differences between these two approaches towards the past in a text, Barði Guðmundsson’s reading of *Ljósvetninga saga* will first be presented, an extreme case of reading the present through a highly distorted past.

4.2 Barði Guðmundsson and the Search for an Author

Barði Guðmundsson, an Icelandic *alþingi* member, produced much research where he tried to track down the authors of various sagas, *Njáls saga*

⁴ Thomas Fechner-Smarsly, *Krisenliteratur. Zur Rhetorizität und Ambivalenz in der isländischen Sagaliteratur*, Jürg Glauser, “Sagas of Icelanders (*Íslendingasögur*) and *þættir* as the Literary Representation of a New Social Space;” For Pernille Hermann, see e.g., “Concepts of Memory. Approaches to the Past in Medieval Icelandic Literature,” “Founding Narratives and the Representation of Memory in Saga Literature,” and “Saga Literature, Cultural Memory, and Storage.”

⁵ Pernille Hermann and Stephen A. Mitchell, “Constructing the Past: Introductory Remarks,” 263.

⁶ Jürg Glauser, Pernille Hermann and Stephen A. Mitchell, “Pre-Modern Nordic Memory Studies: An Introduction.” 18–19.

⁷ Theodore M. Andersson, *The Problem of Icelandic Saga Origins: A Historical Survey*, 50.

in particular, and tied the texts to events in the thirteenth century. His attempts at approaching these representations of the past as pure fiction reveal a flattening of the eleventh-century Icelandic past to nothing but, essentially, names that are freely open to the manipulations of an author. His approach—highly influenced by Icelandic Bookprose—reveals a very simplistic understanding of how people approach stories of their ancestors.

When she discusses the attempts of others to find the author of *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, Emily Lethbridge notes that these “are representative of the ways in which in modern saga scholarship the anachronistic desire to attribute a written narrative to an individual, thereby situating it firmly within an historical and ideological framework, often supersedes the evidence for that narrative itself and distorts our understanding of the distinctive nature of medieval and post-medieval Icelandic textuality.”⁸ Despite being less dismissive of the project of dating sagas and even the discussion of authorship, Einar Ól. Sveinsson pointed out the trap of dating based on a specific author, or specific occurrences:

It must be said that all these attempts to find similarities between the sagas and events of the age in which they were written present exceedingly difficult problems. In the first place, similar incidents often occur in real life, without there being any relationship between them. Secondly, while there may be some literary relationship between a Family Saga and a story of contemporary life, it may be difficult to decide which is the borrower. If we can be sure that there is some direct relationship between a Family Saga and contemporary history, then it is certainly probable that the saga is the borrower, but it need not be so in every case.⁹

⁸ Emily Lethbridge, “Dating the sagas and *Gísla saga Súrssonar*,” 103–104.

⁹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Dating the Icelandic Sagas, an Essay in Method*, 74. See also Paul Schach “Character Creation and Transformation in the Icelandic Sagas,” 240.

Barði Guðmundsson paid no heed to these warnings. Sagas such as *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Njáls saga* are seen by him as *romans à clef*, meaning texts where each event can be read through a corresponding event or character in real life or in history. However, these terms are already problematic, since the history described by Barði is tied directly to the literary representations of these events, rather than the real events themselves, and even historical writing is itself manipulated consciously or subconsciously by the historian.¹⁰ As scholars such as W.P. Ker and Peter Hallberg have shown, *Sturlunga saga*, Barði's historical source, should be looked at as literature, and not just contemporary history.¹¹ With that in mind, we should be careful when discussing the elements in *Ljósvetninga saga* that were taken from 'real' events. In many cases, even if similarities are found, these could also correspond with other representations of these events rather than with the events themselves.

The premise of Barði Guðmundsson's discussion of *Ljósvetninga saga* is therefore problematic from the onset. He suggests that Þorvarðr Þórarinnsson wrote *Njáls saga*.¹² Þorvarðr Þórarinnsson of the Svínfellingar kin group¹³ is less of a household name from the thirteenth century than Snorri

¹⁰ Hayden White, "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory." On the application of White's work in the context of *Sturlunga saga*, see Úlfar Bragason's *Ætt og saga*. See also Torfi H. Tulinius. *The Matter of the North*, 187, and O'Connor, "History or fiction?" 104–5.

¹¹ W.P. Ker, *Epic and Romance*, 259; Peter Hallberg, "Två mordbränder," 25–45. See also Stephen Norman Tranter, *Sturlunga Saga: The Rôle of the Creative Compiler*.

¹² Cf. ÍF 12:CVIII–CXI for Einar Ól. Sveinsson's response to Barði's argument regarding the authorship of *Njála*, with an interesting argument stressing the *Njáls saga* author's lack of knowledge about things Þorvarðr would be knowledgeable about, such as geography and law. However, as Lars Lönnroth has it: "It would be impossible to determine to what extent all these kinship relations were historically correct, but it is evident at least that Þorvarðr had better reason to feel personally involved in the character of Njála than most of his contemporaries," *Njáls saga*, 181. If we are to follow Lönnroth, a connection between *Njáls saga* and Þorvarðr is very plausible, though his direct authorship cannot be proven.

¹³ While the terms Svínfellingar or Sturlungar are extant in medieval literature (see the above discussion of Guðmundr inn ríki meeting Rindill in the Svínfellingar booth in *Ljósvetninga saga*'s C-redaction), it is important to remember that these terms are not always clear; Þorgils skarði could be considered an Ásbirningr no less than a member of the Sturlungar (Sverrir Jakobsson, *Auðnaróðal: Baráttan um Ísland 1096–1281*, 274). Sverrir Jakobsson also points out that although the Sturlungar (i.e., the sons of Hvamm-Sturla Þórðarson) are indeed mentioned in contemporary documents, it is "varla hægt að tala

Sturluson, Sturla Þórðarson, or even Gizurr Þorvaldsson, and he is known chiefly as the rather despicable killer of the almost saintly Þorgils skarði.¹⁴ The fact that this individual is not very well known is especially striking, considering that he had a major role in the introduction of the legal code *Járnstíða* in 1271,¹⁵ and from 1273 and until his death, he had been given control of almost half of Iceland by order of King Magnús Hákonarson.¹⁶

In his reading of *Njáls saga* as a *roman à clef*, Barði identified the antagonists Mǫrðr Valgarðsson and his father Valgarðr grái Jörundarson as stand-ins for Þórðr Þorvarðsson and Þorvarðr Þórðarson, of the farm Saurbær. Barði offers many arguments for this, some sound and some that sound odd, such as the similarities between the names Mǫrðr and Þórðr in letter-count and sound.¹⁷ As a target of libel in *Njáls saga*, Barði argues that Þórðr set out to redeem his and his father's names and humiliate Þorvarðr Þórarinsson by writing *Ljósvetninga saga*. The saga, then, is a *níðrit*,¹⁸ a defamatory text meant to humiliate a clear target: Þorvarðr Þórarinsson. This is done through the humiliation of Guðmundr inn ríki. “Þorvarður Þórarinsson,” Barði decisively asserts, “er níddur undir nafni Guðmundar ríka forföður síns.”¹⁹

Barði's argument treats moments from the saga as literary representations of events meant to invoke scenes from Iceland's history, and more specifically, scenes from Þorvarðr Þórarinsson's life. One example of this is the scene where Rindill goes to Þorkell hákr's house. Rindill's function in the attack on Þorkell hákr's house is considered redundant by scholars.²⁰ Barði, however, has an answer for this redundancy: Rindill's role in the narrative is to invoke the memory of Halldórr skraf, the wretched fellow

um Sturlungaætt,” 122. See also Gunnar Karlsson, “Nafngreindar höfðingjaættir í Sturlungu,” where he surveys the use of these kin group names, and points out that only the Sturlungar, Haukdælir, and Oddaverjar are consistently named in the sources.

¹⁴ See also Lönnroth, *Njáls saga*, 183–84.

¹⁵ Lönnroth, 180.

¹⁶ Lönnroth, 176.

¹⁷ Barði Guðmundsson, *Ljósvetninga saga og Saurbæingar*, 91.

¹⁸ Barði Guðmundsson, 114.

¹⁹ Barði Guðmundsson, 114.

²⁰ E.g., ÍF 10:XXXIX–XL, although this ignores the fact that he unlatches the door and allows Guðmundr and his men to burst into Þorkell hákr's house.

that allows Þorvarðr Þórarinsson to kill Þorgils skarði. This is supported, according to Barði, by the (this time persuasive) similarity between Hall-dórr's name and the assumed name Rindill takes upon himself: Þórhallr.²¹ After Rindill is killed, Guðmundr inn ríki overreacts, and is so bent on avenging his henchman's death that he is willing to burn a house where his wife and son are present. Barði compares this with the killing of Kol-beinn grön by Gizurr Þorvaldsson following the Flugumýrabrenna, and Þorvarðr's exaggerated reaction to the act.²² Guðmundr inn ríki's victim Þorkell hákr is, according to Barði, designed after the character of Þorgils skarði, and the battle scenes where Þorkell and Þorgils are killed share many similarities as well.²³

Barði's examples tend to take random moments from *Ljósvetninga saga* and fit them with events in the thirteenth century. For example, Sölmundr's attempt at the beginning of the saga to take away the daughter of Qlvir—foiled by Ófeigr—is compared by Barði to Þorfinnr Qnundarson's attempt at taking away Guðmundr dýri's daughter—foiled by a Söxólfr.²⁴ When Guðmundr and Einarr meet up several times following the subpoena against Þórir Helgason for the hiding of the sheep, Barði argues for many similarities to Þorvarðr and Þorgils' travels before their final confrontation, and the temporal and spatial contradictions are meant to make the *Ljósvetninga saga* narrative fit with *Þorgils saga skarða*.²⁵ The carrying of Koðrán Guðmundsson's body is meant to remind the audience of

²¹ Barði Guðmundsson, *Ljósvetninga saga og Saurbæingar*, 11–12.

²² Barði Guðmundsson, 60–63.

²³ For Barði Guðmundsson's reading of Þorgils skarði and Þorkell hákr's characters as *einlyndi* (stubborn), see *Ljósvetninga saga og Saurbæingar*, 15–21. Like Þorgils, who is described as saintly towards his death, Andersson and Miller argue that the description of Þorkell hákr is a rather positive one and could be meant to redeem his character from his earlier provocations, *Law and Literature in Medieval Iceland [...]*, 191, n. 122. This interpretation, however, ignores that this is actually Þorkell's only significant appearance in the saga. Earlier he is always named as either the son of Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði, or as spreading defamatory speech about Guðmundr, but is not an actor in a scene. In addition, unlike Þorgils skarði, Þorkell hákr goes down after making a lude gesture that was so provocative that some saga copyists had to remove it from their narrative.

²⁴ Barði Guðmundsson, *Ljósvetninga saga og Saurbæingar*, 94.

²⁵ Barði Guðmundsson, 38–39.

how Þorgils skarði's body was handled.²⁶ Þorvarðr Höskuldsson's travels abroad following the battle at Kakalahóll parallel certain scenes from Sturla Þórðarson's visit to Norway, as depicted in *Sturla þáttr*. Most notably, King Haraldr refers to the Icelanders as “mína þegna” because the *Ljósvetninga saga* author had Sturla Þórðarson's visit to the Norwegian king in mind.²⁷

Barði's reading of *Ljósvetninga saga* relies on establishing Þorvarðr Þórarinsson as the author of *Njáls saga*. Einar Ól. Sveinsson argued in response that Þorvarðr Þórarinsson could not have been the author of *Njáls saga*, and stressed its author's lack of knowledge about things Þorvarðr would be expected to know, such as the geography of the South and Icelandic law.²⁸ Þorvarðr lived in the region, and was the king's agent, enforcing the law code *Járnsíða*. The connections with Þorvarðr's life, Einar Ólafur argues, could very easily be found in other sagas, as well as could be found with other living people.²⁹ As Lars Lönnroth points out, this criticism is somewhat contradictory to the fact that Einar Ólafur himself proposed the author to be one of Skeggi Njálsson's sons, either Þorsteinn or his brother Klængur.³⁰ Lönnroth reconsidered *Njáls saga* in this context quite extensively in his 1976 *Critical Introduction*, where he finds the connection of that saga to Þorvarðr Þórarinsson to be a likely possibility. He states that “it is evident at least that Þorvarðr had better reason to feel personally involved in the character of Njála than most of his contemporaries.”³¹ A connection between *Njáls saga* and Þorvarðr, then, is very plausible, at least if we follow Lönnroth. Nevertheless, it is important to note that his direct authorship cannot be proven.

²⁶ Barði Guðmundsson, 52–54.

²⁷ Barði Guðmundsson, 71.

²⁸ ÍF 12:CVIII–CXI.

²⁹ “Barði Guðmundsson hefur sýnt í rannsóknum sínum mikla hugkvæmni og tengigáfu. En mér er spurn: Mundi ekki slíkur maður geta fundið með sama hætti líkingu og tengsl með atvikum úr ævi ýmissa annara kunnra manna og sögunni?” ÍF 12:CIX.

³⁰ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, “Njála og Skógverjar.” See Lönnroth, *Njáls saga*, 176–77, n. 33.

³¹ Lönnroth, 181.

Þórðr Þorvarðsson's authorship of *Ljósvetninga saga* is an even higher hurdle to jump. Several other authors or milieus have been suggested for *Ljósvetninga saga*, especially in connection with Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson (not to be confused with Þorvarðr Þórarinnsson), who is briefly and rather abruptly mentioned in the saga. This mention, as Barði Guðmundsson himself also notes,³² is connected with the events that surround Friðgerðr's problematic pregnancy. Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson had a similar event in his life, so the connection is obvious. While it is impossible to completely dismiss Þórðr Þorvarðsson as *Ljósvetninga saga*'s author, it does not help that we do not know much of the fellow, as he is only mentioned twice in the *Sturlunga saga* compilation.³³ He could not have been an unimportant figure in Icelandic politics—after all, he ends up marrying Sturla Þórðarson's daughter Ingi-björg. Also, his father Þorvarðr úr Saurbæ was a minor figure in the Eyjafjörður region associated mainly with the Sturlungar, but also rumored to have aligned with Þorvarðr Þórarinnsson before the killing of Þorgils skarði, and to have given him ill advice.³⁴ Barði Guðmundsson suggests that, in *Njáls saga*, Mörðr's successful attempt to convince the Njálssynir to kill Hǫskuldr Hvítanesgoði is a way to implicate Þorvarðr úr Saurbæ in the killing of Þorgils skarði. In *Ljósvetninga saga*, however, this blame is shifted back to Þorvarðr Þórarinnsson through his ancestor Guðmundr inn ríki. While the connection between the literary representations of Þorvarðr úr Saurbæ in *Þorgils saga skarða* and Mörðr Valgarðsson in *Njáls saga* is plausible, it is slight and Barði builds too much on it. After all, as Bjarni Einarsson astutely observes, if *Ljósvetninga saga* had been intended as a *níðrit*, then vengeance for it would presumably have been reported in *Þorgils saga skarða*. Furthermore, Bjarni argues, “Í Þorgils sögu skarða hafði Þorvarði Þórarinssyni verið reist slík níðstöng”—that there was very little need for

³² Barði Guðmundsson, *Ljósvetninga saga og Saurbæingar*, 46–52.

³³ Barði Guðmundsson, 108.

³⁴ “Þorvarðr ór Saurbæ var inn mesti vin nafna síns af bóndum í Eyjafirði; hafði Þorvarðr Þórarinnsson jafnan tal við hann. Hann þótti vera nökkut óheill ok illráðr,” *Sturlunga saga [...] and Other Works*, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, 244. Of the Eyjafjörður farmers, Þorvarðr úr Saurbæ was the greatest of friends with his namesake; Þorvarðr Þórarinnsson frequently spoke with him. He was thought to be somewhat devious and incendiary (my translation).

further finger-pointing in regard to this kin-murder.³⁵ *Ljósvetninga saga* as a *níðrit* therefore appears to be somewhat redundant, since a more direct and equally accusatory account existed. Also, there remains the confusion between who is meant to be represented by Mǫrðr in *Njáls saga*—Þórðr or his father? Barði contradicts himself in his different writings on this fact.³⁶ Finally much rides on the question of whether *Ljósvetninga saga* or *Njáls saga* was written first. The idea that *Ljósvetninga saga*'s A-redaction would have been written first, then *Njáls saga*, then the C-redaction, could give some air of validation to Barði Guðmundsson's theories, at least from the perspective of dating and of how these stories could have reflected a late thirteenth-century—rather than an early/mid-thirteenth-century—present.

4.3 Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches to the Past

Barði Guðmundsson's understanding of *Ljósvetninga saga* as a *roman à clef* sees the main goal of the saga as a defamatory document meant to humiliate Þorvarðr Þórarinsson and to avenge the honor of Þorvarðr úr Saurbæ and his son Þórðr. Barði Guðmundsson's reading musters minute details from the saga, and in doing so denies the past of an independent existence, tethering all possible interpretation of the tenth- and eleventh-century plot to the political developments of late thirteenth-century Iceland. It is clear that Barði's Þórðr Þorvarðsson did not aim to preserve the past, but rather to make a statement about the present. Barði's model of reading the saga could be called a *synchronic* approach to the past, written by the people of late thirteenth-century Iceland, about the people of late thirteenth-century Iceland, for the people of late thirteenth-century Iceland. The historical setting is merely a device. An alternative reading, one in which the past

³⁵ Bjarni Einarsson, 88. On the concept of *níðstöng* see most recently Lawing, "The Forest Pleas of Rockingham."

³⁶ In an earlier study of *Brennu-Njáls saga*, Barði Guðmundsson argues that Þorvarðr úr Saurbæ is meant to be represented by the character of Mǫrðr Valgarðsson, "Örgumleiði, gerpir, Arnljótarson," 87–91. In his study of *Ljósvetninga saga*, however, as shown above, he firmly argues that Þórðr Þorvarðsson was represented in *Njáls saga* by the character of Mǫrðr, and his father Þorvarðr úr Saurbæ represented by Mǫrðr father Valgarðr.

has its own intrinsic value, would be a *diachronic* approach. The diachronic approach recognizes the significance of both past and present for the author and interpreter. In other words, the synchronic approach reflects society only as it sees itself, while the diachronic one compares and negotiates between the past and the present.³⁷

It could be argued that Barði's synchronic reading of *Ljósvetninga saga* uses the tenth- and eleventh-century setting as an ersatz, a meaningless background meant to convey a message about the real story, which is the drama of the thirteenth century and the vindication of the Saurbæingar in face of their humiliation by Þorvarðr Þórarinnsson. While the search for an author does not automatically invalidate the intrinsic value of the past, the kind of research conducted by Barði reduces *Ljósvetninga saga* to a simple authorial message along the lines of 'Þorvarðr Þórarinnsson is a bad man.' A diachronic reading of *Ljósvetninga saga* requires that we study the thirteenth-century society that produced it rather than focus solely on the argued author's background. These opposing synchronic and diachronic readings can be compared to the Assmanns' above-mentioned communicative and cultural memory, respectively, with the caveat that communicative memory is considered by the Assmanns as non-specialized and diffuse, while the authoring and scribing of an *Íslendingasaga* requires a degree of specialization. Alternatively, Barry Schwartz suggested that collective memory has "two faces"; one as "a model *of* society," in which a society projects its own concerns on the past, and "a model *for* society," in which a society looks to the past as something to aspire to, an idealized reflection of its current values.³⁸ Borrowing from sociological models, Schwartz suggests the process of *framing*, by which past events become an interpretative prism for the present. The mechanism that allows this is through keying events of the past to the present through cultural artefacts.³⁹ While the

³⁷ Astrid Erll discusses a similar synchronic vs. diachronic approach towards generation and memory in "Generation in Literary History: Three Constellations of Generationality, Genealogy, and Memory," 395–397.

³⁸ Barry Schwartz, "Memory as a Cultural System: Abraham Lincoln in World War II," 910.

³⁹ Schwartz, "Memory as a Cultural System," 911. For Schwartz's sociological framework, see Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, 40–44.

process of keying is a similar mechanism to the one described in Barði Guðmundsson's work, the kind of authorship he suggests for Þórður Þorvarðsson is even more extreme in its attitude to the past. In an extreme manifestation of Bookprose theory, the past is rewritten to suit the present, with the only detail that is allowed to the domain of the past being the ancestor's names, preferably with their character-count matching. From this it does not follow that a diachronic description of the past is not constructed to say something about the present: whether intentionally or through a subconscious process, works of literature and history are always shaped by the person who sets them down to writing. But the represented past is still acknowledged as the past, as the acts of the people of the past, which reflect on the present.

The following discussion offers two more examples of synchronic readings of *Ljósvetninga saga*, which center on AM 162 c fol.'s supposed fifteenth-century scribe, Ólafur Loftsson. Through the focus on this individual, certain interpretative possibilities open up, but others are closed. The text will therefore turn to a diachronic reading of *Ljósvetninga saga* in the fifteenth century, one that relates the manuscript's present to its forebears. The final reading is a diachronic one that pertains to *Ljósvetninga saga*'s AM 561 4to in the fourteenth-century *fin de siècle*. While some points of interpretation are offered, what is primarily shown is the importance of the search for an author, if only as the linchpin for a contextual reading of the texts. In these discussions, the synchronic readings are better compared to Schwartz's concept of memory as a model *of* society than Barði Guðmundsson's complete deflation of the past. Memory is oriented to reflect characters and events of the manuscript scribe's present, but it is by no means the authoritarian manipulation Barði suggests. The diachronic reading, on the other hand, treats memory as a model *for* society, and offers the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century lessons to learn from their past.

4.3.1 A Synchronic Reading of *Ljósvetninga saga*: Lundarbrek-kumálið

An example for a synchronic reading of *Ljósvetninga saga* is found in the parallel between the saga character of Hrafn Þorkelsson and the fifteenth-century Þorkell Guðbjartsson. The dispute between the priest Þorkell Guðbjartsson and scribe Ólafur Loftsson left an imprint on *Ljósvetninga saga*, even if a minor one. Ólafur Loftsson's attempt to take over the Lundarbrekka parish church and his takeover of Helgastaðir put him at odds with the elite cleric. As the only significant event in the scribe Ólafur's life we can access through diplomatic material, it is important to see if and how it factored into his decisions when incorporating *Ljósvetninga saga* into AM 162 c fol. It is presented as an example of how synchronic memory can operate, and hinges on Ólafur Loftsson's identification as AM 162 c fol.'s scribal hand.

Who was Þorkell Guðbjartsson, Ólafur Loftsson's rival? According to the *Diplomatarium Islandicum V* index, Þorkell was a priest in Múli í Aðaldal and provost in Þingeyjarþing between 1423 and 1430. Between 1430–1440, he held the benefice of Grenjaðarstaður, one of the major churches of the Hólar district. In addition, he was the *officialis* of the Northern Hólar bishopric in 1423, and from 1432 to 1440. Later on, he held the benefice of Helgastaðir, which was essentially a downgrade after Grenjaðarstaður, and eventually took over Laufás from 1449 until his death in 1483.⁴⁰ In a quick summary of Þorkell's life, Björn Þorsteinsson and Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir argue that “Hann átti í deilum við ýmsa ríkismenn eins og séra Jón Pálsson Maríuskáld um Grenjastað og við Jón biskup Vilhjálmsson um ýmisleg mál; annars fór vel á með þeim.”⁴¹ This is an understatement

⁴⁰ DI 5:1084. Björn Þorsteinsson and Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir posit the years 1423–1431 for Múli í Aðaldal, and are undecided about the year he took over Laufás, either 1438 or 1439, “Enska Öldin,” 63. The smaller size and importance of Laufás is manifest in the number of clergy present in the *staðir*, according to the Kirknatal from the days of bishop Jón Vilhjálmsson Craxton (1429): While Grenjaðarstaður had 3 priests and 2 deacons, Laufás had 2 priests and 1 deacon. DI 4: item 414, p. 380.

⁴¹ Björn Þorsteinsson and Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, “Enska Öldin,” 63.

when you consider this priest's eventful life.⁴² When Bishop Jón Henriks-son/Tófason was near his own death, he appointed Þorkell as *ráðsmaður* of Hólar and the Norwegian Michael prestr Jónsson as *officialis*,⁴³ against popular opinion, which would have preferred Jón Bjarnason as *officialis* and Ari Þorbjarnarson as *ráðsmaður*.⁴⁴ Michael was displeased with both Þorkell and Ari, and wrote a firm letter of protest against the two.⁴⁵ The secular *hirðstjóri* Hannes Pálsson, however, took matters into his own hands, and the issue was resolved by his support of Michael as the appointed *officialis*, and Jón Pálsson Mariúskáld as *ráðsmaður*.⁴⁶ Despite his continued elevated position as an elite cleric throughout the decades, Þorkell was not on good terms with the subsequent bishops. Þorkell's disputes with an unnamed bishop of Hólar survived all the way to the seventeenth century, when his memory was connected to stories of wizardry, and he was nicknamed Galdra-Þorkell.⁴⁷ Such a long shadow through history implies a large impact on events of his own time. In 1430, Þorkell Guðbjartsson supported Bishop Jón Vilhjálms-son Craxton's opposition to the archbishop's appointment of Jón Pálsson as the holder of the Grenjaðarstaður benefice.⁴⁸ This paid off for Þorkell, since he was appointed to Grenjaðarstaður in Jón's stead, perhaps also retribution for Jón having taken the coveted appointment as *ráðsmaður* in Hólar. In 1431, however, Bishop Jón Vilhjálms-son Craxton sent Þorkell a harsh letter of protest, where he criticizes him for 8 points: (1) presenting himself as a representative of the bishop in trade dealings and keeping to himself what belonged to the church; (2) having further unauthorized dealings with English traders; (3) approving layman as witnesses without the permission of the

⁴² Comparable, perhaps, to Sigmundur Steinþórsson, see Lára Magnúsdóttir, "Case(s) of Excommunication."

⁴³ For the function of these most important of Icelandic clerical positions, see Erika Sigurdson, *The Church in Fourteenth Century Iceland*, 74–83.

⁴⁴ Lögmansannáli 1423 entry, in *Íslandske annaler indtil 1578*, ed. Gustav Storm, 293–294, and *Nýi Annáll* 1423 entry, in *Annálar 1400–1800*, vol. 1.1:24.

⁴⁵ DI 4: item 365, pp. 303–308.

⁴⁶ See note 44.

⁴⁷ Bjarni Einarsson, *Munnmelasögur 17. Aldar*, LXXIX; *Helgastaðabók [...]*, eds. Selma Jónsdóttir et al., 193, n. 18.

⁴⁸ DI 4: item 461, p. 419.

bishop; (4) conspiring with these laymen against the bishop; (5) not keeping proper records of his provostship; (6) at the most haunting moment of his letter, the bishop describes Þorkell Guðbjartsson mistreating and injuring his kinswoman Ragnfríður Gautadóttir, who resided in Hólar;⁴⁹ (7) Þorkell's general conduct of riding with weapons with a large following: "synandæ þigh so mæir likan einom ribbalda oc hermannæ en preste," and; (8) ignoring the bishops three previous letters.⁵⁰ Þorkell behaved like the overbearing chieftains of old, and while the bishops used him for their own ends—such as with his supporting the archbishop's intervention in Grenjaðarstaður—this also caused them more than their fair share of problems.

Records of Ólafur Loftsson's attempt to take over Lundarbrekka are only extant in diploma form, and we are thus witness to a dramatic historical event only through indirect evidence, and are forced to put the pieces together, as is natural in a period that lacks narrative evidence such as the sagas and the annals of the previous age. According to an inventory in Helgastaðabók, Ólafur Loftsson took control over the church of Helgastaðir from Þorkell Guðbjartsson.⁵¹ According to Stefán Karlsson, this would have taken place sometime in 1448, if not earlier, since he is present

⁴⁹ The powerful description of this event is worth citing: "jtem firir þa settu sauk at þu tok(t) oc fangader sëm ræningia ragnfridæ gautadottur uora frendkona heima a holum oc brygder hana med sinom syni tolf vetra gomblum bædi saman mestu klædlaus j miklu frostæ oc kulda oc þa þau komu vt sa menn hana bædi blaa oc bloduga oc þar med tokt þu vpp hennar godz an doms oc laga oc æi sidr þat godz sem reiknadh uar heilagre hola kirkiu oc hon skæindizst af þinom knifæ sem þu hafder a þær j ykaræ samæighn oc þu vilder henne þrugat hafua sëm hon hefuer fram boret firir oss optliga." (DI 4: item, p. 528) [Item for the accusation that you took and imprisoned like a pica-roon our kinswoman Ragnfríður Gautadóttir when she was home in Hólar, and shut her and her twelve year old son in [a shed?] without clothes in the biting frost and cold. And when they came out men saw that she was both blue and bloody. And then you took from her her property without legal warrant, and uncourteously those goods that belonged to the Holy Church of Hólar. And she was cut by your knife that you have in your possession. And you wanted her to be distressed, as she often attests. (My translation, with the help of Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir)] See also *Skarðsárannáll* 1431 entry, *Annálar 1400–1800*, vol. 1.1:55. The power of this description must have inspired Vilborg Davíðsdóttir's historical novel on the Icelandic fifteenth century, *Galdur: Skáldsaga*.

⁵⁰ DI 4: item 528, pp. 489–490. On this letter see also Björn Þorsteinsson, *Enska öldin í sögu Íslendinga*, 138–139.

⁵¹ Stock. Perg. 4to 16 ii r. See *Helgastaðabók*, 194–195.

there when he writes down DI IV 780 A, discussed below.⁵² Despite the *staður* status of the church,⁵³ which would have made the bishop the authority in deciding on the church's appointments, Helgastaðir had been long under the sway of Ólafur Loftsson's father Loftur Guttormsson.⁵⁴ While the bishop had to approve the appointments of the holders of the Helgastaðir benefice, it was the layman Loftur that had the most say in who was to be appointed to this *staður*. The importance of this is that when he took over Helgastaðir from Þorkell, Ólafur had already incurred the ire of this elite cleric.

On the 19th of February 1449, when Ólafur was likely already resident in Helgastaðir,⁵⁵ a land exchange between him and Ásgrímur Jónsson took place, where Ólafur (in agreement with his wife Guðrún) gave Ásgrímur the properties of Tjörn and Hafralækur í Aðaldal, and Ásgrímur gave Ólafur (also in agreement with his wife, also named Guðrún) Lundarbrekka í Bárðardal.⁵⁶ Lundarbrekka was Ásgrímur's to give because Þorkell Guðbjartsson, the land's previous owner, had given it to him in 1448. This initial transaction is attested to in two places, though neither seems particularly trustworthy. The first, DI 5: item 33, records the transaction with two witnesses who were produced a year after the fact (Jón Helgason and Þorvaldr Jónsson). The second, DI 4: item 780 B, is a copy of a still extant diploma (DI 4: item 780 A), which pertains to the land exchange between Ásgrímur and Ólafur. This copy was written into Helgastaðabók, and adds this key information to the original diploma's text:

reiknadi asgrimvr. at sira þorkell hefði lagt til kirkivnnar j
kavpi þeirra. fýst þa bot sem hann hafði giort æ kirkivnne

⁵² *Helgastaðabók*, 194–196.

⁵³ See Magnús Stefánsson, *Staðir og staðamál*, 143, 311, 316, 321, 326, 331; (Helgastaðir marked “12,” p. 265).

⁵⁴ *Helgastaðabók*, 195, and 194 n. 25. See also DI 4: item 424, p. 389 and DI 4: item 451, pp. 409–410. On identifying Loftur Guttormsson as Ólafur's father, see above.

⁵⁵ At any rate, this is where he writes down the diploma DI 4: item 780 A, pp. 756–757. See also *Helgastaðabók*, 196. A letter from Bishop Gottskálk to him from c. 1450 supports this as well, though it cannot be firmly dated, DI 5: item 63, pp. 77–78.

⁵⁶ DI 4: items 780 A and B, pp. 756–758.

oc þar til lofadi hann ad leggja fimm lanngbavnnd. tvo bi-
ora oc allar spurrvr. messvklædi. tvö merki. tveggja avra
kalek med silfvr. tvær jarnstikvr nýar. olafs likneski. oc mar-
tinnvs likneski. allt saman j kirkivreikning.⁵⁷

There is no mention of Þorkell's previous sale to Ásgrímur in the original. Both of these references to the transaction between Þorkell and Ásgrímur are in what Stefán Karlsson believes to be Ólafur Loftsson's scribal hand.⁵⁸ The fact that the added passage is in the copy of the diploma but not in the original diploma itself gives it the air of a partisan interpolation. This is not to say that such a transaction had never occurred: Ásgrímur Jónsson had had a land transaction with Þorkell Guðbjartsson in 1437,⁵⁹ and this supports that there were previous financial connections between the two men. Based on this previous transaction, Þorkell had perhaps sold Ásgrímur the land but expected to receive it back in the future. There is no extant document that pertains directly to this deal. Whatever agreement there was between Ásgrímur and Þorkell, it was poorly documented when it was made, hence Ólafur's need to produce witness testimony after the fact in DI 5: item 33.

Þorkell was not happy with Ólafur's takeover of the church at Lundarbrekka, as is evident in the letters written by Hólar Bishop Gottskálf to Þorkell Guðbjartsson and Ólafur Loftsson. In the first letter, addressed to Þorkell, we learn that the priest had written a letter to the bishop where he accused Ólafur Loftsson of stealing the possessions of Lundarbrekkukirkja from him. The letter relates how Þorkell had ridden towards Lundarbrekka and accused Ólafur and his men of having taken the land's property and goods "jafnvel j kirkiv sem annars stadar,"⁶⁰ and that he demanded these back. When Ólafur refused, Þorkell had declared

⁵⁷ DI 4: items 780 B, pp. 757–758.

⁵⁸ See discussion above.

⁵⁹ DI 4: item 607, p. 544. See also IOD, p. L.

⁶⁰ DI 5: item 60, p. 75.

Ólafur and those of his men present excommunicated.⁶¹ Þorkell then showed Ólafur a letter from the bishop: “ok sva ei sidur j lasen firir honom vart bref ok þat giorde ydr ei stora hialp.”⁶² The contents of the letter are unclear. Presumably it concerned Þorkell’s general authority to excommunicate, since the bishop seems uninformed of the Lundarbrekkumál before he received Þorkell’s initial letter.⁶³ Alternatively, the letter could have pertained to Þorkell’s authority over Lundarbrekka itself, though since this was a *bændakirkja*, the bishop’s authority would not have extended beyond the property’s church. In his letter to Þorkell, the bishop says that he cannot respond to these accusations without further documentation from Þorkell, and also notes that “þetta er stort mal sem þier kærít til bondans.”⁶⁴

Þorkell’s displeasure with this takeover could be explained through other land transactions he was involved in. He had been accumulating land in the Lundarbrekka parish, and acquired the farms Bær, Bjarnastaður,⁶⁵ and Jarlstaður.⁶⁶ From the wedding agreement of his daughter Guðrún, we know that he also controlled Sigurðarstaður and Sandvík from the Lundarbrekka parish.⁶⁷ All these lands paid tithe to Lundarbrekka. In addition, according to the 1686 and 1696 land registers, the tax value of Lundarbrekka was determined to be between thirty and forty hundreds (long hundreds, meaning that each ‘hundred’ designates one hundred and twenty), which makes it the third most valuable territory in the Ljósavatnshreppur, after the farm in Ljósavatn itself (sixty to seventy-five hundreds) and Hóll (fifty to sixty hundreds).⁶⁸ In 1471, the land

⁶¹ “sidan gafvt j honom fvllar saker æ ok lyster ræn ok grip ok bondan j bann ok hans men sem ath vorv med honom.” DI 5: item 60, pp. 74–75.

⁶² DI 5: item 60, p. 75.

⁶³ Ármann Jakobsson suggested this to me in a personal correspondence.

⁶⁴ DI 5: item 60, pp. 74–75.

⁶⁵ DI 4: item 579, p. 544.

⁶⁶ DI 4: item 736, pp. 704–705.

⁶⁷ DI 5 item 401, pp. 454–455.

⁶⁸ Björn Lárússon, *The Old Icelandic Land Registers*, 292–295 and 32.

would have been valued at around sixty hundreds.⁶⁹ To lose Lundarbrekka meant a significant loss of wealth for Þorkell Guðbjartsson, both in the property's inherent value, and in the church's tithe.

In the subsequent letter to Ólafur Loftsson, Bishop Gottskálk asks him to produce evidence to prove his legal rights over Lundarbrekka⁷⁰ and urges him to settle with Þorkell Guðbjartsson or to discuss the matter on the next *prestastefna*. However, in the same letter, the bishop also extends Ólafur's appointment over Helgastaðir by twelve months, despite Þorkell declaring him excommunicated.⁷¹ As noted above, in his letter to Þorkell, the bishop mentions the severity of his accusations against Ólafur. This adds to the impression that Bishop Gottskálk is somewhat partial towards Ólafur Loftsson in the dispute. Stefán Karlsson suggests that this friendly tone towards Ólafur could be attributed to the fact that his half-brother, Skúli Loftsson, was the scribe of DI 5: item 63; “Det er ikke utænkeligt at [Skúli Loftsson] har haft en finger med i spillet og har lagt et godt ord ind for sin broder.”⁷² But it could also be that the tone has more to do with Þorkell, and his previous run-ins with the Hólar bishopric.

We do not know how the matter was resolved, but we do know that in 1461 a Jón Jónsson sold half of Lundarbrekka to a Jón Sigmundsson,⁷³ so at least half⁷⁴ of the territory seems to have exchanged hands from both Ólafur Loftsson and Þorkell Guðbjartsson's immediate families. The last

⁶⁹ This is supported by the fact that “the private church on Lundarbrekka owns 30h of the farm,” in both DI 5: item 297 (sub-item LIV in the *máldagar*), pp. 320–321 and DI 15: item 248, p. 343, as well as Árni Magnússon and Pál Vídalín's land register, where it is stated that “Nálægir segjast heyrta hafa [hafa in manuscript, n. 1] að jörðin væri að forngildu lx [hundreds], og ætti kirkjan önnur xxx, er það til líkinda hjer um að presturinn tekur jafnan hálfá landskuld af heimastaðnum, en máldaginn er nú ekki til staðar, sem úr þessu mun skera,” *Jarðabók Árna Magnússonar og Páls Vídalíns [...]*, 147–148; referred to in Björn Lárusson, *Icelandic Land Registers*, 294, n. 38.

⁷⁰ DI 5: item 33, pp. 33–34 then, could be a response to this request by the bishop, as Stefán Karlsson argues in *Helgastaðabók*, 196 n. 32.

⁷¹ *Helgastaðabók*, 196. See also Lára Magnúsdóttir, *Bannfering og kirkjuvald á Íslandi 1275–1550*, 217–296, on the implications of excommunication in Iceland, specifically in the context of ostracism and receiving of the Eucharist.

⁷² IOD, p. LII

⁷³ DI 5: item 220, pp. 233–234.

⁷⁴ Magnús Stefánsson indeed lists Lundarbrekka as a church that is a “Partseiekirkested med bondekirke” in documentary evidence, *Staðir og staðamál*, 311, 316; marked as “17.”

document Þorkell Guðbjartsson was involved with in connection to the Lundarbrekka parish is the wedding agreement where he gave away his daughter Guðrún. There he gave her the lands he had left in Bárðardalur, both of which paid tithe to the Lundarbrekka church.⁷⁵

With this background in mind, we turn to *Ljósvetninga saga*. In chapter 23 of the C-redaction, after Friðgerðr, daughter of a Mǫðruvellingar *þingmaðr*, points at a Ljósvetningr as the father of her child, the two sides agree to conduct an ordeal to settle the paternal claim. The ordeal takes place at Laufás, where Þorkell Guðbjartsson spent his last three and a half decades of life. Laufás at the time was a Mǫðruvellingar estate,⁷⁶ and accordingly the priest who presided over the ordeal is dubbed “Mǫðruvellíngaprestr.”⁷⁷ Why the Ljósvetningar allow him to conduct the ritual in the first place is unclear, but once he confirms the Mǫðruvellingar claim of paternity, they call foul and refuse to accept the ruling.

This scene anticipates the introduction of Hrafn Þorkelsson into the saga, who lives in Lundarbrekka. We would expect Hrafn to hold a grudge over the Mǫðruvellingar for the death of his father Þorkell hákr, yet from his introduction he pays more attention to his inner-kin group politics than to the conflict at hand: “Eyjólfir vill nú gánga yfir alla þjóð, en þeim þikir ekki til vor koma, nema til Þorvarðar eins.”⁷⁸ Hrafn uses the conflict to establish a better position for himself among the Ljósvetningar, hinting that if he were in charge and not Þorvarðr, things would take a different and better course. Initially, Hrafn appears to stand by his words.⁷⁹ He dispenses valuable advice by the suggestion to recruit his brother-in-law for the cause, as well as gives decent military advice in the initial stages of the

⁷⁵ DI 5: item 401, pp. 454–455.

⁷⁶ ÍF 10:69, n. 1.

⁷⁷ *Ljósv.* 1830, 77 [ch. 23]. ÍF 10:69. Priest of the Mǫðruvellingar (my translation).

⁷⁸ *Ljósv.* 1830, 79 [ch. 23]. ÍF 10:70. “Eyjólfir now want to lord it over everyone, and they think that nobody matters except Thorvard,” 211.

⁷⁹ “Arfur þessa sonar Háks var sú frekja í orðum, sem varð föður hans að bana, en í stað hetjuskapar hugleysið eitt, þegar hann átti að standa við orðin leysa af höndum þá skuld lífs síns að hefna frægs föður,” ÍF 10:XVIII.

Kakalahóll battle, and insists that the information be kept secret from Þorvarðr. Hrafn, however, quickly loses control over the escalating battle and declares the need to recruit Þorvarðr: “nú erum vèr farnir, nema Þorvarðr ráðist í.”⁸⁰ At this stage Hrafn is on the sidelines of the events and is only mentioned again as the going gets rougher: “Þá sögðu ok menn, at Hrafn gætti ekki miðr skógarins, enn fundarins.”⁸¹ Hrafn then advises to either run to the woods, or report that Þorvarðr was “sáran til ólífis.”⁸² Høskuldr recognizes that “þat er öruggt ráð ok fjærri skapi föður míns.”⁸³ In a masculinity-obsessed society such as medieval Iceland, the safe solution is never the manly solution. Nevertheless, Høskuldr consults his father about this, who quickly dismisses the idea of lying about him being injured as cowardly. It is then reported that Hrafn dwells away from the battle overnight. The fact that he is the only one who reportedly rests singles him out as a non-enthusiastic participant in the battle. And indeed, we are told that “var þat meirr af atburð, enn honum þætti þar allgott.”⁸⁴ Hrafn then returns to the battlefield and approaches Eyjólfur, where he reports the fake news of Þorvarðr’s injury. When Þorvarðr learns of this, he retorts “heyrðu á endimi, at ljúga til sára manna! verði fundr sá, sem auðnar, erum vèr jafnan til óhæfu, en skilja eigi nú fyrr, en öðrum þikir mál.”⁸⁵ Þorvarðr’s words—a de facto criticism of his own father lying about his wounds at the beginning of the saga—are empty, however, since nobody will pass this on to Eyjólfur, and the battle ends, with Koðrán insisting that his mortal wounds are not that bad.⁸⁶ Hrafn, then, manages to undermine Þorvarðr

⁸⁰ *Ljósv.* 1830, 83 [ch. 24]. ÍF 10:75. “Now we’re through unless Thorvard joins in,” 216.

⁸¹ *Ljósv.* 1830, 87 [ch. 24]. ÍF 10:81. “People said that Hrafn had no less an eye to the woods than to the battle,” 220.

⁸² *Ljósv.* 1830, 87 [ch. 24]. ÍF 10:81. “Mortally wounded,” 220. This seems to be the ultimate *Ljósveitningar* solution against the *Möðruvellingar*, as a similar technique is used earlier in the saga in the battle between Þorgeirr and his sons. See also *Law and Literature*, 128–129, n. 18.

⁸³ *Ljósv.* 1830, 87 [ch. 24]. ÍF 10:81. “That’s a safe course, [...] though not at all in the spirit of my father,” 220.

⁸⁴ *Ljósv.* 1830, 88 [ch. 24]. ÍF 10:81. “The action was more than he had a stomach for,” 220.

⁸⁵ *Ljósv.* 1830, 88 [ch. 24]. ÍF 10:82. “What a disgrace to lie about men’s wounds! Let this battle go as fate wills. We are always slow to evil deeds, but let’s not back off now until the others think they have had enough,” 221.

⁸⁶ Notice also the implied criticism against Koðrán for pacifying the situation by lying about his wounds.

with this cowardly-seeming strategy. When Þorvarðr hosts a post-battle feast at his farmstead, his son inquires about the seating arrangements: “hvort skal skipta mönnum at mannvirðingu, eðr eptir framgaungu?”⁸⁷ Þorvarðr answers: “Hrafn skal mér næstr sitja.”⁸⁸ In their interpretations of the scenes, the *Ljósvetninga saga* translators Miller and Andersson contradict each other to comic effect. When he discusses the exchange, Andersson calls Høskuldr’s question “an obvious slap at Hrafn Thorkelsson,”⁸⁹ and does not expand on this. Presumably he reads Høskuldr as saying that Hrafn is the man with the most social standing, who also did not show himself to be worthy at battle. “Thorvard,” Andersson continues, “reprimands him tersely: ‘Hrafn shall be seated next to me.’”⁹⁰ Miller, however, has it the other way around: “Consider Thorvard’s cutting wit directed at the double-dealing and cowardly Hrafn.”⁹¹ Miller does not expand on why this line is witty, but presumably he finds Þorvarðr’s diverting his son’s question a stab at Hrafn. As often happens, these dual interpretations indicate the ambiguity in the scene: Hrafn might have displayed cowardice and ended the battle manipulatively, but he also established his place within the *Ljósvetningar* kin group, and as such deserves a seat of honor.⁹² Very rarely do people make political sacrifices in the name of a joke. The author then takes his own swing at Hrafn when he tells us that the *Moðruvellingar* decide not to prosecute because him specifically because “honum þótti ekki mannhættligr verit hafa fundrinn.”⁹³ But as is often in *Ljósvetninga saga*, no joke is for the sake of humor alone; Eyjólftr’s next move is to elicit support from Hrafn himself through declarations of friendship and an ounce of gold. Hrafn accepts this offer, and later when the

⁸⁷ *Ljósv.* 1830, 89 [ch. 25]. ÍF 10:83. Should we seat men according to rank, or according to their valiance? (My translation.)

⁸⁸ *Ljósv.* 1830, 89 [ch. 25]. ÍF 10:83. Hrafn shall sit closest to me (my translation).

⁸⁹ *Law and Literature*, 113.

⁹⁰ *Law and Literature*, 113. Andersson does not sway from this interpretation in his 2006 *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180–1280)*, 130.

⁹¹ *Law and Literature*, 60. Björn Sigfússon argues that through Koðrán’s death, Þorkell hákr’s death is avenged and his son Hrafn can take a seat of honor, ÍF 10:XVIII.

⁹² Björn Sigfússon’s interpretation is rather close to this one, ÍF 10:XVIII.

⁹³ *Ljósv.* 1830, 89 [ch. 25]; ÍF 10:84. “he was judged not to have been a threat during the battle,” 223.

Ljósvetningar are faced with the Mǫðruvellingar, he supports a non-confrontational stratagem. Nevertheless, when a large group of his family and kin are exiled, following the battle of Kakalahóll, Hrafn travels with them abroad because he “þorði eigi eptir at vera.”⁹⁴ The joke at Hrafn’s expense is also an indication of his prestige: he believes that in Þorvarðr’s absence, he would be targeted by the Mǫðruvellingar.

Hrafn of Lundarbrekka is, then, both a respected member of his kinship group and a man who caters to his own self-interest. Both groups—the Ljósvetningar and the Mǫðruvellingar—make use of him when it suits their purposes, which is why he remains influential. The argument is not that Hrafn Þorkelsson of Lundarbrekka was authored to fit with the character of Þorkell Guðbjartsson. Surely, there were many other people whose characters’ Hrafn resembled in the time since his hypothetical existence and until the mid-fifteenth century.⁹⁵ Rather, the argument is that Þorkell Guðbjartsson would have been in the mind of the scribe and of the audience. I would venture as far as to argue that the scribe—Ólafur—chose to preserve the C-redaction over A-redaction in his manuscript not because of a lack of access to the latter, but because, among other reasons, it included this character and his shameful portrayal. Notice that in the A-redaction, the daughter of Þorkell hákr remains unmentioned; in the C-redaction, she is given the name Guðrún.⁹⁶ Guðrún is also the name of the daughter of Þorkell Guðbjartsson, and thus we have two Guðrúnir Þorkelsdætur. Indeed, Guðrún is the commonest of names for women in Iceland, then as now. Ólafur Loftsson himself was married to a Guðrún. It is nevertheless interesting to consider that Ólafur could have chosen this redaction in part to defame his rival, who was both hated and admired by many of his contemporaries. That a Hrafn of Lundarbrekka is mentioned

⁹⁴ *Ljósv.* 1830, 98 [ch. 28]; ÍF 10:93. “Hrafn did not dare to stay behind” (232).

⁹⁵ Barði Guðmundsson certainly found one: he argues Hrafn Þorkelsson is meant to invoke the thirteenth-century Vigfúss Gunnsteinsson, *Ljósvetninga saga og Saurbæingar*, 86.

⁹⁶ ÍF 10:51. Björn Sigfússon argues that this name was given in the C-redaction retroactively in reaction to the child being named in chapter 24; *Um Ljósvetninga sögu*, 36.

in *Reykðæla saga* as “góðr bóndi”⁹⁷ indicates that there could have been ‘alternative facts’ about this man or his direct lineage floating around in the immanent saga of Eyjafjörður.⁹⁸

4.3.2 A Synchronic Reading of *Ljósvetninga saga*: AM 162 c fol. and Guðmundur Arason hinn ríki

The striking similarity between fifteenth-century Westfjords-magnate Guðmundur Arason’s byname “hinn ríki” and Guðmundr Eyjólfsson inn ríki make the comparison between the two almost obvious. Guðmundur Arason hinn ríki was a man of unclear origins who came to dominate a large part of Northwest Iceland. Arnór Sigurjónsson defined him as “tvímælalaust mesti bóndinn á Íslandi á sínum tíma og líklega mesti bóndinn hér á öllum tímum fram á þennan dag.”⁹⁹ Through two strategic marriages into the Seldælir in the Westfjords, Guðmundur’s father, Ari Guðmundsson, managed to collect a significant fortune, made even more substantial by his son’s strategic marriages.¹⁰⁰ Guðmundur’s uncle Hrafn Guðmundsson was also an important figure, the Western and Northern *lögmaður* from 1405 to his death in 1432. In addition, Guðmundur had

⁹⁷ ÍF 10:160. Björn Sigfússon discusses this Hrafn from *Reykðæla saga*’s lineage at length in 163–4, n. 2. He does not even consider the possibility that this man is not Hrafn Þorkelsson hákr, but rather Hrafn Þorkelsson svartá, the brother of the younger Hrafn’s grandmother Guðríðr (see ÍF 1:270, 271). Since Þorkell Þorgeirsson is a character in *Reykðæla saga* he is already old enough to bring children, ÍF 10:156, 158. Whether this Hrafn is Þorkell’s son or his mother’s brother is uncertain. For another positive representation of a resident of Lundarbrekka, see *Hrana saga hrings*, the earliest extant manuscript of which is found in late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century manuscripts.

Þingeyinga saga, ed. Guðni Jónsson, XI, 417–440. To what extent this tale would be based on oral tradition is uncertain. Note that Lundarbrekka is mentioned in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* as Bárðr’s initial settlement (hence the name Bárðardalur), ÍF 13:109 [ch. 3].

⁹⁸ Though if Guðbrandur Vigfússon’s argument is to be adopted, he would include *Reykðæla saga* among the lost texts of AM 162 c fol. We do not, however, know if this was indeed the case, and even if it was, in what shape and form this saga would have appeared. As will be discussed below, AM 162 c fol. had a tendency to expansion and change, and such could likely have been the fate of the *AM 162 c fol. *Reykðæla saga*. If, one day in 40 years, a leaf of such a saga is found in the binding of a seventeenth-century bible in a Catalan monastery, this argument could be revised.

⁹⁹ Arnór Sigurjónsson, *Vestfirðingasaga 1390–1540*, 66.

¹⁰⁰ See also Hans Jacob Orning, *The Reality of the Fantastic [...]*, 321, n. 29.

probably developed ties with the family of Loftur Guttormsson,¹⁰¹ especially his in-law Ormur Loftsson.¹⁰² Arnór Sigurjónsson tried to calculate the significant fortune of Guðmundur Arason,¹⁰³ and infers that the only way that Guðmundur could make a profit through these substantial holdings was through mercantile dealings with the English.¹⁰⁴

The most noteworthy event in Guðmundur Arason hinn ríki's public life—and the one that eventually led to his downfall—was his abovementioned raid of the Húnavatnssýsla farmers. *Nýja annáll* (grouped with *Lögmannsannáll* in Storm's *Islandske annaler indtil 1578*), writes this in its 1427 entry: “Nordur reid Gudmundar Ara sonar til Hunuetninga. þotti morgvum þvngt ad verda fyrir henne af þeira manna fram ferdi er med bondanum ridv.”¹⁰⁵ In his discussion of *heimreiðir* (raids) in fifteenth-century Iceland, Helgi Þorláksson concedes that Guðmundur Arason's raid in 1427 must have been an exceptional one and therefore it also warranted such a harsh punishment.¹⁰⁶ Arnór Sigurjónsson argued that Guðmundur's subsequent punishment by the Danish crown for this raid was in actuality an excuse to get rid of Guðmundur.¹⁰⁷ The real crime, Arnór suggests, was rather his forbidden dealings with the English.¹⁰⁸ Helgi Þorláksson disagrees, and states that “There is not a shred of evidence for this, not even a hint for any contacts of Guðmundr with the English.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹ Helgi Þorláksson, “Who Governed Iceland in the First Half of the Fifteenth Century?” 272. See also Orming, *Reality of the Fantastic*, 225.

¹⁰² Arnór Sigurjónsson, *Vestfirðingasaga*, 64.

¹⁰³ Arnór Sigurjónsson, 68–73.

¹⁰⁴ Arnór Sigurjónsson, 75.

¹⁰⁵ *Islandske annaler indtil 1578*, 294.

¹⁰⁶ Helgi Þorláksson, “Vald og ofurvald [...]”

¹⁰⁷ DI 5: item 323, pp. 370–371; DI 7: item 6, pp. 6–7; Orming, *Reality of the Fantastic*, 322, n. 32.

¹⁰⁸ Arnór Sigurjónsson, *Vestfirðingasaga*, 113.

¹⁰⁹ Helgi Þorláksson, “Who governed Iceland,” 272, n. 31. Elsewhere he states, “Þetta er forvitnileg tilgáta um Guðmund ríka,” “Vald og ofurvald,” 281. Helgi questions Björn Þorsteinsson and Arnór Sigurjónsson's analysis of Guðmundur Arason hinn ríki, and argues that it is based on shaky evidence. For example, Loftur Guttormsson's overstated friendship with Jón Vilhjálmsson Craxton does not indicate he belonged to the English camp, if there ever was one. In regard to Helgi's general skepticism regarding English and Danish camps in Iceland, one can respond that this difference in alliances was already present in the fourteenth century, when Skálholt had the greatest of ties with the merchant town of Bergen, while Hólar had much fewer connections and was

If we consider his immense wealth and his problematic behavior on at least one occasion, it is unlikely that a mid-fifteenth-century receiver of *Ljósvetninga saga* would read or hear the name “Guðmundr inn ríki” without thinking of Guðmundur Arason hinn ríki.¹¹⁰ This is especially true for a man as engaged in the politics of his time as Ólafur Loftsson (or presumably any other Northern notary or cleric). Guðmundr inn ríki, then, would be read by the manuscript’s contemporary audience as at least a partial representation of Guðmundur Arason hinn ríki; even if no change would have been done to the text to reflect this.¹¹¹

But another major Guðmundr Arason existed in Icelandic history, namely bishop Guðmundr Arason inn góði, who was bishop of Hólar between 1203 until his death in 1237. Due to his controversial nature, much of the bishop’s reign was spent in exile from his seat at Hólar. As shown, AM 162 c fol. preserves the segment of *Ljósvetninga saga* commonly referred to as *Ófeigs þáttr*, unlike AM 561 4to, which probably would not have fit this story into the manuscript’s now lost leaf. Hallvard Magerøy points out some peculiar similarities *Ófeigs þáttr* shares with an anecdote from bishop Guðmundur Arason inn góði’s *Jarteiknabók* [*Book of Miracles*]: (1) both have a strong leader and a strong farmer who are friends; (2) the Guðmundar in the stories obviously share a personal name; (3) both stories take place in the same area of Iceland; (4) both Guðmundar habitually travel through their district, and the point of both stories is to have the prominent farmer comment on that; (5) both teach a lesson, through a trick of a powerful farmer; (6) both take place in years with exceptionally bad weather; (7) there are many similarities in the way the lesson is constructed; (8) in both cases the leaders take the comments to heart; (9) the sentence structure and other narratological aspects of the tales are similar.¹¹² Magerøy does not find other similar occurrences in the saga corpus, though he does name

more connected with Niðarós/Trondheim; Erika Sigurðsson, *The Church in Fourteenth Century Iceland: The Formation of an Elite Clerical Identity*, 83–92.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Helgi Þórlaksson’s argument regarding Snorri Sturluson and Snorri goði, “Snorri goði og Snorri Sturluson.”

¹¹¹ See mention above of Jorge Luis Borges’ “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote.”

¹¹² Hallvard Magerøy, “Guðmundr góði og Guðmundr ríki,” 24–25.

Ásbjörn of Meðalhús from *Hákonar saga góða*¹¹³ and Þorgnýr son of Þorgnýr Þorgnýsson of *Ólafs saga helga*¹¹⁴ in *Heimskringla* as somewhat following this scheme.¹¹⁵ One can point out other instances where someone uses trickery to teach the king a lesson, e.g., *Morkinskinna's Hreiðars þáttur heimiska* where the fool-esque Icelander Hreiðarr hints to the regent Magnús góði that it is best not to intervene in an island's ownership,¹¹⁶ or Flateyjarbók's redaction of *Sneglu-Halla þáttur*, where another provocative Icelander eats gruel in order to teach the king a lesson about under-feeding his *hirð*.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, the similarities between the Guðmundar are striking, and clearly indicate literary connections, though in which direction is uncertain.¹¹⁸ A thirteenth–fourteenth-century Icelandic (or, at any rate, a Northern Icelandic) audience of *Ljósvetninga saga's* C-redaction, then, would have likely seen their own Guðmundur Arason inn góði in the text's Guðmundr Eyjólfsson inn ríki; either because the *Ófeigs þáttur* narrative was modelled after the bishop, or the writer of the saint's miracles modelled his account on the story. The fifteenth-century Northern audience of AM 162 c fol., could, in turn, have seen Guðmundur Arason hinn ríki in both his partial namesakes: *Guðmundr Eyjólfsson inn ríki* and *Guðmundr Arason inn góði*. Since—according to Stefán Karlsson's dating—the manuscript could have been written anytime between 1420–1450 we cannot say for certain what preceded what: the writing down of the manuscript or Guðmundur Arason's raid of Húnavatnssýsla. Nevertheless, its incorporation in light of Guðmundur Arason hinn ríki's prominent character does make sense, even if there were other reasons to incorporate the story.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ ÍF 26:169–170 [ch.14].

¹¹⁴ ÍF 27:115–116 [ch. 80].

¹¹⁵ Magerøy, “Guðmundr góði,” 25.

¹¹⁶ ÍF 23:164 [ch.26]. On this see Yoav Tirosh, “Icelanders Abroad,” 505.

¹¹⁷ On the differences between the redactions' portrayal of Sneglu-Halli see Yoav Tirosh, “Scolding the Skald: The Construction of Cultural Memory in *Morkinskinna's Sneglu-Halla þáttur*,” 3. In the *Morkinskinna* version, the message of the gruel eating is more about issues of Icelandic identity.

¹¹⁸ Magerøy, “Guðmundr góði,” 28. Note that his dating of *Ljósvetninga saga* is 1260–1280 (28). Miller and Andersson's earlier dating of c. 1220 makes things more complicated, since this was in the middle of Guðmundr's tenure as bishop.

¹¹⁹ See discussion of AM 162 c's organizing principles in The Part About the Genres.

While *Ófeigs þáttur* is the obvious example, it is possible to read the whole of AM 162 c fol.'s representation of Guðmundr Eyjólfsson inn ríki as a Barði Guðmundssonian *níðrit* of Guðmundur Arason hinn ríki. While we know little to nothing about the wealthy man's personality, the massive disputes that surrounded his inheritance¹²⁰ could indicate a man not too concerned by what happens after his death, though admittedly his departure from Iceland in 1445 was unexpected and abrupt. This fits well with the problematic familial ties that Guðmundr Eyjólfsson has throughout *Ljósvetninga saga*. Like Guðmundr Eyjólfsson, Guðmundur Arason hinn ríki also lost his father by drowning.¹²¹ If we are to believe Björn Þorsteinsson and Arnór Sigurjónsson, Guðmundur Arason hinn ríki—like Guðmundr Eyjólfsson, as discussed in the chapter Are Each of the Redactions Internally Consistent?—had problematic relations with foreigners that put him at odds with his contemporaries. Guðmundr Eyjólfsson's paranormal and somewhat abrupt death also echoes Guðmundur Arason hinn ríki's mysterious fate.

Things are further complicated, however, when one considers that Guðmundr Eyjólfsson inn ríki lived all his life in Möðruvellir í Eyjafirði. Loftur Guttormsson, AM 162 c fol.'s scribe Ólafur Loftsson's father, also lived in Möðruvellir í Eyjafirði, and was also considered an immensely wealthy person. Like the Guðmundar Eyjólfsson and Arason, Loftur's epithet was *hinn ríki*. As Robert S. Lopez said about the European tenth century, “never was this epithet [‘the Great’] used more frequently [than] in that century, so unpropitious to greatness.”¹²² Indeed, everybody seems to be *ríki* in the fifteenth century. In addition to Guðmundur Arason and Loftur Guttormsson, Björn hirðstjóri Þorleifsson was also awarded the by-name *ríki*, interestingly after he raided and seized Guðmundur Arason's wealth, alongside his brother Einar, in the year 1445. When Einar died some years later, Björn Þorleifsson hinn ríki became the wealthiest man in

¹²⁰ Hans Jacob Orning, “Feuds in Fact and Fiction.”

¹²¹ Though death by drowning was certainly an unexceptional way of losing one's life in medieval Iceland.

¹²² Robert S. Lopez, *The Birth of Europe*, 116.

the country.¹²³ Björn had also been Loftur Guttormsson's son-in-law; he married Ólöf ríka Loftsdóttir, probably the most famous female Icelander of the fifteenth century.

When in 1427 Guðmundur Arason raided Húnavatnssýsla, it was Loftur's obligation as the *hirðstjóri* of the North and West to put him to justice. Nevertheless, we hear of no repercussions to Guðmundur's actions until two decades later, when Loftur was no longer *hirðstjóri* (or alive). In addition, Loftur was on friendly terms with Hólar bishop Jón Vilhjálmsson Craxton. Jón was an English clergyman, who is argued by Björn Þorsteinsson to have been Norwegian by birth.¹²⁴ Like the bishop Guðmundr Arason and Guðmundr inn ríki Eyjólfsson, Bishop Jón needed a reminder from his *officialis*, Ari Þorbjarnarson, in regard to how many people he was advised to take with him for his visits along the bishopric,¹²⁵ and in one case granted truce to Englishmen who were involved in a battle against Icelanders in Skagafjörður.¹²⁶ These connections with Bishop Jón and Guðmundur Arason puts Loftur in the strange situation of being tied to enemies of the Icelandic people. Guðmundur as an aristocratic assailant, and Jón Craxton as a foreign bishop who imposed a foreign interest and protected men who wronged Icelanders in his bishopric. This is not dissimilar to Guðmundr Eyjólfsson inn ríki and Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði joining together against the latter's sons by the invocation of a foreign leader, Hákon jarl. Loftur Guttormsson's loyalties could have been both split between the financial benefits that arose from his association with the English and the English bishop, and the Danish crown and its power to politically make and break a person through its control over royal offices in Iceland as well as over outlawry. The fifteenth-century Icelanders also needed the Danish crown itself to lift the prohibitions concerning trade with the English, trade that was happening anyway, albeit illegally so.¹²⁷

¹²³ Arnór Sigurjónsson, *Vestfirðinga saga*, 115.

¹²⁴ Björn Þorsteinsson, *Enska öldin í sögu Íslendinga*, 83–84.

¹²⁵ DI 4: item 468, pp. 425–426. On this see Arnór Sigurjónsson, *Vestfirðinga saga*, 96.

¹²⁶ Arnór Sigurjónsson, *Ásvejasaga*, 73–75; Björn Þorsteinsson, *Enska öldin í sögu Íslendinga*, 66–68.

¹²⁷ Boulhosa, *Icelanders and the Kings of Norway*, 132–139.

How is Ólafur Loftsson's scribing of AM 162 c fol., or even Guðbrandur Vigfússon's suggestion of a connection between the manuscript and Loftur Guttormsson,¹²⁸ settled with this negative portrayal of the main character who shares so many similarities with Loftur Guttormsson and his alleged ally, Guðmundur Arason hinn ríki, the cousin of Ólafur Loftsson's wife? Ólafur was a relatively older son of Loftur Guttormsson who aided his father, at least in his capacity as scribe, from early on in his father's career.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, and despite his noteworthy marriage to Hrafn Guðmundsson's daughter Guðrún, he is nowhere near as successful and powerful as his legitimate half-siblings Þorvarðr or Ólöf.¹³⁰ Interestingly, Ólafur himself was a witness to his father's will and testament, and one can perhaps imagine that this added to any resentment when he heard of the vast amounts awarded to his half-siblings.¹³¹ All this to say that while Ólafur probably had his father's best interests in mind—the stronger his father's political and financial powers were, the stronger his own were—it is not beyond possibility that he would keep a stab or two at his powerful dad in *Ljósvetninga saga*, especially since that character is named Guðmundr and brings to mind Guðmundur Arason more immediately than it does Loftur Guttormsson.

This discussion of the synchronic elements, as with the *Lundarbrekumál*, are fascinating, but also in danger of being easily disproved. What if a well-trained codicologist concludes ten years from now that the scribe was rather Jón Pálsson Maríuskáld, or some other anonymous figure from the fifteenth century? The idea that Guðmundr inn ríki Eyjólfsson would have reminded a mid-fifteenth-century audience of Guðmundr hinn ríki Arason is likely, regardless of the scribe's identity, but other thoughts could need re-evaluation. Could the twelfth-century magnate Guðmundr dýri Þorvaldsson, who burned down Qnundur Þorkelsson, also be a figure

¹²⁸ *Origines Islandicae* [...], eds. Gudbrand Vigfússon and F. York Powell, 346.

¹²⁹ Evidenced, for example, in the 1424 document DI 4: item 377, pp. 317–319, where Ólafur witnesses a land purchase by his father.

¹³⁰ Compare with the illegitimate Þorsteinn Þorleifsson's support of his legitimate brother Björn Þorleifsson. Jóhanna Katrín Friðríksdóttir, "Ideology and Identity," 110.

¹³¹ DI 4: item 555, pp. 518–520.

through which Guðmundr Eyjólfsson in ríki was viewed?¹³² In addition, it would be wise to remember that *Ljósvetninga saga* was not the only saga in the AM 162 c fol.; there are currently six extant sagas (including *Þorsteins þáttr stangarhöggss*) in the manuscript, and Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell posited that there must have been at least four or five more within its leaves.¹³³ This means that the overall manuscript was bigger than just the story of Guðmundr Eyjólfsson inn ríki, and we therefore do not need to reconcile every occurrence in the saga with events and characters from the fifteenth century. It is also important to consider that different details meant different things to different people at different times. This is important to remember when conducting a synchronic analysis like this. As twenty-first-century people, we pick and choose events that seem to us more significant than others, but the fact is that we only have a very limited picture of the lives lived by the fifteenth-century people discussed. What is deemed here to be significant details for them can therefore sometimes be less important than assumed. Nevertheless, synchronic readings illuminate the past and point at possible aims that the author/compiler could have had.

4.3.3 A Diachronic Reading of *Ljósvetninga saga*: AM 162 c fol. and the Fifteenth Century

One thing that is clear from the examples of Guðmundr Eyjólfsson inn ríki, Guðmundr Arason inn góði, and Guðmundur Arason hinn ríki, is that throughout Icelandic medieval history, similar concerns kept rising.

¹³² Barði Guðmundsson made this connection, for example, but then reminded readers that the main point of comparison should be between Þorvarðr and Guðmundr inn ríki, *Ljósvetninga saga og Saurbæingar*, 64–65. Another noteworthy Guðmundr is Goðmundr á Glæsivöllum, who would make this long line of Guðmundar in Old Norse memory even longer. Goðmundr was a heathen king (who is sometimes described as monstrous) appearing both in several *fornaldarsögur*, but also in Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum* (where he is called Guthmundus). For a review of the character's abundance in Old Norse texts, see, for example, the recent Master's thesis written by Felix Lummer: *Guðmundr á Glæsivöllum: A Study of Potential Foreign Influences*. The connection in the traditions between Guðmundr á Möðruvöllum and Goðmundr á Glæsivöllum is tempting but requires further study.

¹³³ *Origines Islandicae*, 345.

Overbearing local-leaders who rode in large numbers and who disrupted daily life, either through raiding farms or exploiting their hospitality, were an issue that concerned the tenth–eleventh century just as much as it concerned the thirteenth century and the fifteenth century. The same people who reminded the Danish government of its duties towards Iceland by the invocation of *Gamli sáttmáli*¹³⁴ were the people that recognized the benefits of the Danish system of governance, and saw the Icelandic aristocracy as a volatile, self-serving force. These people also had to negotiate between pleasing the Danish court and maintaining financially beneficial ties with the English. All these concerns are apparent in a text like *Ljósvetninga saga*, which allowed its authors to describe a past where things were sometimes better, sometimes worse, and sometimes the same—but always a relevant comparison with the present.

In general, *Ljósvetninga saga*'s C-redaction offers a vision of right and wrong leadership. Guðmundr inn ríki clearly falls on the far-wrong side of that spectrum, as does his son Eyjólfur. In chapters 1–4, *Ljósvetninga saga* presents Guðmundr as so concerned to please Hákon jarl that he is willing to pit a father against his sons. In *Sorla þáttr*, we have the vision of a father who denies his daughter an ideal marriage due to issues of ego and, possibly, misguided lust.¹³⁵ In *Voðu-Brands þáttr*, Guðmundr over-reaches and tries to hurt a *þingmaðr* of the powerful chieftain Þorkell Geitisson. Other prominent Icelanders such as Ófeigr Járngerðarson and Þorsteinn Síðu-Hallsson, as well as Guðmundr's own brother Einarr, unite to stop this. In chapters 13–21 we see the portrait of a man who has it all and uses his power to avenge any slight against him. Though vengeance against insults towards one's masculinity is understandable if not encouraged in the eleventh century, Guðmundr goes about it in a roundabout way: he uses his superior legal clout to humiliate and outlaw Einarr, and employs a large, unproportional force to kill his enemy Þorkell hákr. Eyjólfur, like his father Guðmundr, also prefers the continuation of feud over settlement, at the

¹³⁴ Boulhosa, *Icelanders and the Kings of Norway*, 132–139. See Helgi Þorláksson's partial response to the legal issues Boulhosa raises in "Er Gamli sáttmáli tómur tilbúningur?"

¹³⁵ Misguided in the eyes of the medieval audience.

price of his own brother's life. When a negotiation between the sides is discussed, the Mōðruvellingar representative Gellir states: “ek veit vilja Eyólfs, at hann vill sjálf ákveða ok fjársektum ráða, vill hann eigi sættast við Þorvarð, ok Brandr ok Höskuldr, Þorkell ok Hallr fari utan skógarmenn ferjandi.”¹³⁶ While Eyjólfur is willing, unlike his father, to participate in battles when he has a chance of losing—like the skirmishes that lead to the battle of Kakalahóll—he still shows a similarity to his father when he avoids both the options to turn the Ljósvetningar into *skógarmenn óferjandi* or to reach a settlement, and sends his enemies away from Iceland instead. This choice makes sense, but considering the number of condemned people, it seems excessive. Finally, in *Þórarins þátr ofsa*, when the unpopular psychopath Þorgeirr Hávarsson is killed, Eyjólfur, like his father, prefers to go against the will of the people and instead avenges the death of this *hirðmaðr* of King Ólafr helgi. Unfortunately, we do not know how the story ends, but if we follow the *Fóstbræðra saga* account,¹³⁷ Eyjólfur (in *Fóstbræðra saga*, it is his father Guðmundr) probably achieves vengeance for the king, either through financial compensation, blood-vengeance, or both. The image of the Mōðruvellingar, then, is of a group that plays against the rules, uses their large numbers ‘unfairly’ in their favor, and prefers foreign powers and prestige over loyalty to their countrymen.¹³⁸ As was already noted, for a saga that features the Ljósvetningar, the story of the conversion—or at least some kind of mention of it—is sorely missing. This is due, I believe, to the fact that Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði is on the side of Guðmundr inn ríki. If, in the later chapters, the Ljósvetningar represent Christian thinking and morals,¹³⁹ the Þorgeirssynir also perform a pagan *goðablóð* ceremony to strip their father of his *goði* status.¹⁴⁰ To mention the

¹³⁶ *Ljósv.* 1830, 94 [ch. 27]; ÍF 10:89. “I am well enough acquainted with Eyjolf to know that he will want to set the terms himself and assess the amounts of the compensation awards, [...] He will not settle with Thorvard unless Brand, Hoskuld, Thorkel, and Hall are exiled as full outlaws with passage abroad allowed them” (228).

¹³⁷ ÍF 6:215 [ch. 18].

¹³⁸ This is not an image of Guðmundr inn ríki unique to *Ljósvetninga saga*. See *Heimskringla* ÍF 27:215–217 [ch. 125].

¹³⁹ See Lauren Poyer’s forthcoming PhD chapter on *Ljósvetninga saga*.

¹⁴⁰ ÍF 10:14.

conversion would have created too much of a contrast between the Christian Þorgeirr and his pagan sons, with which the saga's sympathies lie. Better, then, to get rid of the story altogether.

Another preoccupation of the two time periods that emerges when reading diachronocally is the interaction with foreigners, which is met with ambivalence in the C-redaction text.¹⁴¹ If, in the A-version, the character Akra-Þorgils is localized to Akrar í Hörgadal,¹⁴² the C-redaction's Akra-Þórir is introduced without the exact location of his farm. This is noteworthy since in *Sálus saga ok Níkanórs*, the Middle-Eastern brothers kidnap Níkanór's sister Potentia to Akur/Acre, whence she is freed. When we consider that the siege of Acre was the scene of the Danes' greatest known involvement in the Third Crusade,¹⁴³ the possibility arises that these AM 162 c fol. mentions of Akur and Akrar are meant to invoke the Danish achievement, which endorses a positive attitude towards foreigners. While Þorgeirr and Guðmundr are judged harshly for their alliance with jarl Hákon, and while Eyjólftr's employment by Ólafr helgi to avenge Þorgeirr Hávarsson is not in accordance with popular opinion, we also come across cases where the opposite is the case: namely, the Ljósvetningar's travels after the battle at Kakalahóll are not portrayed negatively, rather they have honorable interactions with kings and venture on pilgrimages to Rome during their exile. In addition, Guðmundr's estranged son Halldórr, portrayed in the saga as an honorable man who protects his mother at all cost, is also related to have died in the battle of Clontarf,¹⁴⁴ presumably under the employ of a king.¹⁴⁵ This kind of ambivalence makes sense in the context of the fifteenth century, where, generally, power and respect came from the Danish and papal courts, but the riches came from

¹⁴¹ See Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, "Ideology and Identity," 112, 119.

¹⁴² Unfortunately, I was not able to localize Þorgils' farm in Hörgadalur. Many thanks to Emily Lethbridge for her advice on the matter.

¹⁴³ Janus Møller Jensen, "Martyrs for the Faith: Denmark, the Third Crusade and the Fall of Acre in 1191."

¹⁴⁴ According to Björn Sigfússon, Halldórr should have been dead already when the failed burning scene takes place. See ÍF 10:XXVII–XXIX.

¹⁴⁵ ÍF 10:61 [ch. 12 (22)] and ÍF 12:453, 460 [ch. 157].

England. Interestingly, when one of the minor *Möðruvellingar*, Oddi Grímsson, comes back from his travels to Rome, he goes to the court of King Knútr inn ríki, thirty years after this regent's passing, rather than the current king of Denmark at the time, Sveinn Úlfsson.¹⁴⁶ Oddi criticizes the powerful king for paying him and his men too small a gift. The king, in reaction, gives a significantly larger sum. Knútr, who controlled both England and Denmark, represents both countries, and this often-discussed moment of blatant historical discrepancy highlights the fact that herein lies a general statement about foreign rulers, both Danish and English: They must be generous if they wish to earn their people's respect—at least when it comes to the Icelanders. It is important to bear in mind that this is a nation that was struggling at the time to get their rights recognized by the Danish king and to allow for legal trade with the English.

A concern of both the saga and the fifteenth century are people who are disloyal to their families. These are also criticized throughout the text: the cowardly Hrafn is blinded by Eyjólf's powers and does not always keep his kin group's best interest in mind; Guðmundr inn ríki's problematic relationship with and lack of loyalty to his family have been much discussed; Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði fights his own sons; and Eyjólf becomes estranged from his morally-superior brother Koðrán. These characters are contrasted against the wise marriage of Sqrli Brodd-Helgason to Þórdís the daughter of Guðmundr, and then Þorkell Geitisson's marriage to Einarr of Þverá's daughter Jórunn. Both marriages help resolve the long-lasting discord between Þorkell Geitisson and Bjarni Brodd-Helgason. The late fifteenth-century inheritance dispute surrounding Guðmundr Arason hinn ríki shows that ties of kinship through birth and marriage did not matter to all.¹⁴⁷

The change in societal structures had a significant impact on the fifteenth-century audience of *Ljósvetninga saga*. As Jón Viðar Sigurðsson has pointed out, with the introduction of Norwegian rule over Iceland, the

¹⁴⁶ ÍF 10:104, n. 4; *Law and Literature*, 244, n. 212.

¹⁴⁷ Orning, *Reality of the Fantastic*, 322–329.

connections between the chieftains and their followers were replaced with the aristocracy's direct connection to the king: "the duty of the service aristocracy was to govern rather than to lead."¹⁴⁸ Since the aristocracy lost interest in the support of household members to maintain feuds,¹⁴⁹ the *hreppr* support system gained more significance in society.¹⁵⁰ This communal system designated usually twenty farms or more, based on geographical location and independent on the *goðar* and parish system, as a community, which took care of its poor but also settled small matters such as grazing rights and fire and livestock insurance.¹⁵¹ This kind of societal shift is reflected in *Ófeigs þáttr*. During a *hreppr* meeting, the farmers ask the prominent leader for help. As noted above, Ófeigr's status is never confirmed as a *goði* or a *þingmaðr*, it is simply stated that he was "vinur þeirra bræður," meaning Guðmundr and Einarr.¹⁵² The *þáttr* reflects a society where the chieftain has significance: Guðmundr inn ríki becomes most overbearing precisely in the moment when he caters to his district, but does so in his own excessive way. But in a way the text also pits the exploitative chieftain against the solidarity of the *hreppr* leader. It is interesting that Hans Jacob Orning points at the ducal tendency of *Sálus saga ok Níkanórs*.¹⁵³ This preference towards the lower ranks of governance, then, is common to both *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Sálus saga ok Níkanórs*, though it does not wish to promote a break within traditional rank, which is apparent in the vanquish of the Droplaugarsynir in their eponymous saga. These stories would be preaching to the fifteenth-century Icelandic choir; the *goðar* system brought to power characters such as Guðmundr inn ríki and his unbearable demands on his *þingmenn*. The legal change that came from the Norwegian rule, then, is actually a blessing.

¹⁴⁸ Jón Viðar Sigurðsson "The Changing Role of Friendship in Iceland, c. 900–1300," 57. For the *hreppr* system, see also *Law and Literature*, 140, n. 36.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Erika Sigurdsson, *The Church in Fourteenth Century Iceland*, 31–32, for the argument that feud continued despite Norwegian rule.

¹⁵⁰ Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, "The Changing Role," 55–62.

¹⁵¹ Jesse Byock, *Viking Age Iceland*, 137–138; Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, 19–20.

¹⁵² Based on "Syv Sagablað," 45.

¹⁵³ Orning, *Reality of the Fantastic*, 125, 142, n. 13.

This diachronic reading allows for the similarities and differences between past and present to be charted more significantly than in a synchronic reading, where most events are seen as a key to understanding the period of writing, rather than the importance of the period when the story takes place. The fifteenth-century Icelanders saw their ancestors living lives that were in many ways similar—overbearing chieftains imposing their wills on the local farmers—but also saw more champions who looked after local interests rather than big-picture politics. The upper classes would also recognize their own dilemmas and struggles in the stories of their predecessors, and would be able to think through issues of mixed loyalties between different societal forces.

4.3.4 A Diachronic Reading of *Ljósvetninga saga*: AM 561 4to and the Fourteenth-Century *fin de siècle*

The origin of AM 561 4to is unclear, and the dating of the manuscript is broad (sometime between late fourteenth and early fifteenth century). This makes it hard to determine much about the interests of the people who wrote down the manuscript. Social and political concerns must have shifted after a traumatic event such as the Black Plague,¹⁵⁴ so whether the manuscript was written before or after this is significant. Nevertheless, it is interesting to consider the A-redaction in light of the end of the fourteenth century in Iceland, if only as a contrast to the C-redaction.

If, as we shall see below in the discussion of genre, the focus of the extant AM 162 c fol. sagas is Northeastern Icelandic politics, the three extant sagas of AM 561 4to pose us with a problem of a clear focal point. As will be discussed in The Part About Genre, if *Reykdale saga* and *Ljósvetninga saga* together create a larger narrative and an almost straightforward

¹⁵⁴ The disagreement on the number of Black Plague victims is irrelevant to this point. Chris Callow and Charles Evans state: “It seems unlikely that either outbreak in Iceland killed much more than about 25% of the population” (“The mystery of plague in medieval Iceland,” 30). These numbers, despite being lower than the common estimate, are certainly dramatic. Imagine that one in four *Íslendingasögur* characters named Þorsteinn died abruptly: this would certainly be a significant and immediately felt loss.

sequence of events, *Gull-Þóris saga* disrupts this. The scope of *Ljósvetninga saga* itself, then, is also significantly narrower. If the stories of Sǫrli, Ófeigr, Vǫðu-Brandr and Þórarinn ofsi are excluded, all that is left is a straightforward story of a single-generation conflict between a group of brothers and a forceful *goði*. But what themes can be found within this story? *Ljósvetninga saga* discusses the disintegration of kinship ties: at his death Guðmundr inn ríki becomes alienated from his son Halldórr, his wife Þorlaug, his brother Einarr, and his larger kin group, reflected in Brúni's assistance to his brother Eilífr following the killing of Rindill. Þorgeirr's fight against his own sons in the name of a foreign ruler also reflects this, as does the minimal effort the Þorgeirssynir make in order to avenge their problematic brother Þorkell hákr. This neglect of kinship ties could be associated with the same phenomena mentioned above [in the discussion of the fifteenth century, the move from a "kin-based aristocracy" to direct service of the king].¹⁵⁵

This propensity to "govern rather than to lead" discussed above escalated in the mid-fourteenth century. In 1354, King Magnús Eriksson—in need of quick cash—introduced the idea that instead of transferring taxes on a regular basis, the *hirðstjórar* of Iceland would pay him a large sum for the right to keep whatever they collect, making this position essentially 'rented.' As Elizabeth Ashman Rowe states, "this system encouraged violence and extortion."¹⁵⁶ Indeed, this position had become occupied by forceful men who did much to maximize their profits from their positions, the climax of which was the Grundarbardagi, where the present rental-*hirðstjóri*—a Norwegian—and one of his Icelandic predecessors were killed by a force that included another past rental-*hirðstjóri*.¹⁵⁷ Árni Daníel

¹⁵⁵ Jón Viðar Sigurðsson "The Changing Role," 56.

¹⁵⁶ Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók [...]*, 149.

¹⁵⁷ According to the *Annalbrudstykkje frá Skálholt*, Jón Guttormsson skráveifa had with him 30 men, *Íslandske annaler indtil 1578*, 225–226. This is three times the amount he was allowed, Ashman Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók*, 251. It is certainly possible that this dramatic event would have been on the AM 162 c fol. author's mind when he wrote of Guðmundr inn ríki's retinue of 30 people in *Ófeigs þáttur*.

Júliússon frames this event in the context of peasant revolts,¹⁵⁸ and *Ljósvetninga saga* certainly represents a distrust towards the chieftain class: they bicker among each other, and it is their householders who suffer. Even the relatively positively portrayed Ljósvetningar employ violence and coercion to get their way. At the beginning of the saga, Arnsteinn never gets his part of the Ljósvetningar-*godorð* back, which was taken from him by force.¹⁵⁹ The A-redaction text criticizes Þórir Helgason twice: once indirectly, for his inability to protect his *þingmenn*,¹⁶⁰ and later on he is slyly criticized by Þorgils for losing ground against Guðmundr inn ríki, the implication being that many of his *þingmenn* suffer, while Þórir essentially does nothing.¹⁶¹ Indeed, as Marion Poilvez points out, the implications for Þórir Helgason himself are minute: his travels help to increase his wealth and prestige.¹⁶² The aristocracy bickers amongst itself for power, and the householders suffer. This is much more pronounced in the A-redaction, since in the C-redaction the Ljósvetningar solidarity and *Voðu-Brands þáttr* offer a more positive form of *godar*-ship, while *Sorla þáttr* and *Ófeigs þáttr* offer an alternative for the *godar*, Þórarinn as the powerful *hirðsmaðr* who can sway the heart of Guðmundr inn ríki, and Ófeigr, the *hreppr*'s only hope.

¹⁵⁸ Árni Daniél Júliússon, “Peasant unrest in Iceland,” 126–127.

¹⁵⁹ Though, admittedly, this part is missing in AM 561 4to, so perhaps in this version Arnsteinn got back his chieftaincy. This is unlikely, due to the fact that, while names and order of events change in the narrative, the contradictions between the two redactions’ portrayal of events are usually minute. See this thesis’s chapter Are Each of the Redactions Internally Consistent?

¹⁶⁰ ÍF 10:20–21.

¹⁶¹ ÍF 10:24.

¹⁶² Marion Poilvez, “Discipline or Punish? Travels and outlawry as social structures in medieval Iceland.”

4.4 Conclusion

You got a nine to five, so I'll take the night shift, / and I'll
never see you again if I can help it. / In five years I hope
the songs feel like covers / dedicated to new lovers.

—“Night Shift,” Lucy Dacus¹⁶³

If the same examples were sometimes to illustrate synchronic and diachronic readings of *Ljósvetninga saga*, this should not surprise us. As Schwartz points out, “[t]he distinction between memory as a “model of” and “model for” society is an analytic, not empirical, distinction; both aspects of it are realized in every act of remembrance.”¹⁶⁴ The multitude of overlapping, but not contradictory, interpretations allows for the (perhaps obvious) realization that these texts meant different things to different people in different stages of history, like Lucy Dacus’s songs that are meant for one lover at one point of history, but then turn into cover songs for new lovers as time progresses. This realization allows us to step back from the search for a presently unattainable original form of the text, since certain elements could have been added by later scribes and compilers. What we should do instead is contemplate the extant text and speculate on the meaning that it signified for its audience in different stages of its reception. Such analysis reveals the persistent relevance of these founding narratives that reaches far beyond the original impulse to put these stories to parchment.¹⁶⁵

Different avenues of interpretation—situated in history and related to memory—can contribute to our understanding of a saga and its variances. While in no way a complete analysis of the possible implications the historical circumstances might have on our reading of *Ljósvetninga saga*, this chapter questioned the advantages of keying historical events too strictly

¹⁶³ *Historian*, Matador, 2018.

¹⁶⁴ Schwartz, “Memory as a Cultural System,” 910.

¹⁶⁵ For the application of the Assmanns’ “founding narratives” concept in Old Norse literature, see Pernille Hermann, “Founding Narratives.”

to the authorial present, but also addressed the avenues and alleyways that such interpretations open up to us. Barði Guðmundsson's reading of *Ljósvetninga saga* in relation to late thirteenth-century politics is productive at times, his meticulous method points out similarities between Gizurr Þorvaldsson and Guðmundr inn ríki, or Mqrðr Valgarðsson and Þorvarðr úr Saurbæ. But Barði's extreme Bookprose interpretation, in a sense, ransacks the memory of the past, with all that is left behind being authorial construction.¹⁶⁶ This author-based approach has its benefits, however, and it was therefore applied not to the saga's thirteenth-century author, but rather to its fifteenth-century scribe, Ólafur Loftsson. By tracing his life and his milieu, the saga's relevance to his own life and lifetime were made clear. In this reading, memory offers a synchronic model *of* society, one that used Hrafn Þorkelsson of Lundarbrekka to condemn Þorkell Guðbjartsson, and Guðmundr inn ríki Eyjólfsson to condemn Ólafur's father's circle, most prominently Guðmundur Arason hinn ríki. But "a past that merely reproduces the present suggests no answers to its dilemmas,"¹⁶⁷ and therefore a diachronic approach that uses memory as a model *for* society viewed the issues that preoccupied the fifteenth century more generally. This diachronic reading offered ways in which the Icelanders dealt with—and condemned—the problematic behavior of their own aristocracy, and the negotiation between the need to appease both the royal Danish interest and the financially-beneficial English merchants. If AM 162 c fol.'s context offers us various avenues of interpretation, the lack of context for AM 561 4to makes a similar analysis more difficult. This highlights the advantages and disadvantages of a manuscript-based collective memory analysis: it requires more context than is sometimes available to us in the generally paratext-less world of medieval Icelandic manuscripts.

¹⁶⁶ For a much more positive approach towards Barði Guðmundsson's study, see Peter Hallberg, "Nyare Studier," 244–47, and Hallberg, "Njálas författare."

¹⁶⁷ Schwartz, "Memory as a Cultural System," 922.

5. The Part about the Genres

On April 3rd, 2018 the episode titled “Roseanne Gets the Chair” of the then-renewed *Roseanne* featured the following dialogue:

ROSEANNE

Dan, you’re snorin’, wake up.

DAN

What time is it? Did I miss dinner?

ROSEANNE

It’s eleven o’clock. We slept from ‘Wheel’ to ‘Kimmel.’

DAN

We missed all the shows about black and Asian families.

ROSEANNE

They’re just like us. There, now you’re all caught up.¹

Since then the show has been cancelled by its broadcaster ABC because of racially problematic tweets by the show’s creator and star, Roseanne Barr, and there are certainly problematic undertones in the quote above: who are “they” and who is “us”? But an important element of this scene is that it reveals how connected genre and society can be. Roseanne is referring to television shows that feature African- and Asian-American actors in the lead roles,² which operate within the same genre as the show *Roseanne*, namely the sitcom.³ The characters in *Roseanne* are white, and

¹ *Roseanne*, 225, “Roseanne Gets the Chair,” directed by John Pasquin, written by Sid Youngers, April 3, 2018, ABC.

² See Sonia Saraiya, “‘Roseanne’: Is the Show Really ‘Just Like Us’?” *Variety*, April 4, 2018, <https://variety.com/2018/tv/columns/roseanne-abc-blackish-fresh-off-the-boat-column-1202744021/>. She argues that Roseanne is specifically referring to “Black-ish” and “Fresh Off the Boat,” both featured on ABC like *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*. *Wheel of Fortune*, however, belongs to the NBC network, so it could be that this joke did not target any specific show.

³ Jason Mittell, *Genre and Television*, 182.

therefore belong to the American sitcom “us,” whereas the “black and Asian families” belong to the American sitcom “them,” *The Cosby Show* notwithstanding. By stating, “they’re just like us,” Roseanne is essentially stating that through the genre of the sitcom, groups that are in marginal positions in American society become incorporated into the societal norm. Genres and genre divisions have the power to indicate what is the norm and what is the exception, the “us” and the “them.” This, it seems, is why genres persist as a topic of discussion and why they are constantly being shifted and negotiated in scholarship. Indicating that a text belongs to a certain genre, and determining how this genre operates, is a statement about the society that produced these texts, just as much as it is about literature. In the Old Norse field, this has been best articulated in recent years in the debate surrounding polysystem theory—originally developed by Itamar Even-Zohar⁴—which posits that within every literary system are a myriad of corpora that exist side by side, with their own—at times autonomous and at times interconnected—operations.⁵ This theory suggests a complex connection between individual literary and cultural systems (or “repertoires”) operating within almost every society in the world. Polysystem theory is an effective prism through which to consider saga texts, in that it highlights the connection between power and literature: different forces in society are represented by different literary systems. The question we need to keep in mind is to what extent the different genres in Old Norse literature indeed represent different cultures. While it is easy to argue a difference in regard to translated literature that introduces a foreign world of courtly values and behaviors to a mostly rural society, to what extent

⁴ Itamar Even-Zohar, “Polysystem Theory.” This approach is heavily influenced from Russian Formalism and their systematic and diachronic analysis of literature (Even-Zohar, “Factors and Dependencies in Culture: A Revised Outline for Polysystem Culture Research,” 16–7. See also Jurij Tynjanov, “On Literary Evolution”), while Even-Zohar’s model is best used to explain the position of translated literature within a certain society’s literature (Even-Zohar, “Polysystem,” see also Stefka Georgieva Eriksen, “The Change in Position of Translated *Riddarasögur* within Old Norse Literary Polysystems: A Case Study of *Elíss saga ok Rósamundar*”).

⁵ E.g., Torfi H. Tulinius, “Writing Strategies: Romance and the Creation of a New Genre in Medieval Iceland,” and Massimiliano Bampi, “The Development of the Fornaldarsögur as a Genre: a Polysystemic Approach.”

can we call the Icelandic bishops, the Norwegian kings, and the Icelandic feuding farmers from both the *Íslendingasögur* and the *samtíðasögur* representatives of different cultures as opposed to different aspects of the same culture?⁶

Successful application of polysystem theory requires a clear understanding of the diachronic developments within a system. This understanding is unattainable for Old Norse material because of the problems inherent with dating the sagas. This thesis then elects to treat genre from a wider, cultural perspective, with the acknowledgment that a more specific look into the individual forces that were in operation in Old Norse medieval society is not possible. Furthermore, this chapter's focus on manuscript context for generic grouping necessarily means that the period discussed is the fifteenth century rather than the thirteenth. The focus on scholarship, in turn, means that the notions being questioned are that of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries rather than the thirteenth, or even the fifteenth. The category of post-classical *Íslendingasögur*, it will be shown, was invented by scholarship and did not exist in any sense in the medieval understanding of genre.

This chapter sets out to understand what *Ljósvetninga saga* is from a generic point of view. Previous chapters explored how the saga's reception has been influenced by constant scholarly debate that figuratively and literally took the saga apart, even though both of its redactions' inner-logics are solid. These are both stand-alone pieces, whether they are derived from each other or developed side-by-side. After each redaction has—especially the C-redaction—has been situated within its own historical time and place, the next step is to understand the generic place of the saga itself, with the goal to reveal whether our generic expectations from the saga are

⁶ In her post-colonial criticism of the use of the term “hybridity” in film genre studies, Janet Staiger questions whether or not Hollywood generic filmmaking could ever be truly termed as hybrid: “I seriously doubt that the strands of patterns that intermix in Hollywood filmmaking are from different species. Rather, they are in the same language family of Western culture. The breeding occurring is not cross-cultural, but perhaps, and with a full sense of the derogatory implications involved, even a case of *inbreeding*.” Janet Staiger, “Hybrid or Inbred,” 17. Italics in original.

similar to the ones that existed during the time of its extant compilation. The chapter starts with a discussion of what *Ljósvetninga saga* is generically, and how we can define the *Íslendingasögur*. It then contends with the often used but little criticized term ‘post-classical’ *Íslendingasögur*, revealing the false premises behind the concept. After discussing this group of texts in general, the chapter focuses on two important sagas for the discussion of *Ljósvetninga saga*’s manuscript context: *Gull-Þóris saga*, which appears in AM 561 4to, and *Finnboga saga*, which appears in AM 162 c fol. The discussion of *Gull-Þóris saga* will reveal the fallacy of dating based on somewhat arbitrary criteria, while the discussion of *Finnboga saga* will question the assumptions of our current definition of the *Íslendingasögur*. Finally, the chapter will suggest another way of looking at genre: manuscript context. Manuscript context will be offered as one such point of departure, and the sagas of both AM 561 4to and AM 162 c fol. will then be looked at as how they work together, and what organizational principle could be behind these decisions. The main differences between *Ljósvetninga saga*’s A-redaction and C-redaction, will be explained through their respective positions in the manuscript.

This chapter makes use of film and television genre studies with two aims. The first is the belief that our notions of genre are in many ways established by our own world. By showing that even the Western’s status as a stable film genre is uncertain, the aim is for us to reconsider how much our own beliefs in the obvious shared qualities accepted of Old Norse genres are based on false notions. Another aim is to disrupt our usual frameworks in Old Norse research by bringing in material that is seldom used in comparison beyond anecdotes and quips.⁷ The multiplicity of voices involved in the production of a film mirrors the plural voices that are involved in the production of a saga, and it is therefore an even more beneficial point of comparison than the modern novel, where the voices present are usually that of the omnipotent author and editor.

⁷ For example, Carol Clover’s career as a film studies scholar and her career as an Old Norse scholar rarely intersect in the discussion of her work. Clover addressed this in a speech at the conferral of her honorary doctorate from Háskóli Íslands, on October 2, 2015.

5.1 Genre in Old Norse Studies

In the 1975 *Scandinavian Studies* debate between Lars Lönnroth, Joseph Harris, and Theodore Andersson,⁸ three approaches towards the Old Norse generic system can be mapped out:

- (1) The **Descriptive**, or Emic Approach, represented by Lönnroth. Lönnroth insisted that when analyzing the workings of genre in Old Norse literature, one must use terms contemporary to the literature itself. According to this approach the *Íslendingasögur* were never a single genre; to argue that they were hurts our understanding of the composition and workings of these texts.
- (2) The **Prescriptive**, or Etic Approach, represented by Harris. Harris agrees with Lönnroth that these terms were never used by the saga authors themselves and their contemporaries, but that these terms are nevertheless useful and are in fact needed to facilitate communication about these texts between our own contemporaries and modern scholars.
- (3) The **Pragmatic**, or ‘Le Sigh’ Approach, represented by Andersson. While Andersson leans towards Harris’ prescriptive approach, he mostly argues that a loose generic definition serves us best and allows us to move on with the debate.

What we are left with is a methodological stalemate, similar to the one reached in the 2005 debate concerning the *fornaldarsögur* at a round-table discussion in Denmark, where scholars could not reach an agreement on how to define *fornaldarsaga* or what sagas could be counted in its corpus.⁹ It could be argued that this circular stalemate stems from a reluctance to

⁸ Lars Lönnroth, “The Concept of Genre in Saga Literature;” Joseph Harris, “Genre in the Saga Literature: A Squib”; Theodore M. Andersson, “Splitting the Saga.”

⁹ See Judy Quinn, et al., “Interrogating Genre in the *Fornaldarsögur*: Round-Table Discussion.”

let go of the descriptive approach, even as we are choosing a pragmatic approach: for example, Massimiliano Bampi's eye-opening work on the development of the *Íslendingasögur* and its literary influences through a polysystemic analysis still assumes the existence of such an entity as the *Íslendingasögur*.¹⁰

Following Lönnroth's groundbreaking but controversial work on the Old Icelandic generic system in 1964 and the 1975 *Scandinavian Studies* debate,¹¹ scholarly discussion has gained further momentum from increased awareness that current generic divides stem from premises established by seventeenth- to nineteenth-century scholars. While they provide a frame of reference when discussing sagas, they may also distort our perception of the similarities and differences between these different modes of writing. Scholars have increasingly broadened their approach, but a predilection to work within the traditional genre system is still strong. A fault in the descriptive approach is that in some cases the terminology we are framing as 'emic' is in fact 'etic.' A well-known example from *Þorgils saga ok Haflíða* tells of a wedding where several tales are told by the participants. The narrative then relates that Norwegian King enjoyed some of these tales, which he called *lygisögur*, lying tales.¹² This is a telling example: the wedding in Reykjahólar where the kind of stories King Sverrir refers to are told took place in 1119. King Sverrir's reign was between 1184 to 1202. There is more than a half-century gap between the event and the use of the term. Moreover, the wedding obviously takes place in Northwest Iceland, whereas King Sverrir is a Faroese man who became the king of Norway: these are separated in both time and space. Then we need to consider that *Þorgils saga ok Haflíða*, where this event is narrated, was written sometime in the thirteenth century, and compiled into its extant form at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Therefore, when the 'emic' source *Þorgils*

¹⁰ Bampi, "Literary Activity and Power Struggle: Some Observations on the Medieval Icelandic Polysystem after the *Sturlungaöld*."

¹¹ Lars Lönnroth, "Tesen om de två kulturena: kritiska studier i den isländska sagaskrivningens sociala förutsättningar."

¹² For the wedding at Reykjahólar and *lygisögur*, see O'Connor, "History or Fiction? Truth-Claims and Defensive Narrators in Icelandic Romance-Sagas," 133–139.

saga ok Hafliða cites King Sverrir, there is a gap of almost two centuries from the event. People of the fourteenth century likely had better access to the ideas of the twelfth century than we do in the twenty-first, but it is not perfect access, and would be affected by their own biases and notions of genre.

With Alastair Fowler's understanding of 'generic repertoire' as a theoretical basis—i.e., "the whole range of potential points of resemblance that a genre may exhibit"¹³—Margaret Clunies Ross argues that all sagas are actually of the same genre; their differences constitute sub-genres, which are modally-mixed. These sub-genres, for example, are governed by different storytelling tones,¹⁴ usually connected with the story's space and time. The *Íslendingasögur*, for example, feature a legendary and/or folkloric tone for stories related in Norway, a more realistic and bleak one when action takes place in Iceland, and a perhaps more hagiographic atmosphere around the time of the conversion in Iceland. The *Íslendingasögur*, *samtíðarsögur*, *fornaldarsögur*, and *konungasögur*—but not the sagas dealing with saints and the *rid-darasögur*—use the same generic language to deal with different subject material and generic modes,¹⁵ and are therefore hard to significantly distinguish.¹⁶ This invokes the arguments made by Lönnroth that saga genres should be considered according to descriptive terms rather than prescriptive terms. These thoughts of Lönnroth, in turn, are not unlike Hans Robert Jauss' discussion of genre as something that is established through a horizon of expectations: "A literary work, even if it seems new, does not appear as something absolutely new in an informational vacuum, but predisposes its readers to a very definite type of reception by textual strategies, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics or implicit allusions."¹⁷

¹³ Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature, an Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*, 55.

¹⁴ Fowler, 56, 106–111.

¹⁵ Margaret Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society*, vol. 2, *The Reception of Norse Myths in Medieval Iceland*, 50–51. See Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 54–74 (cited in Clunies Ross). Similar notions are expressed in Úlfar Bragason, "Sagas of Contemporary History (Sturlunga Saga): Texts and Research," 427.

¹⁶ Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, 53.

¹⁷ Hans Robert Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," 12. See also Jauss, "The Alterity and Modernity of Medieval Literature." The concept of 'Horizons of

The insistence on distinguishing between the terms ‘genre’ and ‘sub-genre’ may seem pedantic, but when the sagas are grouped together into a single genre that encompasses all its variants, the distance between these becomes significantly smaller. Thus, if we are to choose the term genre over sub-genre for the different manifestations of saga literature, it is as if we are saying that the distance between an *Íslendingasaga* and a *riddarasaga* is as significant as the distance between *Guðmundar saga helga* and the *Fyrsta málfraðiritgerðin*, or between *Njáls saga* and eddic poetry. While this might be an exaggerated opposition, it is clear that behind defining two texts as belonging to separate genres lies the implication that there is a significant enough distance between the texts to warrant such differentiation. Others have used this terminology when referring to the distinction between *riddarasögur*, *formaldarsögur*, *Íslendingasögur*, etc.¹⁸ Ármann Jakobsson took these matters a step forward and argued that the sub-generic distinctions themselves are unnecessary, and that there is need to first get rid of them before more productive work can be done on the matter of the saga generic system.¹⁹ When discussing the *Íslendingasögur*, Vésteinn Ólason says that the common attributes of the corpus “hardly justify referring to these 40 works or so as a separate genre,” but that it is productive looking at them “as a single entity, regarding them as a separate family within the saga-tribe.”²⁰ Responding to Clunies Ross’s minimal generic demarcation, Torfi Tulinius offers five principles by which to distinguish these texts: “genealogy, geography, religion, relation to the supernatural and social status of the protagonists.”²¹ These principles are probably the best way to reaffirm the existing generic system, though the selection of the criteria revolves around

Expectations’ was originally conceived by Karl Popper (Jauss, “Literary History,” 32–33, and Jonathan Culler, “Semiotics as a Theory of Reading,” 54). See also Culler’s criticism of Jauss’s search for a text’s “original meaning” (as if this were the gravest of sins!), 54–58.

¹⁸ Margaret Clunies Ross, in “The Intellectual Complexion of the Icelandic Middle Ages: Toward a New Profile of Old Icelandic Saga Literature,” uses “sub-genre” and “subclass” interchangeably.

¹⁹ Quinn, et al., “Interrogating Genre,” 282–3.

²⁰ Vésteinn Ólason, “Family Sagas,” 101. See also Vésteinn Ólason, “Sturlungaöld og ritun Íslendingasagna.”

²¹ Torfi H. Tulinius, “Saga as a myth: the family sagas and social reality in 13th-century Iceland,” 527.

our notion of the *Íslendingasögur*. If these were written with the translated *riddarasögur*, for example, in mind, different organizational principles might have surfaced, such as relation to a previous oral or literary tradition, treatment of time and space, and portrayal of heroism.

To understand literary genres, generic expectations are important: authors operate within an already existing framework, which they merely manipulate.²² Michael Riffaterre argues that meaning is created when literary expectations are foiled,²³ while Wolfgang Iser takes this further and argues that “the reader must act as co-creator of the work by supplying that portion of it which is not written but only implied.”²⁴ Literature is built on the concept of the audience filling in the gaps left by the piece’s author.²⁵ These gaps are filled in differently by different readers, “and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential.”²⁶ Stanley Fish tried to further expand this process of interpretation. According to him, the experience of reading is itself fraught with meaning, every sentence informed by the one that preceded it; every word is informed by the word that led up to it.²⁷ These, in turn, are informed by training and convention.²⁸ Generic expectations are what lead these conventions, and these expectations, as Jauss shows, are historically bound.²⁹

5.2 Towards a Definition of the *Íslendingasögur*

Ljósvefninga saga is a member of the *Íslendingasögur* corpus, and as such operates within a set of generic expectations that was clear, if not consistent, at the time they were composed and transmitted. But what does the term *Íslendingasögur* actually mean? At face value, it would seem that of all the

²² Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author.”

²³ See Yoav Tirosh “Feel the Burn: *Lönguhliðarbrenna* as Literary Type-Scene,” for how literary meaning is created by the type-scenes of house burnings, though I do not use the language of reader-response theory there.

²⁴ Jane P. Tompkins, “An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism,” xv.

²⁵ Wolfgang Iser, “The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach,” 55.

²⁶ Iser, 55.

²⁷ Stanley E. Fish, “Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics,” 70–100.

²⁸ Jonathan Culler, “Stanley Fish and the Righting of the Reader,” and “Literary Competence.”

²⁹ E.g., Jauss, “Literary History,” 23–27.

saga genres or sub-genres, the *Íslendingasögur* or ‘family sagas’ are the least problematic to define, and the least disputed. These are sagas that deal with the early settlers of Iceland from c. 870–930 and their descendants, the cut-off point being around the third quarter of the eleventh century, when *Bandamanna saga* and *Ljósvetninga saga* end.

One way to approach the *Íslendingasögur* is to give them a stricter definition. In his chapter about the “Family Sagas” in *A Companion to Old Norse–Icelandic Literature and Culture*, Vésteinn Ólason defines the *Íslendingasögur* thus:

Sagas about Icelanders from a certain period and written by anonymous authors are known as *Íslendingasögur*, ‘sagas of Icelanders’, or, as they are frequently referred to in English, ‘family sagas’, albeit that this latter term is really only appropriate for some of them. It is used only about tales of considerable length which centre on the lives of people from a relatively small group of Icelandic families. The important part of the action in such tales takes place during the first century of the Icelandic Commonwealth, from c.930 to c.1030, though introductory sections may deal with events in Norway and Iceland during the main period of the settlement of Iceland, c.870–930. While the saga heroes may travel to foreign lands, most frequently Scandinavia or the British Isles, the main action usually takes place in Iceland and is rooted in the ways in which men feuded vigorously and eventually resolved their conflicts through the operation of a judicial system whose courts were unsupported by any common executive power.³⁰

This definition, as Vésteinn himself points out, excludes *Egils saga*, which mostly involves feuds between a family of Norwegians–Icelanders and

³⁰ Vésteinn Ólason, “Family Sagas,” 101.

various members of the Norwegian royalty, or the *Vínland sagas*, which take place primarily outside of Iceland.³¹

Some attempts have been made to focus on the *Íslendingasögur*'s structural generic elements rather than by their setting. Theodore M. Andersson's *The Icelandic Family Saga: An Analytic Reading* is the most influential structuralist approach towards the *Íslendingasögur*, and it seems to encompass all the sagas that are considered classical.³² Andersson argues that almost every 'Family Saga' fits the schema of Introduction, Conflict, Climax, Revenge, Reconciliation, and Aftermath. Some sagas, such as *Ljósvetninga saga* (dated elsewhere by Andersson and Miller to c. 1220, thus by no means post-classical in his view),³³ have a double conflict pattern.³⁴ Others, like *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga* entirely fail to conform to the structure he proposes.³⁵ This approach is soon to become half a century old, and though it is still appreciated for its importance in treating the sagas as literature, criticism has been voiced against its praise of the 'classical' *Íslendingasögur* for its marginalization of those sagas that do not fit the model. Andersson's influence has meant that many sagas' important contributions and strengths are ignored.³⁶ As Daniel Sävborg has pointed out, Andersson's structural study skips over sagas such as *Finnboga saga* and *Gull-Þóris saga*, and the decision not to include them seems mostly dictated by the editorial decisions behind the *Íslenzk fornrit* series.³⁷ It should be noted

³¹ Vésteinn Ólason seems inclined to exclude the *Vínland sagas* from the *Íslendingasögur* corpus. Vésteinn Ólason. "The Icelandic Saga as a Kind of Literature with Special Reference to its Representation of Reality," 38.

³² Or, perhaps, what Vésteinn Ólason ("Family Sagas") calls 'Early' and 'Classical.' See Lars Lönnroth, "Structuralist Approaches to Saga Literature" as well as Ármann Jakobsson "Structure."

³³ *Law and Literature*, 74–84.

³⁴ Andersson, *The Icelandic Family Saga: An Analytic Reading*, 252–61.

³⁵ Andersson, 153–62, 215–22, respectively.

³⁶ Clunies Ross, "Intellectual Complexion," 450–1.

³⁷ Daniel Sävborg, "Búi the Dragon: Some Intertexts of *Jómsvíkinga Saga*," 102–3. These are divided into ÍF 13: *Harðar saga*, which also includes *Bárðar saga*, *Porskfirðinga saga*, *Flóamannasaga*, *Þórarins þáttur Nefjólfssonar*, *Þorsteins þáttur uxafóts*, *Egils þáttur Síðu-Hallssonar*, *Þorsteins þáttur Tjaldstæðings*, *Þorsteins þáttur forvitna*, *Bergþúva þáttur*, *Kumlbúa þáttur* and *Stjörmu-Odda draumr* and ÍF 14: *Kjalnesinga saga*, which includes also *Jökuls þáttur Búasonar*, *Víglundar saga*, *Króka-Refs saga*, *Þórðar saga hreðu*, *Finnboga saga* and *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfjfls*.

that these decisions were made by editors many years before Andersson started his structuralist project, and as such were already worth re-examination before the corpus for that study was decided. In addition, as Lönnroth observed, the narrative schema Andersson suggests could easily fit some *konungasögur* and *fornaldarsögur*.³⁸ This last observation by Lönnroth takes us back to the question of whether or not there is a significant benefit to considering the *Íslendinga-* and *konungasögur* as separate genres.

The main tension here is between a focus on the plot elements that unify these sagas on the one hand, and their structure and themes on the other. If Vésteinn Ólason suggests a definition that breaks down the period, locations, characters, and plot points of the *Íslendingasögur*, Andersson looks instead at the inner structure that is common to these texts as the defining criterion. Vésteinn Ólason's set of criteria, as mentioned, excludes a text as major as *Egils saga* from the corpus. Andersson's criteria, on the other hand, singles out *Eyrbyggja saga* as a misfit.³⁹ One way to deal with this tension lies in what film genre theorist Rick Altman dubs the "Semantic/Syntactic" approach, based on Todorov's influential work, which connects two major ways of looking at genre. Altman describes the differences between the semantic and the syntactic approaches to film genre:

While there is anything but general agreement on the exact frontier separating semantic from syntactic views, we can as a whole distinguish between generic definitions that depend on a list of common traits, attitudes, characters, shots, locations, sets, and the like—thus stressing the semantic elements that make up the genre—and definitions that play up instead certain constitutive relationships between undesignated and variable placeholders—relationships that might be called the genre's fundamental syntax. The semantic approach thus stresses the genre's building blocks,

³⁸ Lönnroth, "Concept of Genre," 420.

³⁹ Andersson, *Icelandic Family Saga*, 160–162.

while the syntactic view privileges the structures into which they are arranged.⁴⁰

When looking at the film genre of the Western, the semantic approach would provide a set definition, such as Jean Mitry's, which Altman translates: "The western [...] is a 'film whose action, situated in the American West, is consistent with the atmosphere, the values, and the conditions of existence in the Far West between 1840 and 1900.'"⁴¹ On the other hand, a syntactic approach would look at how the Western genre is constructed through its common use of cinematography and stock characters, as well as the themes discussed. Films such as John Ford's 1939 *Drums along the Mohawk* are American frontier narratives dealing with the settlement of Eastern United States in the eighteenth century rather than Western United States in the nineteenth century: these are given the title 'Pennsylvania Western,' which acknowledges their similarities, but also their difference in location. An attempt to brand *Star Wars* as a Western failed, however, "for the general tendency of genre theorists and the popular audience alike is to recognize genre only when both subject and structure coincide."⁴² As Rick Altman points out, "the 'Pennsylvania western' (like the urban, spaghetti, and sci-fi varieties) represents a quandary only because critics have insisted on dismissing one type of definition and approach in favor of another."⁴³ What he suggests, then, is that rather than separating these two approaches, they should be treated together, since "to insist on one of these approaches to the exclusion of the other is to turn a blind eye on the necessarily dual nature of any generic corpus."⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Rick Altman, "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre," 31.

⁴¹ Altman, 31, citing Jean Mitry, *Dictionnaire du cinema*, 276.

⁴² Altman, *Film/Genre*, 24. Altman insists on the exclusion of *Star Wars* from the Western corpus "even though it shares certain syntactic patterns with that genre," in "Semantic/Syntactic," 36. It would be interesting to see his response to the Science-Fiction TV Show *Firefly* (2002–2003), and its use of the syntactical language of the Western, as well as much of the semantic elements; a post-Civil War, frontier-driven plot dealing with outlaws and using the aesthetics of the western genre.

⁴³ Altman, "Semantic/Syntactic," 33.

⁴⁴ Altman, 34.

Altman's approach opens up an alternative to giving the *Íslendingasögur* a set definition such as the one provided by Vésteinn Ólason, which excludes sagas that are thought to be masterpieces of the genre such as *Egils saga*, or on the other hand treating the *Íslendingasögur* as a set of conventions, such as the structural analysis that Andersson conducts and in essence excludes some sagas that clearly 'feel' *Íslendingasögur*-y,⁴⁵ such as *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga*.

The semantic/syntactic approach offered by Altman makes creating a prescriptive definition of the *Íslendingasögur* almost impossible. However, to avoid being vague, here is an approximation:

The *Íslendingasögur* are a group of prose or prosimetric texts that concern the medieval Norse world, usually taking place in the period between the end of the ninth and the mid-eleventh centuries, and usually focusing on Iceland. Their structural elements usually revolve around a feud or feuds, usually with at least one family of farmers.

The reason for offering such a broad definition for the *Íslendingasögur* is a practical one: the present thesis is of two minds in relation to the existence of these texts as a distinct genre: they sometimes belonged together, and sometimes did not, depending on the manuscript editor's goals. In addition, such a broad definition helps to elucidate that there is nothing post-classical about the post-classical *Íslendingasögur*; they are all simply *Íslendingasögur* that were grouped together by twentieth-century scholars who based dating decisions on a saga's quality and themes.⁴⁶ Altman uses his semantic/syntactic approach to champion a diachronic approach towards genre, which he felt was lacking in film studies at the time he was writing. This chapter's present goal is the opposite: when we realize that

⁴⁵ And, perhaps, would easily accommodate for the inclusion of *Færeyinga saga* and *Áns saga bogsveigis* into the corpus.

⁴⁶ See also Margaret Clunies Ross's prediction of "a more pluralistic definition of the dominant genre of Old Icelandic literature," in "The Intellectual Complexion," 452, as well as Jürg Glauser, "The Speaking Bodies of Saga Texts," 15.

our generic definitions are firmly tied with a now anachronistic diachronic premise, there is need to distance ourselves from these historical notions in order to better understand the generic expectations that accompany these kinds of texts.

This broad definition expands the repertoire of the *Íslendingasögur*. *Færeyinga saga* could certainly be included in this definition,⁴⁷ and justifiably so: its structure, themes, and characters are all very similar to some of the *Íslendingasögur*, with only a few days' boat-voyage separating between these two geographical locales. *Áns saga bogsveigis* is not inherently different from *Egils saga* in its structure.⁴⁸ Without dismissing its status as a generic hybrid,⁴⁹ this approach allows that the saga could be seen in the outskirts of the *Íslendingasögur*; much like *Víglundar saga* takes on the structure of a romance in an *Íslendingasögur* setting.⁵⁰ One argument against a broad definition such as this is that, by saying that the *Íslendingasögur* are “usually taking place in the period between the end of the ninth and the mid-eleventh century,” with a stress on the word ‘usually,’ the door is opened to even include the *samtíðarsögur* into the *Íslendingasögur*-fold; Sturla Þórðarson's *Íslendinga saga* is as close to an *Íslendingasaga* as *Færeyinga saga* is. It is hard to see why *Guðmundar saga dýra* cannot be considered both an outlier of the *Íslendingasögur*, as well as a full-fledged member of the *samtíðarsögur*. As will be shown, medieval Icelanders were little concerned with genre exclusivity. This approach hopefully brings the prescriptive and the descriptive approaches somewhat closer together, more in line with the flexible system that seems to be apparent in these modally-mixed texts.

⁴⁷ In fact, Andreas Schmidt argues along these lines in his recent PhD thesis on the topic of *Færeyinga saga*. See Ármann Jakobsson “Sögurnar hans Guðna: Um “lýðveldisútgáfu” Íslendingasagnanna, hugmyndafræði hennar og áhrif,” for a discussion of Guðni Jónsson's more inclusive *Íslendingasögur* corpus, though the publisher did not include *Færeyinga saga* among this group of texts.

⁴⁸ See Eldar Heide “Áns saga bogsveigis. A Counterfactual Egils saga and yet Another Twist on the Myth of Þórr's Visit to Útgarda-Loki.”

⁴⁹ As it is presented in Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, “Generic Hybrids: Norwegian ‘family’ Sagas and Icelandic ‘mythic-heroic’ Sagas.”

⁵⁰ Marianne E. Kalinke, *Bridal-quest Romance in Medieval Iceland*.

5.3 Post-Classical *Íslendingasögur*

After the *Íslendingasögur*—to which *Ljósvetninga saga* belongs—have been defined, there is a need to better understand what is meant by the term ‘post-classical’ *Íslendingasögur*. Two manuscript neighbors of *Ljósvetninga saga* are commonly referred to as post-classical: *Gull-Þóris saga* and *Finnboga saga*.⁵¹ The former appearing in AM 561 4to and the latter in AM 162 c fol. The meaning of the post-classical designation is not always clear, though it seems to have more to do with dating (fourteenth century onwards) and the presence of influences from the *fornaldarsögur* and the *riddarasögur* than anything else.⁵² The post-classical sagas are characterized by what Elizabeth Ashman Rowe has referred to as ‘generic hybridity,’ a concept later adopted by other scholars.⁵³ Generic hybridity argues that certain sagas sport features that are characteristic of more than one saga genre. Ashman Rowe suggests that *Íslendingasögur* such as *Egils saga* and *Grettis saga* that feature influence from the *fornaldarsögur* should be considered ‘mythic-heroic,’⁵⁴ a significantly less general and ambiguous term than post-classical *Íslendingasögur*, which also allows significantly more chronological flexibility. This pluralistic approach notwithstanding, the term post-classical *Íslendingasögur* persists in scholarship. Since two of these texts are grouped with *Ljósvetninga saga* in its medieval manuscripts, it is worth understanding what makes these generically different from one another, if indeed they are. This will help to better understand *Ljósvetninga saga*’s place within its manuscripts. Furthermore, the flawed notions about what comprises proper *Íslendingasögur* set generic expectations that are prescriptive rather than descriptive, and advance a false diachronic perception of these texts. *Ljósvetninga saga*’s C-redaction, which does not always conform to generic

⁵¹ E.g., Phil Cardew, “The Question of Genre in the Late *Íslendinga sögur*: A Case of Study in *Þorskfirðinga saga*,” 26.

⁵² Stefán Einarsson, *A History of Icelandic Literature*, 150–1.

⁵³ E.g., Bampi, “Literary Activity,” 63.

⁵⁴ Ashman Rowe, “Generic Hybrids,” 542.

expectations, is therefore deemed to be a later product, though the tag ‘post-classical’ was never attached to it.⁵⁵

The distinction between classical and post-classical *Íslendingasögur* is both diachronic and thematic, with the thematic considerations including “a diminished sense of Icelandicness” in the post-classical works.⁵⁶ The distinction then feeds circularly into attempts to date these sagas. The diachronic understanding of the divide implies that something happened c. 1300 that changed the way sagas were written, tying Icelandic independence—both past and present—to the quality of Icelandic literature.⁵⁷ If the early *Íslendingasögur* dealt with the turmoil of the *Sturlungaöld* and the classical ones dealt with the loss of independence and submission to Norway, the sagas created post-1300 could free themselves from these issues and feature more unambiguous heroes that raise fewer moral questions.⁵⁸ Einar Ól. Sveinsson bemoans the loss of classical *Íslendingasögur* objectivity and synthesis of realism and ideology for an interchange between “vulgær realisme og blodløs romantic.”⁵⁹ As Vésteinn Ólason has it, “more clearly than ever before, sagas are now works of entertainment.”⁶⁰ As with Einar Ólafur, this seems to imply degeneration.⁶¹ What was once a great genre had devolved to become a simple vehicle of entertainment,⁶² like the similarly undervalued *riddara-* and *fornaldarsögur*.⁶³ Another designation these

⁵⁵ Though note Magerøy’s designation of *Sprla þáttir* as a “happy-end-soge,” in *Soga om Ljosvetningane*, 10–11.

⁵⁶ Martin Arnold, *The Post-Classical Icelandic Family Saga*, 104.

⁵⁷ On this see Arnold, 87–106.

⁵⁸ See Vésteinn Ólason, “The Fantastic Element in Fourteenth Century *Íslendingasögur*: A Survey,” 20.

⁵⁹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, “*Íslendingasögur*,” 507.

⁶⁰ Vésteinn Ólason, “Family Sagas,” 114.

⁶¹ See also Clunies Ross, “Intellectual Complexion,” 140.

⁶² The assumption is that simple entertainment lies in contrast to more serious literature that deals with important issues for the specific society. There is a fallacy that lies behind this approach, since every piece of art, even the ‘simplest,’ has a certain agency behind it, whether conscious or unconscious. Even automatic writing is driven by the psyche of the author, and whether they admit or are aware of this or not is not relevant.

⁶³ Knut Liestøl offers a perhaps more positive take on this similar process, and sees it as the natural result of the *Íslendingasögur* stories getting older and thus closer in their nature and intertwined with the *fornaldarsögur* tradition: “At such a distance of time the two

sagas have received is simply ‘late,’ distinguishing them from the ‘early’ and the ‘classical.’ This designation refers to sagas written c. 1300–1450, the ‘classical’ period ending c. 1310.⁶⁴ While it is a less qualitative term than ‘post-classical,’ the only generic criterion is the actual date of writing, which is usually hard to pinpoint, inaccurate, and constantly shifting, as will be shown in the discussion of *Gull-Þóris saga* below. In addition, while it eliminates the ‘classical’ component from this sub-genre’s name, it is clear that these sagas are ‘non-classical.’⁶⁵ Sävborg has questioned the dating of the *Gull-Þóris saga*, *Hávarðar saga Ísfrðings*, *Harðar saga ok Hólmvejar*, and *Svarfdæla saga*, but does not question their place in an “efterklassiska” category. According to him, “Vi kan inte självklart utgå från att Droplaugarsona saga och Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls är skrivna vid olika tidpunkt, men det är tydligt att deras litterära egenart är mycket olika.”⁶⁶ Sävborg, then, rejects a dramatic difference between the classical and post-classical *Íslendingasögur* in terms of dating, but insists that they are separated thematically. If we compare this to the gap between semantic and syntactic approaches to genre discussed above, the classical and post-classical *Íslendingasögur* are separated by their syntactic elements—the use of paranormal, the “happy ending”—rather than their semantic elements, since the narrative still focuses on Iceland in the ninth to eleventh centuries. There is an insistence that something is inherently different in the sagas that are called post-classical. Martin Arnold has suggested that, rather than being degenerate literature, the post-classical sagas constitute a “reworking of the genre” that is a direct response to the break experienced by society due to the loss of independence,⁶⁷ again tying temporal considerations with thematic ones. Arnold argues against those who associate

forms of saga assumed a certain resemblance, and as a result they more easily influenced each other,” *The Origin of the Icelandic Family Sagas*, 163.

⁶⁴ E.g., Vésteinn Ólason, “Family Sagas,” 114–6.

⁶⁵ As are the ‘early’ period *Íslendingasögur*.

⁶⁶ Sävborg, “Den Efterklassiska Íslänningasagan och Dess Alder,” 53–54.

⁶⁷ Arnold, *Post-Classical*, 232.

lower quality with lateness,⁶⁸ but nevertheless does not attempt to question the premise of these sagas' dating.

Thematically, when separating the classical from the pre- and post-classical *Íslendingasögur*, Vésteinn Ólason argues that the way that these texts represent reality is a key to understanding the differences between them. In the classical *Íslendingasögur*, compared with the post-classical ones, magic does not have a significant impact on the characters and their fates.⁶⁹ Vésteinn elsewhere connected theme and time of composition, arguing that the more fantastic elements were incorporated into the later *Íslendingasögur* because the local stories, which were the source material for twelfth- and thirteenth-century sagas, had dried up by the time of their composition.⁷⁰ This is highly speculative, and there is no way to prove or disprove that the story-well dried up, since there is nothing on which to base an assumption that the backlog of usable stories had dwindled. Indeed, as the example of the unwritten saga of Guðmundr inn ríki shows, it seems that the saga authors had many immanent sagas up their sleeves,⁷¹ and it does not seem likely that they used them all up. Andersson's argument that the thirteenth-century compiler of *Ljósvetninga saga's* A-redaction drew on different oral tales in order to make changes to the saga speaks to this same plurality of available material. Knut Liestøl suggested that with time, oral tales about the period before the settlement of Iceland—which became the *fornaldarsögur*—and the tales about its first settlers and their descendants—which became the *Íslendingasögur*—would have blended together because of prolonged exposure to each other, influencing each other's style and motifs.⁷² Following this logic, the later the saga, the more it is influenced by the fantastic style of the *fornaldarsögur*, thus explaining

⁶⁸ Arnold, 143–147.

⁶⁹ Vésteinn Ólason, “Kind of Literature,” 38–43.

⁷⁰ Vésteinn Ólason, “Fantastic Element,” 19–20.

⁷¹ See Gísli Sigurðsson, “*The Immanent Saga of Guðmundr ríki,” as well as *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition, a Discourse on Method*, 161–184. For another example of how this theory has been used, see Jamie Cochrane “**Síðu-Halls saga ok sona hans*: Creating a Saga From Tradition.”

⁷² Liestøl, *Origin*, 153, 163.

the fantastic elements in these texts. However, as Liestøl himself pointed out, *fornaldarsögur* influence can also be detected in sagas such as *Gísla saga*, *Brennu-Njáls saga*, and *Ljósvetninga saga* when these seem to feature motifs from *fornaldarsögur* such as *Völsunga saga*, or the heroic lays that were these sagas' sources.⁷³

It is important to address the stylistic change that would have purportedly occurred with the introduction of romance literature to medieval Iceland. Romance in Old Norse literature is usually associated with King Hákon Hákonarson's project of commissioning translations, mentioned in several sources.⁷⁴ King Hákon's translation project must have affected Iceland by the mid-thirteenth century and opened the island's residents to influences from continental literature. That the translated texts were modified to fit Icelanders' tastes is important to note, yet not significant enough to change the fact that these were foreign courtly texts.⁷⁵ However, King Hákon's importance should not be overstated: other romance texts were translated into Old Norse beforehand as well, though less systematically.⁷⁶ Therefore the *introduction* to translated text is not what sparked a stylistic change attributed to the post-classical *Íslendingasögur*. Eriksen argues that from their central position in thirteenth-century Norway, "translations of *riddarasögur* may seem to have become not peripheral, but rather internalized and undistinguishable from the indigenous Icelandic compositions" in the fourteenth–fifteenth-century Icelandic literary polysystem.⁷⁷ While the process of internalization was one that took place in the generic system of the *riddarasögur*, it might also indicate that the literary world of the translated *riddarasögur* or romances was less foreign to the Icelanders of the time.

⁷³ Liestøl, 169–180.

⁷⁴ Jürg Glauser, "Romance. (Translated *riddarasögur*)," 375–376.

⁷⁵ Glauser, 372–87. For a complex analysis of the changes in emotion and narrative that took place within this translated literature, see Sif Rikhardsdóttir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia*, where she argues that rather than looking at translated texts through the prism of either the source material or the receiving culture, translations to Old Norse should rather be understood and "studied on the basis of their internal coherence and as evidence of the cultural capacity for assimilation and adaptation of foreign material," 70.

⁷⁶ Glauser, "Romance," 374–5.

⁷⁷ S. G. Eriksen, "Change in Position," 56.

This works well with Bampi's observation that indigenous *riddarasögur* such as *Samsons saga fagra* and *Vilmundar saga víðutan* are a combination of the world of Romance and the world of the *Íslendingasögur*.⁷⁸ In the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries, it was more possible than before to write in a way that bridged the gap between these once significantly more distant societal systems.

With these thematic and diachronic considerations in mind, *Gull-Þóris saga* will now be examined in more detail. An individual look at *Gull-Þóris saga* will highlight the false notions that stand behind the category of 'post-classical' *Íslendingasögur*, and reveal the biases that lead to dating decisions based on personal taste.

5.3.1 *Gull-Þóris saga*

Since AM 561 4to included *Gull-Þóris saga* alongside *Ljósvetninga saga*, it is important to understand if these sagas are significantly different from each other generically. The focus here will be on how *Gull-Þóris saga* has been dated, which reveals a different treatment from sagas like *Ljósvetninga saga*, based on notions of what motifs belong and do not belong in the *Íslendingasögur*-proper. It is important to first deal with the perhaps obvious question: is *Gull-Þóris saga* really an *Íslendingasaga* at all? It certainly fits the schema suggested by Andersson for a 'family saga,' with the main dispute being between Þórir and Steinólfr, or alternatively Þórir and Hallr. The former is resolved by the killing of Steinólfr and his associates, the latter ends with Þórir killing Hallr and the payment of compensation to his estranged son, Hyrningr. As with other *Íslendingasögur*, the narrative concerns itself with honor, feuds, familial ties, and dealings with the Norwegian king, and there is no reason why it should be excluded from the corpus. Guðbrandur Vigfússon included it in his list of 'minor' sagas—which includes *Ljósvetninga saga* as well—though he deemed it a "late recension,"

⁷⁸ Bampi, "Literary Activity," 63.

and differentiated between the “mythical” part in Norway, and the “historical” part in Iceland.⁷⁹

The earliest manuscript evidence for *Gull-Þóris saga* is AM 561 4to, which has been dated to c. 1400. This is rather late, and might imply that the saga is itself late, but AM 561 4to is also the first extant text witness of *Ljósvetninga saga*, which, as we have seen, Andersson dated as early as c. 1220, as well as *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, commonly considered an early *Íslendingasaga*.⁸⁰ Vésteinn Ólason does not attempt to justify his late date for this saga. He sees it as part of the natural evolution of the *Íslendingasögur* discussed above, and states that “The saga has crossed the boundaries to heroic myth and fairy tale while retaining significant generic indicators that pin it down as an *Íslendingasaga*. It is closer to folktale and myth than *Grettis saga*, although its fantastic elements are not as effectively integrated in the narrative.”⁸¹ Vésteinn sees the fantastic element as an indicator of the saga belonging to the post-classical *Íslendingasögur*.⁸²

But how much can we rely on these fantastic elements for a later dating? Phil Cardew argues that the generic treatment of the supernatural is different between the scenes where the action takes place in Norway and where the action takes place in Iceland, especially in regard to Þórir’s transformation into a dragon.⁸³ This is disputable, since he might be reading too much into the phrase “þat hafa menn fyrir satt.”⁸⁴ While he is correct in pointing out that there is little reference to the gifts Þórir received following his meeting with his dead Viking ancestor in Norway,⁸⁵ he also argues that the incorporation of the supernatural in the Icelandic part of the saga introduces an “aspect of *fornaldar saga*.”⁸⁶ This essentially

⁷⁹ Sturlunga Saga [...] and Other Works, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, LII.

⁸⁰ Vésteinn Ólason, “Family Sagas,” 115, but not by Björn Sigfússon, ÍF 10:XLII–L.

⁸¹ Vésteinn Ólason, “Fantastic Element,” 17.

⁸² Though in the specific article discussed, he refers to them as “Fourteenth-Century *Íslendingasögur*.” See also Liestøl, *Origin*, 165–166, for *Gull-Þóris saga*’s borrowing from the *fornaldarsögur* tradition, which he associates with its younger age.

⁸³ Cardew, “The Question of Genre,” 20, 26.

⁸⁴ ÍF 13:226. “People believe,” “Gold-Thorir’s saga,” 359.

⁸⁵ Cardew, “The Question of Genre,” 26.

⁸⁶ Cardew, 23.

means that *every* appearance of the supernatural in an *Íslendingasaga* is of *fornaldarsaga* nature, an argument that Vésteinn Ólason would disagree with—according to him exaggerations and fantastic occurrences are prevalent in the entire *Íslendingasaga* corpus. In his opinion, it is their abundance rather than their presence that is unique to the later ones,⁸⁷ along with their influence on characters' fates, as mentioned above. Cardew's analysis indicates that there is confusion regarding the fantastic, a confusion made evident from Vésteinn Ólason's short discussion of the topic in his article.⁸⁸

Passages from the thirteenth-century *Landnámabók* indicate that a version of *Gull-Þóris saga* existed at a much earlier point of time than the c. 1400 AM 561 4to.⁸⁹ Kålund speculated that the saga must have existed in a more 'realistic' mode in its older version.⁹⁰ As Þórhallur Vilmundarsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson point out, when dating the saga, the consideration of supernatural elements may be too prominent: "Skoðun þeirra Kálunds styðst við þá grundavallarhugmynd, að sögurnar hafi verið ritaðar að raunsæi fram eftir 13. öld, en ævintýrilegt fornaldarsagnaefni hafi sótt á um og eftir 1300. Þetta fær ekki staðizt. Slíkt efni var í Íslendingasögum frá byrjun og í ríkum mæli í sumum þeirra fyrir miðja 13. öld. Og [það] hefur verið að koma í ljós á síðustu árum, að sumar Íslendingasagnagerðir, sem eru með miklu ævintýra- og fornaldarsagnaefni og áður voru taldar yngri gerðir gagnanna, séu að öllum líkindum eldri gerðir, en hafi verið stytur á 14. öld."⁹¹ In addition, in a recent study Daniel Sävborg has shown that the most fantastic element in *Gull-Þóris saga*, the dragon motif, actually draws its inspiration from one of the oldest pieces of extant saga literature, *Jómsvíkinga saga*,⁹² rather than *fornaldarsögur* or the translated *riddarasögur*. Both these studies place a big question mark on the late dating of this saga,⁹³ and on the 'lateness' of its use

⁸⁷ Vésteinn Ólason, "Fantastic Element," 18.

⁸⁸ Vésteinn Ólason, 7–9.

⁸⁹ See, e.g., *Sturlunga Saga*, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, LII.

⁹⁰ *Gull-Þóris saga eller Þorskfirdinga saga*, ed. Kristian Kålund, XXII.

⁹¹ ÍF 13: CXIII.

⁹² Sävborg, "Búi the Dragon," 101–17.

⁹³ See also Sävborg, "Efterklassiska," 43–45.

of supernatural themes, and therefore on its status as a post-classical *Íslendingasaga*. But as is reflected in Daniel Sävborg's debate of the dating of post-classical *Íslendingasögur*, proving that these texts' dates skew earlier does not mean that the concept of the 'post-classical' is entirely irrelevant. The question should be whether or not the texts commonly grouped together as post-classical *Íslendingasögur* by scholarship can indeed be considered significantly different from each other. For this discussion the focus will turn to *Finnboga saga*.

5.3.2 *Finnboga saga*

The case of *Finnboga saga* and its definition as a post-classical *Íslendingasaga* is curious because it reveals once again how much bias is involved in the generic divisions between the classical and the post-classical *Íslendingasögur*. After the issue of how *Finnboga saga* had been dated is dealt with, a comparison to *Vatnsdæla saga* will be attempted, because of the large character overlap between these two texts. This will help understand whether or not *Finnboga saga* as a text is significantly different from or similar to the *Íslendingasögur* genre. The issues that will be examined are the sagas' narrative structure and their connection with folklore.

Based on its literary sources, Jóhannes Halldórsson dated *Finnboga saga* to sometime between the last years of the thirteenth century or the first decade of the fourteenth century. Due to its incorporation in the main section of *Möðruvallabók*, dated to sometime between 1316–1350,⁹⁴ it must have been composed before that; Jóhannes declared that the *Möðruvallabók* text is not the saga's "frumrit," though he does not expand on his reasoning.⁹⁵ Björn M. Ólsen suggests that it would have been composed sometime between 1300–1325.⁹⁶ That it must have been written before—or during—its incorporation into *Möðruvallabók* is logical. Its earliest

⁹⁴ ÍF 14:LXVIII, which references Jón Helgason, *Ritgerðakorn og ræðustúfar*, 103–104. See also Stefán Karlsson's "Möðruvallabók," where he says it was "skrevet omkr. midten af 1300-tallet," 185.

⁹⁵ ÍF 13:LXVIII.

⁹⁶ Björn M. Ólsen, "Um Íslendingasögur. Kaflar úr háskólafyrirlestum," 344.

possible dating to the last years of the thirteenth century is based on the texts it seems to correspond with, such as *Vatnsdæla saga*, which tells a very similar tale of the dispute between Finnbogi and the people of Hof, but with no significant verbal correspondences and many discrepancies in the details.⁹⁷ These discrepancies are explained as the result of differing oral traditions,⁹⁸ but the assumption is that the take-off point of *Finnboga saga* is *Vatnsdæla saga*,⁹⁹ commonly dated to c. 1270.¹⁰⁰ Presumably, this is what prompted Einar Ól. Sveinsson to assert that, during the post-commonwealth period, “people cease to concern themselves with history, and sagas in the end become pure fiction, like *Víglundar Saga* and *Finnboga Saga*.”¹⁰¹

A saga that does show verbal correspondences and has been used to date *Finnboga saga* is *Gunnlaugs saga*, which Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson dated to 1270–1280, based on intertextual evidence.¹⁰² Jóhannes Halldórsson calls *Gunnlaugs saga* a source for *Finnboga saga*, referring to Björn M. Ólsen, who determines that “Nú getur enginn efi verið á, að Gunnlaugs saga er eldri enn Finnboga saga.”¹⁰³ This confidence is backed up by tenuous arguments that pertain to the rationale behind the exposure of children in both sagas. In *Gunnlaugs saga*, the protagonist’s love interest Helga is exposed at birth due to her father’s ominous dream, and in *Finnboga saga*, the protagonist is exposed at birth since his father is displeased with his daughter’s unwanted marriage. Exposing one’s child as punishment for an unwanted marriage of another child seems like a less

⁹⁷ ÍF 13:LXIII–LXIV.

⁹⁸ Though, as Gísli Sigurðsson points out, these traditions seem to be considered “meager and sketchy” (*Medieval Icelandic Saga*, 320), which is translated from Jóhannes’s “fáskrúðugar,” ÍF 13:LXIV.

⁹⁹ ÍF 13:LXIV. Jóhannes also notes a mention of Finnbogi in *Landnámabók*, though he argues that the inconsistency concerning his father shows that the author of *Finnboga saga* would not have had it in front of him while composing the text, ÍF 13:LXVIII.

¹⁰⁰ ÍF 13:LXIV.

¹⁰¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Dating the Icelandic Sagas, An Essay in Method*, 126. In Sävborg, “Búi the Dragon,” 104.

¹⁰² ÍF 3:LX. Referenced in ÍF 13:LXVIII, n. 2.

¹⁰³ Björn M. Ólsen, “Um Íslendingasögur,” 340. Jóhannes Halldórsson states that “Gunnlaugs saga er vafalaust eldri en Finnboga saga,” ÍF 13:LXVI.

logical narrative decision than exposing them based on a prophetic dream,¹⁰⁴ but the act of exposure in *Finnboga saga* is a narratologically necessary step in a series of events that leads the protagonist to be recognized by his powerful kinsman Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði and, following him, his father Ásbjörn. The fact that *Finnboga saga* makes Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði—the pagan lawspeaker who allowed child exposure practice to persist into post-Christian Iceland—the one who convinces a father to recognize his abortively exposed child seems like an ironic and witty choice; this is a similar use of Þorgeirr as in *Njáls saga*, where the narrative compares Þorgeirr’s son Þorkell and Njáll’s son Skarphéðinn by stressing the eating of a mare’s ass and the characters’ father–son struggles, which both correspond with the prohibitions decreed by Þorgeirr himself at the moment of Iceland’s Christianization. It is also unclear why the allegedly better and more logical text needs to be the older one. *Au contraire*, when thinking of a less controversial genre like the TV crime drama, is it not true that the socially-aware *The Wire* (2002–2008) was qualitatively ‘better’ than the more popular *NYPD Blue* (1993–2005)? Similarly, is it not common consensus that Christopher Nolan’s 2008 *The Dark Knight* is significantly better than Joel Schumacher’s disastrous 1997 *Batman and Robin*? Of course, one can immediately point out Zack Snyder’s much-criticized 2016 *Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice* as a counter example, but the exception proves the point: the age of a piece of art within an established genre does not indicate its quality.¹⁰⁵ Snyder did not learn from Nolan’s example, but Nolan certainly learned from Schumacher, as did David Simon (*The Wire*) from Steven Bochco and David Milch (*NYPD Blue*).

Björn finds other similarities between *Finnboga saga* and *Gunnlaugs saga*,¹⁰⁶ and argues that because *Gunnlaugs saga* is from the late thirteenth

¹⁰⁴ Though is exposing one’s child ever logical in modern eyes? Notice that this exposure of children based on prophetic dreams is a common folktale motif, worth considering in the discussion ahead. Compare with Þorkell Geitisson’s demand that a child be exposed in *Þorsteins þáttur uxafóts*, ÍF 13:348 [ch. 4].

¹⁰⁵ It is possible that in the future, when tastes change, Snyder’s directing will be hailed as masterful and compelling.

¹⁰⁶ Björn M. Ólsen, “Um Íslendingasögur,” 340–341.

century, *Finnboga saga* could “varla” be before the early fourteenth.¹⁰⁷ The dating of *Gunnlaugs saga*, in turn, is based on intertextual connections between it and several other sagas.¹⁰⁸ As seen in The Part About the Critics, these dates need major revision. While Björn argues convincingly that the author of *Finnboga saga* would have operated under a law other than *Grágás*, this is also true for *Njáls saga*, and that saga is considered to have been written sometime between 1265–1275.¹⁰⁹ Björn M. Ólsen argues that the language of *Finnboga saga* has a fourteenth-century “smekk,” and that some of the language is “víða einkennilegt og einhver bóndalegur alþíðukeimur.”¹¹⁰ While that may be, it is unclear why a unique ‘commoner’s’ language would necessarily indicate a younger age. On the contrary, opposite arguments were made in reference to *Hreiðars þáttur* and its archaic, awkward language, though this was discounted by Faulkes, who would rather attribute the unique lexical features to the artistry of the *þáttur*’s composer, than to linguistic evidence for dating.¹¹¹ Finally, fifteen to thirty years passed between *Njáls saga*’s Skarphéðinn calling Hallgerðr a “púta”¹¹² and *Finnboga saga*’s use of the word “krækil.”¹¹³ What makes these so dramatically different to warrant the different generic sticker of ‘post-classical’?

Jóhannes Halldórsson states that “Áhrif frá riddarasögum og hóflausar ýkjur um afl Finnboga með sniði fornaldarsagna benda einnig til ungs aldurs meðal Íslendingasagna.”¹¹⁴ In his discussion of the fantastic, Vésteinn Ólason does not seem to give any indication of anything unique about *Finnboga saga* that is inherently different between it and earlier sagas, stating that “its first half has many folktale elements. His bare-handed fight with a bull, whose head he rips off, while he is still a youth, and shortly after the killing of a bear that seems to understand human language, are

¹⁰⁷ Björn M. Ólsen, 342.

¹⁰⁸ ÍF 3:XLIX, LX.

¹⁰⁹ ÍF 12:LXXXVI–LXXXI.

¹¹⁰ Björn M. Ólsen, “Um Íslendingasögur,” 343.

¹¹¹ See *Two Icelandic Stories*, ed. Anthony Faulkes, 18–19.

¹¹² ÍF 12, 228 [ch. 91]. See discussion in ÍF 12:LXXXII–LXXXIII.

¹¹³ ÍF 14:257 [ch. 4], and 260 [ch. 6].

¹¹⁴ ÍF 14:LXVIII.

definitely fantastic.”¹¹⁵ However, once Finnbogi returns to Iceland the events described “are more of a kind well known from thirteenth century sagas.”¹¹⁶

A comparison between *Finnboga saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga* stresses that there is more in common generically between these two texts than there are significant differences. From a narrative structure perspective, both *Vatnsdæla saga* and *Finnboga saga* have a beginning typical for the *Íslendingasögur*. *Vatnsdæla saga* tells of the Norwegian origins of the Vatnsdælir and their progenitor Þorsteinn; *Finnboga saga*, on the other hand, starts the narrative in Iceland, with Finnbogi’s father Ásbjörn. The two narratives share the element of one man taking on the social role of another, exemplified in the adoption of the dead man’s name. *Vatnsdæla saga*’s Þorsteinn Ketilsson starts off the narrative by killing Jökull and assumes his social position. He marries his sister and promises to name one of his descendants after him. Finnbogi enters the saga as Urðarkottr, the unwanted child of the Eyjafjörður chieftain Ásbjörn, who is raised by peasants. The name Finnbogi is taken from a Norwegian he saves in a shipwreck, whose last dying wish is that Urðarkottr assumes his name and possessions. Furthermore, after killing the jarl’s man Álfr, Finnbogi eventually assumes his social role as the jarl’s follower and marries Álfr’s daughter. *Vatnsdæla saga* is quite literally a family saga, giving its attention to several generations of the Vatnsdælir chieftains, with no central feud or climax,¹¹⁷ and starting off its narrative with a long description of the family members’ exploits in Norway. *Finnboga saga*, on the other hand, focuses on one individual: Finnbogi hinn rammi, and rather than telling the tale of a district, it follows him through the various districts he visits after a years’ long expedition to Norway. *Vatnsdæla saga*’s Jökull Ingimundarson is *Finnboga saga*’s main antagonist, constantly trying to avenge an insult to his honor by disturbingly killing many of Finnbogi’s loved ones and dependents in attempts to get at him. Both of these narrative structures are not unlike other

¹¹⁵ Vésteinn Ólason, “Fantastic Element,” 11.

¹¹⁶ Vésteinn Ólason, 11.

¹¹⁷ Andersson, *Icelandic Family Saga*, 221.

Íslendingasögur; the significant focus on the exploits in Norway before the settlement in Iceland of *Vatnsdæla saga* is comparable with *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*,¹¹⁸ *Grettis saga*, or *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, to name only three examples, and the strong focus on generational district politics is similar to *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Reykðæla saga*, and *Heiðarvíga saga*. *Finnboga saga*'s strong focus on a single hero with exploits in Norway as well as Iceland is comparable to *Bjarnar saga Híttdælakappa*.¹¹⁹ *Finnboga saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga* also share the motif of using outlaws to kill one's opponents, which is also a feature of *Grettis saga*. In the way that the saga is constructed, then, nothing in *Finnboga saga* stands out to make it significantly different than *Vatnsdæla saga*.

Does *Finnboga saga*'s use of folklore indicate that it is somehow different than other, 'older' *Íslendingasögur*? The basis of this argument is somewhat vague. The term 'folktale' is used as a frequent shorthand in Old Norse studies, but it is rarely defined.¹²⁰ Liestøl, for example, on the one hand talks about how, "in their general character," the *Íslendingasögur* "resemble folk-tales or romances,"¹²¹ and on the other hand about how "there are remarkably few traces of ordinary *migratory legends* or migratory anecdotes in the Icelandic family sagas."¹²² What he means by these migratory legends and anecdotes are stories such as the tale of Guðmundr hitting his foster-father with the butt of the axe in *Ljósvetninga saga*, and its connections with the international folktale about the bear who hurts or kills his human companion while trying to swat away a fly. The scholarly consensus is that *Ljósvetninga saga* probably existed in some written form in the middle of the thirteenth century. The fact that a folktale motif was incorporated into it

¹¹⁸ And, in part, the allegiance with king Haraldr hárfagri.

¹¹⁹ As well as, for example, *Egils saga* and *Grettis saga*, though both include long sequences in Norway prior to the settlement of Iceland.

¹²⁰ Cf. Michael Chesnutt, "Folklore," 202. Also see John Lindow, "Hríðars þátrr heimiska and AT 326 [...]," and "The Challenge of Folklore to Medieval Studies."

¹²¹ Liestøl, *Origin*, 163. He says further of folktales in the context of *formaldarsögur*'s influence on the *Íslendingasögur*: "their influence on the family sagas was not so great, and they certainly did not serve in any way as a model. On the other hand we can see that features and situations in the folk-tales were running in the mind of the saga-teller or saga-writer while he shaped his account of certain incidents," 166.

¹²² Liestøl, 169. Italics in original.

did not influence the general discussion surrounding this saga's dating,¹²³ or its status as a classical *Íslendingasaga*. Thus, the incorporation of such migratory tales is not useful evidence for a saga's age. Similarly, several of the early-dated *þættir* have been argued as examples of the International Popular Tale. Joseph Harris has shown an influence of the King in Disguise tale on *Heimskringla*'s description of the Battle of the Nissa, as well as on *Þorsteins þáttur austfirðings* and *Auðunar þáttur vestfirzka*.¹²⁴ Regardless of the dating of *Þorsteins þáttur*, *Auðunar þáttur* has been dated to 1190–1220,¹²⁵ and *Heimskringla* to c. 1220–1230.¹²⁶ These are by no means late texts. *Auðunar þáttur vestfirzka* has also been tied to AT 1161, 'The Bear Trainer and His Bear,' as well as several other folktales, though Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson suggested that the historical Auðunn was the originator of these stories.¹²⁷ Lindow discounts the connection with the folklore type for several convincing reasons and points out that, most importantly perhaps, the story bears little resemblance to AT 1161.¹²⁸ A. R. Taylor, making an argument concerning the dating of *Auðunar þáttur* in connection to *Hungvaka*, dismissed the connection between the *þáttur* and AT 1161 as "slight,"¹²⁹ but agreed with the connection between it and several other

¹²³ Magerøy, for example, uses this as more evidence for the superiority of the A-redaction in *Sertekstproblemet i Ljósvetninga saga*, 47–49. Some exceptions to this do exist, however, such as Eugene Mogk's assertion that the foster-father scene is different from the "Romantischer Einfluss" that is entirely missing from the saga, in *Geschichte der norwegisch-Isländischen Literatur*, 762 and n. 1.

¹²⁴ Harris, "The King in Disguise." Harris misses an opportunity to show how the beginning of *Sneglu-Halla þáttur* plays on this motif, since the *þáttur*'s first scene has the protagonist insult the king, whose identity is far from clear in the *Morkinskinna* account. The usually self-critical Joseph Harris repeats the fallacy of 'older is better' here when discussing the connection between *Auðunar þáttur vestfirzka* and *Þorsteins þáttur austfirðings*: "As literary works the two *þættir* stand at opposite poles, *Auðunar þáttur* being one of the great short stories in European literature, and *Þorsteins þáttur* an ill-executed outline. There can be no doubt in which direction the putative influence flowed," 163. This and subsequent dating of the *þáttur* to the fourteenth century does not allow more discussion on the possible influence of this story on, for example, the *Morkinskinna* narratives *Hreiðars þáttur* and *Sneglu-Halla þáttur*. On *Auðunar þáttur* and folktales see also Lindow, "Hreiðars þáttur heimiska," 155–158.

¹²⁵ ÍF 6:CV–CVII.

¹²⁶ *Heimskringla Volume 1* [...], eds. Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes, VII–IX.

¹²⁷ ÍF 6:CI–CIV.

¹²⁸ Lindow, "Hreiðars þáttur heimiska," 156–158.

¹²⁹ "Auðunn and the Bear," 93. Cited in Lindow, "Hreiðars þáttur heimiska," 157, n. 17.

folktales.¹³⁰ *Hreiðars þáttur* has been discussed in connection with AT 326, the story of ‘The Boy Who Wanted to Learn Fear.’¹³¹ This text, which cannot be younger than its first text witness in *Morkinskinna* (c. 1280), has been dated to the mid-thirteenth century the latest,¹³² and perhaps even older than c. 1217 if it was indeed incorporated into the *Earliest Morkinskinna*, as Ármann Jakobsson argues.¹³³ Using the appearance of folktale motifs for the promotion of younger date for a text such as *Finnboga saga*, then, seems unfruitful.

It is worth considering that it is unclear why *Finnboga saga* is said to exhibit more folkloric influence than *Vatnsdæla saga*. *Vatnsdæla saga* begins with describing Þorsteinn Ketilsson as a *kolbítur*, a common motif in old as well as young Old Norse texts,¹³⁴ which has a background in folktales that go beyond the Old Norse world.¹³⁵ After the egging on of his father, a violent confrontation is initiated between Þorsteinn Ketilsson and Jökull the highwayman in the woods. The encounter of an outlaw in the woods is also a common motif in folklore,¹³⁶ and the association between outlaws and the woods runs deep in Scandinavian literature.¹³⁷ Beyond the Old Norse world, the English author Walter Map described in his late twelfth-century *De Nugis Curialium*, a tale of the Welsh king Llywelyn’s youth that is reminiscent of *Vatnsdæla saga*. King Llywelyn is an ash-lad in his youth, and is provoked by his sister to get up and eavesdrop on a stranger’s house,

¹³⁰ Taylor, 94.

¹³¹ Lindow, “*Hreiðars þáttur heimská*,” 173–177.

¹³² *Two Icelandic Stories*, ed. Anthony Faulkes, 20–22

¹³³ Ármann Jakobsson, *A Sense of Belonging, Morkinskinna and Icelandic Identity*, c. 1220.

¹³⁴ Ásdís Egilsdóttir, “Kolbítur verður karlmaður,” but see Einar Ól. Sveinsson’s description of these as a late motif: “The Icelandic Family Sagas and the Periods in Which Their Authors Lived,” 81. See also Jan Brunvand, “Norway’s Askeladden, the unpromising hero, and junior-right,” 21, n. 6. Liestøl insists on a connection with the folktale motif of the “Askelad,” either directly or through the *fornaldarsögur* in *Origins*, 166–167.

¹³⁵ See, e.g., Brunvand, “Norway’s Askeladden.”

¹³⁶ See, e.g., Maurice Keen, *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend*, 1–8; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *The Folk-stories of Iceland*, 217–218, 220.

¹³⁷ This is brought home by the Old Norse term for outlaws, *skóggangr*. See Riisøy, “Outlawry: From Western Norway to England,” 101–102, 105–107. These terms reflect a Norwegian natural world rather than an Icelandic one, supporting the older association between the outlaw and the forest (and the wolf), 110–111.

a ritual that somehow reveals omens for his future.¹³⁸ *Vatnsdæla saga*'s narrative similarly dwells on the description of Þorsteinn first examining the outlaw Jökull's house from the outside. Another folklore motif in *Vatnsdæla saga* is the magical forgetfulness that comes upon Guðmundr inn ríki after he is hit by *spákona* Þórdís's staff *Hognuðr*. This is reminiscent of *Volsunga saga* and the magical drink of forgetfulness, but also fits with the folktale motif J2046, 'Law Student Forgets His Speech,' and the common folktale motif of magical forgetfulness (D2004). How are these elements of *Vatnsdæla saga* any less inspired by folktales than *Finnboga saga*'s similarities with folktale motifs R131 'Exposed Child or Abandoned Child Rescued' or H41.5 'Unknown Prince Shows His Kingly Qualities in Dealing with His Playmates'?

Færeyinga saga's use of folktale motifs and types is also interesting to examine, since this saga is considered quite early, certainly earlier than *Finnboga saga*. Both the story of Finnbogi and that of *Færeyinga saga*'s Sigmundur and his cousin Þórir seem to be borrowing from folktales like AT 567A 'The Magic Bird-Heart and the Separated Brothers.' The path of *Færeyinga saga*'s two cousins Sigmundur and Þórir is similar to many a folktale narrative. After their fathers' murderer Þrándr pays Hrafn money to have the children as slaves, the latter frees them and gives them Þrándr's money. This could be a variation of AT 567A's 'Spared by the Man Charged with Executing Them,' which in turn is much like *Finnboga saga*'s Syrpa saving Urðarkottr's life despite knowing him to have been intentionally exposed. When, in *Færeyinga saga*, Sigmundur and Þórir wander off from their savior they become stranded and wet on a mountain. They eventually find their way into a house, where they are taken in by two women who take care of them. When the master of the house arrives, he sniffs the air and recognizes that there are guests, and his wife convinces him to let them stay. This sniffing of the air, as Liestøl points out, is very much like folktale motif G84, 'Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum. Cannibal Returning Home Smells

¹³⁸ Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium = Courtiers' Trifles*, 188–190.

Human Flesh and Makes Exclamation.’¹³⁹ Úlfr/Porkell is not a flesh-eating ogre, but his home in a secluded location suggests an Otherness.¹⁴⁰ Liestøl perhaps manipulates his reading of the narrative a tad too much to fit with G532, ‘Hero Hidden and Ogre Deceived by His Wife (Daughter) When He Smells Human Blood,’ when he says that the master’s “attention is diverted by one of the women,”¹⁴¹ whereas Úlfr/Porkell has no intentions on eating the lads, and his wife rather gets to the point and pleads for their lives. Nevertheless, it is hard to avoid the impression that the narrative is in line with folktale motifs and types. That both Finnbogi and Sigmundr have an encounter with a bear that they subsequently kill and then set up to look alive at first sight seems like a variation of K2321 ‘Corpse Set Up to Frighten People.’¹⁴² All this to say: since *Færeyinga saga* is commonly dated to the early thirteenth century,¹⁴³ here we have an example of a rather early saga that makes heavy use of folktale motifs. Our expanded definition of the *Íslendingasögur* accepts *Færeyinga saga* as an outlier of the genre. Even if this is too liberal a definition, other similarities between *Færeyinga saga* and other *Íslendingasögur* make it clear that these texts were operating within the same generic framework.¹⁴⁴ Rather than an indication of age or of a different genre, it could be said that the influence from folktales is a common feature in many of the *Íslendingasögur*, regardless of their age. We can conclude that there is no significant reason to relegate *Finnboga saga* to the post-classical *Íslendingasögur*, based on either manuscript evidence, or the supernatural or folkloric elements in the saga. I suspect

¹³⁹ Liestøl, *Origin*, 168.

¹⁴⁰ Another example of this is Þórisdalr in *Grettis saga*. When Úlfr/Porkell later tells his tale we learn that he, together with a group of 12 men and his kidnapped wife, lived in a forest until they were attacked by the kidnapped woman’s father; see discussion above about the folkloric connection between outlaws and the forest.

¹⁴¹ Liestøl, 168.

¹⁴² See Inger M. Boberg, *Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature*, 186. Ólafur Halldórsson suggests a literary connection between the two, with *Finnboga saga*’s account influenced by *Færeyinga saga* (*Færeyinga saga*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, CLXXXIV)

¹⁴³ See Andreas Schmidt, “‘hinn verstí maðr á øllum norðrlöndum’, or *House of Cards* in the Faroe Islands: Conceptualising the ‘Boys Guys’ in *Færeyinga saga*,” 275–276, n. 7. See also Yoav Tirosh, “Eyrbyggja saga: efni og höfundareinkenni. (Review),” 163.

¹⁴⁴ *Færeyinga saga*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, CLXX–CXIV.

individual studies of other sagas commonly treated as post-classical will yield similar results, to the extent that the term itself will eventually be rendered pointless.

5.3.3 Do *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Gull-Þóris saga*, and *Finnboga saga* Belong to the Same Genre?

It could be argued that *Ljósvetninga saga* on the one hand, and *Gull-Þóris saga* and *Finnboga saga* on the other represent two ends of the spectrum of narrative structures that the *Íslendingasögur* can take on. Despite their alleged varied dates of composition, all three texts lack the prosimetric style commonly associated with the *Íslendingasögur*.¹⁴⁵ All three of them skip the story of the ancestry in Norway and jump straight to the action. *Gull-Þóris saga* and *Finnboga saga* both focus on a specific individual, as does *Ljósvetninga saga* to a certain extent with Guðmundr inn ríki. Following his death, though, the saga—while still focusing on Eyjólfur Guðmundarson—spends much of its narrative relating the side of the Ljósvetningar. Structurally, if *Ljósvetninga saga*'s A-redaction and *Gull-Þóris saga* focus—at least while the narrative takes place in Iceland—on a single feud, *Finnboga saga*, though highlighting the feud between Jökull and Finnbogi, focuses on the various disputes that the eponymous hero gets himself into. When the story takes place in Iceland, the literary techniques employed by all three sagas are similar enough, featuring the characteristic relatively laconic *Íslendingasögur* style.¹⁴⁶ If we turn to our broad definition of the *Íslendingasögur* suggested above, all three texts certainly match these criteria: they are prose texts that concern the medieval Norse world; they take place in the period between the tenth and the mid-eleventh century; and their main focus is Iceland. Their structure revolves around a feud or several feuds, all belonging to the class of independent farmers or *goðar*.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Heather O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse and the Poetics of Saga Narrative*, 228–241.

¹⁴⁶ For a general survey regarding the particularities of saga style, see Daniel Sävborg, “Style.” See also Chris Crocker, “Emotions,” on the scholarly problematizing of the “laconic, emotionally repressed hero of the sagas of Icelanders,” 240.

Both the Bookprose and the Freeprose approaches towards saga origins created an isolated perception of the *Íslendingasögur* texts, either as a literature that was developed in a secluded Iceland, or as a wholesale Germanic tradition that took very little from sources that were not oral. In response to the generic studies stalemate in his own field, Rick Altman posits: “As long as Hollywood genres are conceived as Platonic categories, existing outside the flow of time, it will be impossible to reconcile *genre theory*, which has always accepted as given the timelessness of a characteristic structure, and *genre history*, which has concentrated on chronicling the development, deployment, and disappearance of this same structure.”¹⁴⁷ Any assertion regarding the very existence of such a sub-subgenre as the post-classical *Íslendingasögur* needs to rely on a firmer agreement on issues of dating than the one we currently have. A synchronic look of the *Íslendingasögur*, then, must ignore this post-classical distinction. A diachronic one requires an entire re-evaluation of the dating on the sagas that is not available at present.¹⁴⁸

5.4 Location, Location, Location? Genre in its Manuscript Context

Material philology’s stress on individual manuscripts means that much more attention can be paid to the text’s role as part of a wider context. Genre at times dictates that context and, in turn, is dictated by context, in this case of manuscripts. The way a text is received cannot be isolated from its material surroundings, which includes the texts that it is grouped with. Generic context is ever-present in the construction of text, and in fact constructs the text. Without context, phrases could and do mean many things, sometimes to the point of being non-intelligible. Their place in a larger picture is what grants them their meaning.

¹⁴⁷ Altman, “Semantic/Syntactic,” 29.

¹⁴⁸ See also Pernille Hermann, “Saga Literature, Cultural Memory, and Storage,” 338.

The First Grammarian lists in his eponymous work the genres that were known to him at that time:¹⁴⁹

til þess at hægra verði at rita ok lesa sem nu tíðiz ok a þessv
landi bæði lög ok áttvisi eða þyðingar helgar eða sva þau
hín spaklegu fræði er ari þorgils son hefir a bækr sett af
skynsamlegu viti.¹⁵⁰

If one looks at the genres that the First Grammarian names, the possibility arises that when set to writing, the ancestral oral tales, by means of inclusion,¹⁵¹ incorporated into them the already existing literary genres¹⁵² of genealogy,¹⁵³ interpretations of sacred writings,¹⁵⁴ sagacious lore, and law. The sagacious lore referred to could be both the extant *Íslendingabók*, which relates Saga-Age events in a more concise style than the *Íslendingasögur*, but also the no-longer extant kings' history that Ari had supposedly written.¹⁵⁵ While some of the more historically-dry elements in the *Íslendingasögur*¹⁵⁶ could have originated with the oral storytelling that preceded their

¹⁴⁹ There is room to doubt whether or not he was including all of these, or only those genres of which he approved. The First Grammarian seems to have been quite a complex character (For a [light-toned] attempt at the identification of The First Grammarian, see Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson, “‘Mjög eru þeir menn framir’: Fyrsti málfraeðingurinn fundinn,” 10–12.

¹⁵⁰ Partially normalized based on *The First Grammatical Treatise [...]*, ed. Hreinn Benediktsson, 208; “In order that it may become easier to write and read, as is now customary in this country as well, both the laws and genealogies, or interpretations of sacred writings, or also that sagacious (historical) lore that Ari Þorgilsson has recorded in books with such reasonable understanding,” 209.

¹⁵¹ Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 180–182.

¹⁵² This might contribute to what Slavica Ranković calls the “heteroglossia” of the *Íslendingasögur* in “The Oral–Written Continuum as a Space,” 57–64.

¹⁵³ Margaret Clunies Ross, “The Development of Old Norse Textual Worlds: Genealogical Structure as a Principle of Literary Organisation in Early Iceland.”

¹⁵⁴ E.g., Andrew Hamer, *Njáls Saga and Its Christian Background: A Study of Narrative Method*; Jonas Wellendorf, “Ecclesiastical Literature and Hagiography,” 48–58, and Haki Antonsson, “Christian Themes,” 283–287. I wish to thank Daria Segal for her observations on this topic in a personal communication.

¹⁵⁵ *Íslendingabók: The Book of the Icelanders*, ed. Siân Grønlie, XII–XIII.

¹⁵⁶ It is important to point out that this is a judgment coming from a specific perspective, and as such is not an objective observation. William Ian Miller, addressing descriptions of the law in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, points out that while some find it boring and cannot wait for the killings to pick up again, others find these scenes fascinating, *Why Is Your Axe Bloody?*, 259–260.

writing, it is also possible that certain parts have been composed using the example of the writings of authors such as Ari Þorgilsson (and, presumably, Sæmundr inn fróði Sigfússon). It is hard to single these out in *Ljósvetninga saga*, which focuses mostly on detailed descriptions of regional events rather than grand scale national occurrences, but in other sagas such as the famous account of the Christianization of Iceland in *Brennu-Njáls saga*,¹⁵⁷ it is easy to see the influence of more concise texts such as *Íslendingabók* and *Kristni saga*. In addition, saga style came to the *Íslendingasögur* already somewhat established by the *konungasögur*.¹⁵⁸ One example of this is *Ljósvetninga saga*'s borrowing of *Morkinskinna*'s description of the killing of Hallr Ótryggsson,¹⁵⁹ one rare case where a scene of one saga was incorporated into the text of another saga, dealing with entirely different material.

I have left one genre named by the First Grammarian, namely *lög*, out of the debate above because it warrants some further attention. Law is an important component in many of the *Íslendingasögur*, either as a major theme as in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, or as a source of misfortune and facilitator of events as in *Grettis saga* and *Gísla saga*. Some scenes in *Njáls saga*, for example, seem like they were lifted straight from a courtroom transcript, had such a genre existed in thirteenth-century Iceland. It is likely that the written (and oral) genre of law was a component involved in the origins of the *Íslendingasögur*. But law itself is a good example of the process I wish to illustrate in connection to genre and manuscripts. When, at the beginning episode of *Ljósvetninga saga*, the sons of Þorgeirr explain about their father and Guðmundr: “kalla þeir oss ómaga, er í kviðinum eru” in the A-redaction and “kalla þeir oss ómæta í kviðinum” in the C-redaction, they are using legal language. But the context of the saga transforms this meaning into something that discusses the Þorgeirssynir's masculinity. As Thomas Beebe, discussing Wittgenstein's approach to language, points out, “the

¹⁵⁷ ÍF 12:255–272 [chs. 100–105].

¹⁵⁸ See Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir, *Jómsvíkinga saga. Sérstaða, varðveisla og viðtökur*, on other texts predating the *Íslendingasögur* such as *Jómsvíkinga saga*.

¹⁵⁹ ÍF 23:XXXIX; ÍF 10:XXXIV–XXXVI; and *Morkinskinna*, eds. Theodore Murdock Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade, 19–20.

meanings of words cannot be separated from the systems within which they are located. ‘Brick’ may point to an object in the world, or it may mean ‘hand me a brick,’ depending on the game being played. The value of ‘brick’ is more informative than the word’s ‘meaning’ in the dictionary sense.”¹⁶⁰ Beebee argues that the same applies for any given text: a text’s meaning is defined by the way that it is used. Discussing the genre of legal discourse specifically, Beebee looks at Barthes and his description of the language of the law as competing with the language of the people who are external to its construction process (the accused). The text of legal procedure, then, is a heteroglossia. But Beebee takes this further: “If, as Barthes argues, the law is really literature in disguise, then we might argue that literature [...] is really law in disguise.”¹⁶¹ Literature can be created through the language of law, and it is the context in which these words and phrases appear that create the genre.¹⁶²

The importance of context can therefore be expanded beyond the level of sentences and kinds of speech to text-groups. When trying to define the *fornaldarsögur* genre, Torfi H. Tulinius offers this witty ‘minimal definition’: “*Fornaldarsögur* are the sagas that C. C. Rafn published under this blanket title.”¹⁶³ While meant to trigger a debate about the lack of uniformity in the *fornaldarsögur* corpus, Torfi also sheds light on an important genre-defining aspect that is frequently ignored or is simply given lip-service: the genre corpus as we have it is defined by editorial choices made by nineteenth- and twentieth-century publishers and scholars. To say that the post-classical *Íslendingasögur* are a modern construct is a disservice to those men and women of the centuries before the nineteenth, who read these texts without our biases and discriminations. In one of the two

¹⁶⁰ Beebee, *The Ideology of Genre, a Comparative Study of Generic Instability*, 275.

¹⁶¹ Beebee, 175.

¹⁶² See also Gun Widmark, “Om nordisk replikkonst i och utanfor den islandska sagan,” and Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *Fortælling og ære: Studier i slænderesagaerne*.

¹⁶³ Quinn et al., “Interrogating Genre,” 379. But see Lavender “The Secret Prehistory of the Fornaldarsögur,” where he problematizes Rafn’s role in creating the *fornaldarsögur* sub-genre and points the creation of the corpus to “Peter Erasmus Müller in the second volume of his *Sagabibliothek* and not Carl Christian Rafn as commonly thought,” 551.

first ever printed volumes of the *Íslendingasögur* in 1756, *Ágætar fornmannasögur*, Björn Markússon published such texts as *Kjalnesinga saga* and *Króka-Refs saga*, as well as the female-empowered *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*, alongside *Gísla saga* and *Víga-Glúms saga*. In the second volume, *Nokkrir margfróðir söguþættir*, Björn published *Bandamanna saga*, *Víglundar saga*, *Olkofra þáttur*, *Hávarðar saga Ísfróðings*, *Þorðar saga hreðu*, *Grettis saga hins sterka*, *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, *Gests þáttur Bárðarsonar* (usually considered a part of *Bárðar saga*), and *Jökuls þáttur Búason*. The logic of this compilation is different than the ones we are used to, since it groups many sagas that are considered nowadays ‘post-classical’ with ‘classical’ *Íslendingasögur*. The fact that more sagas that are today considered late were the first *Íslendingasögur* texts to be published indicates a difference in tastes from now and then. This publication shows that, at least in mid-eighteenth-century Iceland, the generic division between classical and post-classical *Íslendingasögur* was not always intuitive. This in itself is not something to lament; the later editions and the categories they offered indeed captured something that was common between different saga groups, though this was by no means the only possible way of dividing the saga corpus.¹⁶⁴ It gave us a useful group of texts that allowed the advancement of literary interpretation, despite the stalemates that it produced.

But Torfi’s observation also leads to another important point: in the case of the saga genre, context has a crucial role. The mid-fourteenth-century AM 132 fol.—better known as *Möðruvallabók*—currently contains within its pages the following sagas: *Njáls saga*, *Egils saga*, *Finnboga saga ramma*, *Bandamanna saga*, *Kormáks saga*, *Víga-Glúms saga*, *Droplaugarsona saga*, *Olkofra þáttur*, *Hallfræðar saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, and *Fóstbræðra saga*. Seeing this list, one cannot escape the feeling that indeed, these texts worked together and were organized as members of the *Íslendingasögur* genre.¹⁶⁵ On the other

¹⁶⁴ See, e.g., Kalinke’s *Bridal-quest Romance in Medieval Iceland* in the discussion above.

¹⁶⁵ It has been pointed out that *Njáls saga* and *Egils saga* seemed to have originally been intended for separate codices, perhaps with the purpose of being sold. Michael Chestnutt, “On the Structure, Format, and Preservation of *Möðruvallabók*”. See also Emily Lethbridge, “Hvorki glansar gull á mér,” 61–64. As Lethbridge has pointed out, it is possible that other sagas were included in the main codex before or after the extant

hand, though, the fourteenth-century manuscripts AM 371 4to, AM 544 4to and AM 675 4to that together compose Hauksbók contain within their pages *Fóstbræðra saga* (which is also in Möðruvallabók) and *Eiríks saga rauða*, alongside texts as varied as *Elucidarius*, *Breta sögur*, *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, a version of *Landnámabók*, *Völuspá*, *Algorismus*, and various others. Much ink has been shed to convincingly argue that the compiler of Hauksbók felt that these belonged together.¹⁶⁶ Was one of these compilers wrong? Obviously not. *Fóstbræðra saga* fit in Möðruvallabók, and it fit in Hauksbók. The saga remained (mostly) the same, what was different was the context.

A focus on a saga's manuscript context—or, as Beebee calls it, a text's 'use value'—would stress that *Ljósvetninga saga*'s status as an *Íslendingasaga* is not as stable as it would seem, even less so than if we follow the semantic/syntactic approach discussed above. Both in our contemporary as well as in past imaginations, the *Íslendingasögur* are very real concepts, even if their canon was arranged differently in the eighteenth-century publications, for example. But we need to accept that these texts had different uses besides those we usually assign them. As Fish points out, "readers don't just 'decide' to recharacterize a text; there has to be some reason why it would occur to someone to treat a work identified as a member of one genre as a possible member of another; there must already be in place ways of thinking that will enable the recharacterization to become a project, and there must be conditions in the institution such that the prosecution of that project seems attractive and potentially rewarding."¹⁶⁷ One of the best ways that these uses can be estimated in medieval Icelandic literature is by looking at their manuscript context.

texts (she bases this on Sigurjón Páll Ísaksson), and these could, obviously, concern the Nordic mythic-heroic past, the period of the settlement, or the non-historical happenings in a geographically far away land. This does not detract from the fact that we have a number of *Íslendingasögur* grouped together, and nine of these clearly belonged together in the eyes of the compiler or his commissioner (as noted above, the existence of such an individual has been put into question).

¹⁶⁶ See, e.g., Sverrir Jakobsson, "Hauksbók and the Construction of an Icelandic World View," but cf. Gunnar Harðarson, "Hauksbók og alfræðirit miðalda."

¹⁶⁷ Stanley Fish, "Working on the Chain Gang," 209.

5.4.1 AM 561 4to Organizing Principle: Regional History with Entertaining Interlude

As seen above, AM 561 4to is a challenging manuscript, because very little is known about the hand that wrote it, because of the many lacunae in it, and because we have no idea if what we have of it presently reflects its entirety or if other sagas were included in it. The manuscript currently contains sixteen leaves of *Reykðæla saga*, followed by seventeen leaves of *Gull-Þóris saga*. The manuscript then introduces *Ljósvetninga saga* and contains ten leaves of it. While the three sagas in this manuscript are riddled with missing and damaged leaves, their presence still provides us with much information about the texts themselves.

It is of significance that *Ljósvetninga saga* is placed after *Reykðæla saga* and *Gull-Þóris saga*. *Reykðæla saga* takes place in much the same area as *Ljósvetninga saga*, albeit in a different time period and with the focus slightly more northeast, though it indeed has some characters, places, and kin groups in common.¹⁶⁸ It also is divided very similarly to the C-redaction of *Ljósvetninga saga* in a two-part structure, the first part focusing on the district ruler Áskell, and the second part focusing on Áskell's son Víga-Skúta.¹⁶⁹ *Gull-Þóris saga* is a very different case: its action focuses initially on Þórir's *útanferð* to Norway, where he gains the gold that justifies his name Gull-Þórir, and then moves on to the Westfjords, where politics and vengeance cause Þórir's men to be killed one by one. Eventually, Þórir runs away and hides his gold and there are rumors that he has become a gold-guarding dragon. This saga is more adventure-oriented than *Reykðæla saga* and *Ljósvetninga saga*. It is interesting, then, that *Gull-Þóris saga* was placed by the manuscript's compiler between two sagas that deal very clearly with regional history, and neighbouring regions to boot. In many ways, *Ljósvetninga saga* could be seen as a sequel to *Reykðæla saga* and the regional dynamics of Eyjafjörður. The interruption by *Gull-Þóris saga*, then, is curious.

¹⁶⁸ Sigríður Steinbjörnsdóttir suggested that *Reykðæla saga*, *Víga-Glúms saga*, *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Svarfdæla saga* and *Valla-Ljóts saga* could constitute a saga cycle. *Heljur á heljarþróm Karlmennska og heljuímynd fimm Íslendingasagna af Norðurlandi*, 32–34, 39–69.

¹⁶⁹ See Bertha S. Phillpotts, *Edda and Saga*, 200.

Assuming that the compiler had a plan in mind, it can be argued that, after the politically heavy *Reykðæla saga*, the compiler wanted to turn to a lighter tone of adventures in Norway and battles with magical users in Iceland before going back to the mostly sober, or ‘realistic’ A-redaction of *Ljósvetninga saga*. The C-redaction includes at least three, if not four, stories that were attached to the main plot of the saga in the process of its transmission, and it seems likely that the compiler of the A-redaction chose not to include these. I believe that, by incorporating *Gull-Þóris saga*, he compensated for the lack of flair that characterizes the somber and slowly paced *Ljósvetninga saga*.

While the possibility remains that other sagas would have existed in AM 561 4to, the current situation of these three sagas works together quite well. Here the concept of generic crossroads could be of significance. When discussing approaches to genre films, Rick Altman presents two main trends. One approach, inspired by Lévi-Strauss, is the one called the ritualistic, which suggests that the audience has control over Hollywood generic formation and it shapes the way that genre films are made;¹⁷⁰ the opposite approach, developed in several film studies journals such as *Cahiers du Cinéma*, *Screen*, and *Jump Cut*, based on the cultural theories of the Frankfurt school, is that film genres are actually an ideological force that Hollywood uses to manipulate its audience towards the goals that they wish to promote.¹⁷¹ Rather than focusing on these approaches as contradictory, Altman suggests that these are in fact complementary. In every genre film, there are moments that he terms “generic crossroads”: “Strategically simplifying, we may say that one fork offers a culturally sanctioned activity or value, while the other path diverges from cultural norms in favour of generic pleasure.”¹⁷² These forks in the road delineate a choice between the ethics of the genre and the ethics of society, which are often contradictory. For example, a gangster film requires non-sanctioned

¹⁷⁰ See Hans Jacob Orning, *The Reality of the Fantastic [...]*, 72, for his discussion of Lévi-Strauss’s use of myth in the context of Old Norse scholarship.

¹⁷¹ Altman, “Semantic/Syntactic,” 30.

¹⁷² Altman, *Film/Genre*, 145.

violence to allow for the generic pleasure; this goes against the ethics of modern Western society where such actions are unwanted and harmful.¹⁷³ Altman stresses that these ethical forks in the road are not to be confused with narrative forks in the road that are tied with character development. These narrative crossroads are choices that are open to the text and the audience;¹⁷⁴ the texts' characters may or may not be involved in this crucial ethical moment. In the *Íslendingasögur*, the path of generic pleasure is that of fighting, of revenge-based violence, whereas the path of cultural norms is that of resolution and settlements.¹⁷⁵ Looked at through this perspective, *Reykðæla saga*'s Áskell goði is a moderate chieftain, who can be seen as maintaining the order that cultural norms demand. Once Áskell is killed, however, his violent son Víga-Skúta is unleashed upon the narrative and gives the genre audience what they seek from an *Íslendingasaga*: action and wit. After a series of violent confrontations, Víga-Skúta is betrayed and killed, with the narrative only briefly summarizing the peaceful resolution of the affair. *Gull-Þóris saga*'s narrative is an almost constant state of battle, first in Norway and then in Iceland. The protagonist sees all his adventuring companions die around him, and eventually elects to seclude himself away from society. In other words, this is a saga that consistently chooses generic pleasure over cultural norms, though the tone is darker, the many paranormal occurrences perhaps a manifestation of Gull-Þórir's trauma.¹⁷⁶ *Ljósvetninga saga* starts in a similar state of societal unrest: the district chieftains Guðmundr inn ríki and Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði prefer commitments to foreign rulers and personal financial gain over their own countrymen and *þingmenn*'s interests. As we have seen in The Part About Memory, the saga in its A-redaction is a constant display of chieftains preferring their own wealth and power over the well-being of their district.

¹⁷³ Altman, 146–147.

¹⁷⁴ Altman, 145.

¹⁷⁵ Martin Arnold calls these “the ethical problems that arise when the standards of personal honour conflict with the standards of communal peace,” Arnold, *Post-Classical*, 233.

¹⁷⁶ On the idea that the paranormal in the *Íslendingasögur* can be seen as a manifestation of trauma, see Marion Poilvez, “A Troll Did It? Trauma as a Paranormal State in the *Íslendingasögur*.”

Eventually, it is up to the Reykjadalur *hreppr*'s charismatic leader Ófeigr to check Guðmundr's strength, and it is up to the half-brother of Þorkell hákr, Drauma-Finni with his ties to the paranormal, to end the chieftain's life. This does not offer a round, positive ending to the preference of generic pleasures over cultural norms that started with Áskell goði's death, but it also ends this three-saga arc with a sigh of relief as the overbearing chieftain's power is checked through strong individuals, and dies mysteriously without clear recourse for vengeance, promising a period of peace.

5.4.2 First AM 162 c fol. Organizing Principle: Plot Expansion

In its extant form, AM 162 c fol. features fragments of *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Vápnfirðinga saga*, *Droplaugarsona saga*, *Finnboga saga*, and *Þorsteins þáttur stangarhöggis*, all texts set in the north of Iceland, and besides *Finnboga saga* focused on regional politics. Guðbrandur Vigfússon has suggested that it would have also contained within it many more political sagas.¹⁷⁷ In addition to these five *Íslendingasögur*, an indigenous Icelandic romance called *Sálus saga ok Níkanórs* was contained in the manuscript. This led Guðbrandur Vigfússon to assume that around a third of the manuscript would have been sagas of similar nature. Before dealing with *Sálus saga ok Níkanórs*'s place in the manuscript, the logic of the five extant *Íslendingasögur* grouped in AM 162 c fol. will be dealt with. Magerøy's arguments regarding the C-redaction's tendency toward expansion could be the key to its role in the manuscript as a whole as well. While his arguments characterizing chapters 13–18 as an expansion of the plot are impossible to determine without AM 561 4to's missing leaves, it is true that AM 162 c fol.'s choice of *Ljósvetninga saga*'s C-redaction over the A-redaction is aimed at expanding the saga's narrative. The narrative here includes three *þættir* that were almost certainly not a part of the A-redaction—at least not in its AM 561 4to

¹⁷⁷ Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell hypothesize that one-third of the AM 162 c fol. manuscript would have been *riddarasögur* material. They suggested that with *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, *Valla-Ljóts saga*, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, and **Njarðvíkinga saga*, the size of its *Íslendingasögur* portion would have been around 86 folios. *Origines Islandicae*, 345.

manifestation—and Eyjólfur’s bulk and *Þórarins þátr ofsa*, which were most likely not a part of the A-redaction as well. I believe that, at least partially, the same logic applies to the other four *Íslendingasögur* texts of AM 162 c fol.

It is believed that the version of *Droplaugarsona saga* preserved in AM 162 c fol. is actually older—or at any rate reflects a differing tradition—than the one available to us in *Möðruvallabók*,¹⁷⁸ and the same is true for *Finnboga saga*. The fragmentary *Þorsteins þátr stangarhöggs* represents a slightly different tradition than the one preserved in the paper manuscripts. The four extant leaves of *Sálus saga ok Nikanors* also reveal to us a different version.¹⁷⁹ The decision made by the AM 162 c fol. compiler of which version to use in the other *Íslendingasögur* can, in turn, help us understand why *Ljósvetninga saga* in this manuscript appears as it does.

Prescriptive generic thinking causes us to edit out things that do not belong to the genre as we perceive it, and thus impose an often false and anachronistic logic to the way texts were thought of, composed, and assigned to manuscripts. This is why short stories such as *Sorla þátr*, *Ófeigs þátr*, and *Vöðu-Brands þátr* are frequently understood as interpolated in the *Ljósvetninga saga* text, and even as a part of a different genre, as short stories rather than the novel-like saga, and in some editions are removed entirely or relegated to after the end of the ‘saga proper.’ The case of *Ólkofra þátr* is a good example of where the prescriptive approach fails to give us a good picture of the medieval perception. According to Emily Lethbridge, when *Ólkofra þátr* appears in *Möðruvallabók*, its rubric is “Ólkofra saga,” rather than *þátr*. As she points out, “Modern critics deciding on one or the other generic type (i.e., *saga*/*þátr*) may well be implicitly perpetuating certain hierarchical value judgements founded on assumptions about the relative lengths and narrative value or complexity of sagas (longer, more

¹⁷⁸ Alison Finlay, “Droplaugarsona saga,” 143. See also ÍF 11:LVII–LXIV. Kristian Kálund says of the saga, “fremgår det allerførst klart, at 162 ikke kan nedstamme fra 132,” “Droplaugarsona-saga i den ved brudstykket AM. 162, fol. repræsenterede bearbejdelse,” 175.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. variant readings in *Late Medieval Icelandic Romances*, vol 2. [...], ed. Agneta Loth.

sophisticated) and *þættir* (shorter, less sophisticated).”¹⁸⁰ Mathias Blobel’s initial steps at network analysis of the saga corpus came to the conclusion that *Íslendingasögur*, *formaldarsögur*, and *riddarasögur* were clustered together in manuscripts, and rarely separated. While a handful of manuscripts exist that do contain only *Íslendingasögur*,¹⁸¹ the rule is rather one of “decidedly mixed or generically heterogeneous character.”¹⁸² While text compilations such as *Möðruvallabók* reinforce our notion of the *Íslendingasögur* genre, their scarcity should reinforce our notion that these genres mattered very little to the thirteenth–fifteenth-century Icelandic audience that wrote and consumed this body of literature. The texts’ place within their respective manuscripts should then be examined, more than their place within their specific genre.¹⁸³ The treatment of the *Íslendingaþættir* as a separate genre has also worked to widen the difference between the *Íslendingasögur* and the *konungasögur*. Like the *Íslendingaþættir* in the *konungasögur*, one could argue for *konungaþættir* in the *Íslendingasögur*. The problem with the prescriptive method offered by Andersson’s structural analysis or Harris’s approach towards Old Norse genre is that, while they illuminate the workings of certain texts from a structural perspective, they blur the similarities that these texts would have in the eyes of their contemporaries. Thus, we forget what a large role the *Íslendingaþættir* themselves play in the *konungasögur*, and the significant similarities these have with to *Íslendingasögur*.

All three of the so-called *þættir*, *Sprla þáttur*, *Ófeigs þáttur*, and *Vöðu-Brands þáttur*, are extant in AM 162 c fol. In addition, most paper copies of *Ljósvetninga saga*, which are believed to have derived from a copy of AM 162 c fol., include a fragment of *Þórarins þáttur ofsa*; this makes it likely that that story would have been in the complete AM 162 c fol. as well. The inclusion

¹⁸⁰ Lethbridge, “Hvorki glansar gull á mér,” 70. On the *þættir* as a unsustainable generic category that was constructed in modern editions, see Ármann Jakobsson “The Life and Death of the Medieval Icelandic Short Story.”

¹⁸¹ Such as *Möðruvallabók* and *Pseudo-Vatnshyrna*. Lethbridge, “Hvorki glansar gull á mér,” 85, see also 72. It is important to note that while Lethbridge treats *Íslendingaþættir* and *Landnámabók* as texts of a genre different from the *Íslendingasögur*, no essential distinction between these texts is recognized in the present discussion.

¹⁸² Lethbridge, 73.

¹⁸³ See Lethbridge, 76.

of these *þættir* expands the story to a wider scope, what Vésteinn Ólason calls “composition by accretion.”¹⁸⁴ The C-redaction narrative expands beyond the dealings of the people from Möðruvellir with the people of Ljósavatn: the three *þættir* bring the story farther northeast, and the story of Þórarinn ofsi brings in connections with events that take place in the west of Iceland.

But this is not a flawless argument. While for *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Droplaugarsona saga*, the compiler of AM 162 c fol. had chosen longer redactions over others that were available, the extant *Finnboga saga* version in the manuscript is noticeably shorter than the one in Möðruvallabók,¹⁸⁵ unfortunately the extant part concerns events connected with the west rather than the northeast of Iceland. It would certainly have been interesting to see how the narrative dealt with those sections dealing with Finnbogi’s youth in Eyjafjörður. One hint of this can be found in AM 510 4to, a manuscript which has a redaction that is closer to AM 162 c fol. than Möðruvallabók.¹⁸⁶ We find there increased mention of Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði by name.¹⁸⁷ This could simply be a stylistic choice, but it could also indicate an attempt to make him a more prominent character in the saga, rooting the narrative more firmly in the Northeast, or at any rate connecting it more explicitly to a prominent character in Icelandic history, Þorgeirr the Lawspeaker. This tendency toward expansion can also explain the presence of *Þorsteins þátr stangarhögg*s in the manuscript. While it could be seen as a standalone narrative, it could also be seen as a text tied to *Vápnfirðinga saga* and Bjarni Brodd-Helgason.¹⁸⁸ This text, then, could

¹⁸⁴ Vésteinn Ólason, *Dialogues with the Viking Age*, 92.

¹⁸⁵ E.g., *Finnboga Saga Hins Ramma*, ed. Hugo Gering, XXI. See also XXI–XXIV.

¹⁸⁶ ÍF 14:LXIX.

¹⁸⁷ *Finnboga Saga*, ed. Gering. e.g., 10–11, 50, 55. Though, again, this is not the rule in general dealings with the Northeast. For example, see how many details about Finnbogi’s engagement to Eyjólfur Valgerðarson’s daughter are taken out of AM 510. *Finnboga saga*, 53. This brings to mind Hans Jacob Orning’s statement that “a manuscript cannot be regarded as a diligently crafted product made up according to some master plan without inconsistencies,” *Reality of the Fantastic*, 63.

¹⁸⁸ Its post-medieval reception confirms this. If AM 496 4to calls it “þáttur ur voknfyrdinga sögu” (32v), AM 156 fol. calls it “Af Þorsteine Stangarhögg” (8r).

either have been incorporated into *Vápnfirðinga saga*, or could have been appended to it, thus expanding the world of its characters.

One organizing principle of AM 162 c fol., then, could be that of plot expansion. The inclusion of *Þorsteins þáttr stangarhöggss*, whether we look at it as a stand-alone text or one that was incorporated into *Vápnfirðinga saga*, as well as the longer versions of *Droplaugarsona saga* and *Ljósvetninga saga* point in this direction. The manuscript compiler aspired to contextualize his sagas within a wider world, perhaps with the aim of putting the immanent sagas to vellum, after the trauma of the plague presumably revealed how unstable these memories' existence actually were. Another possibility—presuming Ólafur Loftsson's identity as a scribe—was the Skarðverjar's wish to establish a firmer connection to the Northeast. In this scenario, the story of Finnbogi who moved to the Northwest but was born and raised in the Northeast, would certainly be a key text for the Skarðverjar to preserve. But the sagas of AM 162 c fol. also share a common theme, one that connects the *Íslendingasögur* within it to the single extant *riddarasaga*, *Sálus saga ok Níkanórs*. That theme is the debate surrounding the use of power.

5.4.3 Second AM 162 c fol. Organizing Principle: Power as Theme

Several scholars have argued that *Sálus saga ok Níkanórs*,¹⁸⁹ and other indigenous *riddarasögur*, show a combination of the *Íslendingasögur* style as well as that of the *riddarasögur*. It could very well be that this saga would find its place among family sagas. In AM 557 4to (Skálholtsbók), which is partly attributed to Ólafur Loftsson, we see *Íslendingasögur*, *riddarasögur*, and *konungasögur* set alongside each other. While a study of that manuscript's literary organization is wanting, what is clear from this is that these stories could be seen as fitting together in a manuscript that has been shown to be tied to the same milieu as that of AM 162 c fol.

¹⁸⁹ See Klaus Rostenbeck, *Die Stellung Der Riddarasögur in Der Altnordischen Prosaliteratur*, 210–211, and Glauser, *Isländische Märchensagas: Studien zur Prosaliteratur im spätmittelalterlichen Island. Beiträge zur Nordischen Philologie*, 288, as well as Matthew J. Driscoll, “Saulus saga ok Níkanórs,” 566.

If the organizing principle of the *Íslendingasögur* in AM 162 c fol. is one of expansion, the connection with *Sálus saga ok Níkanórs* seems to be a thematic one. *Ljósvetninga saga* (including each of its *þættir*), *Finnboga saga*, *Vápnfirðinga saga*, *Þorsteins þáttur stangarhöggs*, and *Droplaugarsona saga*, all discuss issues of the exercise of power. The closing lines of *Ljósvetninga saga*'s C-redaction's main narrative exemplify this with Skegg-Broddi's statement: "I don't think you are a strong man, but you are a sound one," showing a preference of moderate behavior over brute strength. The message of *Ljósvetninga saga* is therefore about the moderate exercise of power. Too much power causes trouble and imbalance. In *Þorsteins þáttur stangarhöggs* we see the chieftain Bjarni Brodd-Helgason exercise his power moderately by finding a way to avenge his honor without killing. In *Droplaugarsona saga* we learn of the dangers of overstepping one's bounds when the upstart Helgi Droplaugarson takes on the local chieftain Helgi Ásbjarnarson. *Vápnfirðinga saga* contrasts the relatively peaceful Geitir with the greedy Brodd-Helgi, and *Finnboga saga* similarly contrasts the two strongmen Finnbogi, who just wants to be left in peace, and Jökull, who is constantly seeking vengeance. This message was relevant in the fifteenth century, just as it was in the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries when the sagas were put down in writing, or the tenth and eleventh centuries when the stories that would become the sagas were unfolding and developing.

Here the concept of generic crossroads once again offers an interesting possibility for interpretation. As in the case of AM 561 4to, honor and vengeance are the *söguligt* generic pleasure, while peacemaking represents the cultural aspiration for peace and conflict resolution.¹⁹⁰ *Ljósvetninga saga* is full of textual forks in the road where generic pleasure competes with cultural norms. In the C-redaction, after two frustrated duel threats (*Vöðubrand's þáttur's* Þorkell Geitisson and ch. 17's Þórir Helgason), ch. 30 brings the possibility of another duel between the Møðruvellingar and the Ljósvetningar. Geilir, friend of arbitrator Skegg-Broddi, functions as the voice of society: "Illa læt ek yfir því, er hólmgangur takast upp, ok er þat

¹⁹⁰ See William Ian Miller's *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking* generally, and n. 19, p. 368.

heiðinna manna.”¹⁹¹ And indeed, once again—against the logic of the narrative law of thirds—a duel is averted, and cultural norms are restored. To drive this point home, Þorvarðr, the most prominent of the Ljósvetningar, learns of the death of his brother Þórarinn. Rather than follow the path of vengeance, the typical decision that would be made in an *Íslendingasaga*, Þorvarðr decides to follow the wish of St. Peter and avoids perpetuating the violent Ljósvetningar–Møðruvellingar feud.¹⁹² In *Vápnfirðinga saga*, the feud is only resolved when Bjarni Brodd-Helgason and Þorkell Geitisson neglect their duty of vengeance and honor and adopt the cultural norm of peacemaking. The choice Bjarni Brodd-Helgason makes in *Þorsteins þáttr stangarhöggss* to employ Þorsteinn rather than kill him is another example of a choice between vengeance and honor and peace. The two Droplaugarsynir upstarts disrupt societal convention by disputing with the district chieftain and eventually killing him. Once they outlive their usefulness from a generic pleasure perspective, the story does away with them, restoring cultural norms. The frustration one might feel when reading of the constant torture by Jökull against Finnbogi in the latter’s eponymous saga may also stem from the narrative’s insistence on offering action and battles instead of the cultural norm of resolution for the sympathetic Finnbogi. This trait could be what made saga scholars insist that this is a ‘late’ saga, despite lack of conclusive evidence to support this; too much generic pleasure and too little conformation to cultural norms could be somewhat off-putting. Despite the fact that *Finnboga saga* chooses a path different from the other *Íslendingasögur* in AM 162 c fol., it still discusses a similar theme of balanced power.

¹⁹¹ *Ljósv.* 1830, 105 [ch. 30]. ÍF 10: 102. “I dislike the idea of fighting duels [...] They are a heathen custom.” *Law and Literature*, 242.

¹⁹² Poyer discussed this scene in detail at The Seventeenth International Saga Conference (Reykjavík, 13 August, 2018) in a paper titled “Vernacular Christianity and the *Book of Jonah* in *Ljósvetninga saga*.” There she presented her future Doctoral thesis chapter regarding *Ljósvetninga saga*, which will further explore the religious elements in the saga that are sporadically discussed in the present thesis.

Sálus saga ok Níkanárs similarly discusses matters of power.¹⁹³ The story starts off with two prominent Mediterranean rulers, Prince Sálus and Duke Níkanór, who are invited to Rome for a feast with the emperor. When people start to praise duke Níkanór and his abilities, Prince Sálus becomes jealous and challenges him to a game of chess and then to a jousting match. Following the joust, the two are near-fatally wounded. When they recover, they are asked by the emperor to become sworn brothers. They agree to this, and the deal is supposed to be sealed through a marriage between Prince Sálus and Níkanór's sister Potentiana. Here the author drives his point home by the use of the Latin word for power, *potentia*, in the name for the coveted woman. However, resolution is delayed once the sister is kidnapped to the Israeli/Palestinian city of Acre by Abel and Matteus, two Middle Eastern rulers, and the two sworn brothers Sálus and Níkanór must unite to bring Potentiana back by travelling to the Levant. When they succeed in this through trickery, they prepare for a large battle against Abel and Matteus that is waged in Rome, at the cost of many lives. Throughout the text, Prince Sálus always tries to solve things by force of arms and even murder; Duke Níkanór always checks his behavior, and by tying their fates together, saves Rome and perhaps Europe from the forces that wish to conquer it. The saga clearly favors the cool-headed yet very able Duke Níkanór over the hot-headed Prince Sálus, but it also shows that through checking Sálus' power, it can be used for the good. *Sálus saga ok Níkanárs* employs clearly different semantics from its manuscript *Íslendingasögur* neighbours; its values, narrative style, word choice, character building, time and space are literally worlds apart,¹⁹⁴ yet syntactically the sub-plotline of the interactions between Sálus and Níkanór are very similar in nature, though turned somewhat upside-down. Here, interestingly, cultural norms and generic pleasure fit: both kinds of texts shy away from senseless murder as a way of solving disputes. Once the violence of

¹⁹³ See Orning, *Reality of the Fantastic*, 125, 178. Orning stresses Sálus's realization of the fault of his ways, whereas the present analysis focuses on the checking of power through the mechanisms of another agent.

¹⁹⁴ It is important to consider the similarities between these texts, discussed above.

prince Sálus is contained, Western society can focus on the real threat coming from the land of Israel/Palestine.¹⁹⁵ This saga could function to close off the saga compilation that was AM 162 c fol. as a coda of sorts, but we will most likely never know its true place within the complete manuscript.

5.5 Conclusion

An aversion to all evaluative categorization is in my opinion one of the unfortunate tendencies accompanying post-modernism as well as the excessive emphasis on one manuscript by the New Philologists. In both cases, it was a positive move to increase scholars' awareness of the relative nature of some ideas about literary and textual quality, but the negative aspect of these schools of thought is a tendency to undermine the most important function of criticism, which is to make distinctions and to evaluate; to say, this saga is different from that one in certain respects and in my opinion better for it, and this manuscript is more important and has a better text than another one, although each of them has its own intrinsic value.¹⁹⁶

The *Íslendingasögur*'s nature as a stable group of texts has not changed much throughout the last two centuries. It is easy to decide what fits and what does not fit into this group of text. These notions of what makes a proper *Íslendingasaga* and what makes a less proper *Íslendingasaga* have had, however, sad effects on the way that scholarship has dealt with texts such as *Gull-Þóris saga*, *Finnboga saga*, and most importantly (for the purposes of this project) *Ljósvetninga saga*. Scholarship has refused to see *Ljósvetninga saga*—its C-redaction at any rate—as a proper *Íslendingasaga* because it does not work the way that a proper *Íslendingasaga* should work. The *þettir* are seen

¹⁹⁵ Orning, 157 and n. 29.

¹⁹⁶ Vésteinn Ólason, "Kind of Literature," 40, n. 28.

as parasitic texts that leeches onto a main story without adding much to the mix. I believe that this stems from a false understanding of what the proper *Íslendingasögur* are. Following from that is a false understanding of how these stories fit in with each other, one that excludes too many texts for either narrative reasons (*Ljósvetninga saga*), for employment of different modalities (*Gull-Þóris saga*), or simply because they do not fit with our notions of natural *Íslendingasögur* development (*Finnboga saga*).

If, instead of looking at *Ljósvetninga saga*'s parts separately, we zoom out and look at its generic function within its manuscripts' context, an alternative generic interpretation for the texts can be established. More specifically, if we do not try to fit the narratives into the generic narratological rules we assume we know, other narratological interpretations open up. Within AM 162 c. fol., *Ljósvetninga saga* functions as a part of a grander collection of stories of the Icelandic North and Northeast, and as a part of a grander thematic discussion of the uses and abuses of power. Within this framework, the *þættir* are not unneeded interpolations, but rather integral to the overall aim. This is not to say that the texts do not work well together; as I have showed in the chapter *Are Each of the Redactions Internally Consistent?*, there is a consistency of characterization and narrative between all parts of *Ljósvetninga saga*'s C-redaction. Rather than call the *þættir* interpolated—or even *þættir*, for that matter—the stress should be on AM 162 c fol.'s scribe (Ólafur Loftsson?) and his choice to incorporate a longer redaction of the saga over the shorter one that was, presumably, available to him. He could have chosen to take out the *þættir*, like the scribe of AM 561 4to, or Eyjólfur's bulk of the saga, like the scribes of AM 561 4to and AM 514 4to.

As such, this chapter and the thesis at large contend with the quote by Vésteinn Ólason that opens this conclusion. Indeed, we can agree that certain versions of sagas are more enjoyable or even more artistic than others. An imaginative and creative scribe could turn a middling saga into a masterpiece, with the right change of pacing and the insertion of witty retorts. But since we lack so much by way of paratextual information in

medieval Icelandic manuscripts, we cannot always achieve with certainty an understanding of which redaction or which individual wordings are the ‘original.’ In addition, in the case of *Ljósvetninga saga*, the insistence on finding an original blurs the fact that both of its redactions are in fact medieval literature, and have equal value in a study of literary history. Indeed, there are times when the C-redaction is more entertaining and tells a better, more expansive story. This says nothing about its precedence, though, since what the present writer finds better, another finds worse. Jason Mittell shows in his research into the generic history of cartoons that our understanding of the genre as directed toward children is a misconception born out of programming decisions: shows like *The Flintstones* and *The Jetsons* were originally produced with the aim of an adult audience, and the move from prime-time TV had more to do with the overexploitation of a popular genre than anything that is inherent in the programs.¹⁹⁷ What Vésteinn Ólason ignores in his insistence on the importance of the evaluative function of criticism, is that this same evaluation creates moments where we decide on the literary history of a certain nation—in this case medieval Iceland—based on the literary tastes of our own times. Decisions based on personal tastes and political interests carry across time, creating concepts such as ‘post-classical’ *Íslendingasögur*, or better and worse redactions, long after the debates that these were judged by died down and lost their relevance.

¹⁹⁷ Mittell, *Genre and Television*, 56–93.

6. Conclusion and Final Thoughts

Guðni Jónsson's edition of the *Íslendingasögur* is not frequently used or referred to in scholarship about these texts and general Old Norse topics. It was a popular edition with no critical apparatus except for the rare footnote and a short introduction. However, as Ármann Jakobsson points out, many saga readers have first encountered the *Íslendingasögur* through Guðni Jónsson's publications, and as such they shaped their understanding and future interpretations of the sagas.¹ This is comparable to how the first version of a symphony you hear rules your interpretation of that piece after and how you judge other performances. Many people and scholars, then, came across *Ljósvetninga saga* for the first time in the ninth volume of Guðni Jónsson's *Íslendingasagnaútgáfan*, titled *Þingeyinga sögur*. In the short introduction, Guðni repeats Björn Sigfússon's conclusions regarding the fact that the three *þættir* had been interpolated into the C-redaction, and therefore prints them separately, after the main saga and with a different heading, just as Björn Sigfússon did. In addition, he repeats Björn Sigfússon's mistake in citing AM 561 4to as AM 461 4to, as well as the *Íslenzk fornrit* editor's choice to separate *Þórarins þáttur ofsa* from the rest of the saga, and even to distinguish between it and the other three *þættir*'s position in the text. If *Sprla þáttur*, *Ófeigs þáttur*, and *Vöðu-Brands þáttur* are interpolated, *Þórarins þáttur ofsa* is treated as a text that is entirely external. In all of these decisions (and mistakes), Guðni follows Björn. One specific decision, however, shines through for its *chutzpah*: rather than use the A-redaction text and its lacunae, Guðni appends that version of the saga to the end with the title "Viðbætur," and instead presents the C-redaction without its *þættir*.

¹ Ármann Jakobsson, "Sögurnar hans Guðna: Um "lýðveldisútgáfu" Íslendingasagnanna, hugmyndafræði hennar og áhrif," 116.

This is a text that never was and never could be.² Guðni Jónsson had become the author of a new redaction of *Ljósvetninga saga*.

This thesis's primary question has been: *How did the reception of Ljósvetninga saga influence its construction?* Its main conclusion is that *Ljósvetninga saga*—and perhaps all of the *Íslendingasögur* with it—is constantly being rewritten. By aiming to go a step backwards, the scribes and editors go two steps forwards. The theoretical debates of saga origins have had a profound impact on the shaping of the saga. Scholarship about *Ljósvetninga saga* had mostly focused on one thing: the saga's oral versus literary origins. In the name of Bookprose, Björn Sigfússon took it upon himself to contend with Erichsen and Liestøl, manipulating the text to eliminate traces of orality—i.e., the narratologically divergent *þættir*—and establishing a firm literary superiority of the A-redaction, the text of *Ljósvetninga saga* as it should have been before the interpolated *þættir* and the historical novelization of the C-redaction. Andersson tried to salvage the text from the origins debate by offering a midway, but only succeeded in creating an opposite hierarchy: his A-redaction was a clumsily created abbreviation of the textually superior C-redaction.

If the origin debate of the *Íslendingasögur* affected the saga's construction, the debate on the dating of *Ljósvetninga saga* influenced the way it was received and analysed. While scholars such as Björn M. Ólsen dated the saga's various parts separately rather than trying to understand when it was unified as a whole, others such as Björn Sigfússon and Theodore M. Andersson tried to fit it within their own literary-historical frameworks. The problem with these grand theories is that they are built on too many variables, and while they are appealing and provoke discussion, they always have blindspots. One such blindspot is the relationship between *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Brennu-Njáls saga*. A literary connection between these two undoubtedly exists, and sheds a light on these two sagas' characters and their actions—especially the murderous Víga-Njáll Þorgeirsson and

² Guðni Jónsson, *Þingeyinga sögur*, 97. Though, as seen in the discussion about Erichsen, this sentence is perhaps overstated. Some could conceive of a *þættir*-less C-redaction.

Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði—the order of composition will remain unknowable as long as a revision of the dating system and its foundations does not take place.

When it comes to the redactions of the saga, these two texts both work well and consistently in their own rights. Rather than try to find the logical gaps and instances of clear literary influence, like Adolfine Erichsen, Björn Sigfússon, Hallvard Magerøy, and Theodore M. Andersson did, this thesis opted to look at these texts as they are and ask the question not properly answered since A.U. Bååth: Are they internally consistent and what do we gain from seeing them as a whole? With the focus on the representation of Guðmundr inn ríki anchoring the discussion, the narrative and the plot were shown to shed different lights on a complex character, rather than an inconsistent one. It was stressed that both redactions were negative towards Guðmundr inn ríki, rather than the C-redaction somehow coming in to redeem his character from the negative portrayal found in the A-redaction. Most importantly, it was shown that most of the chronological inconsistencies and mirror-characters in the C-redaction serve to shed a critical light on the saga's characters, mainly the Møðruvellingar. When Knútr inn ríki appears in the saga as the reigning king, thirty years after his death, this could be a chronological misstep on the side of the author, but it is also a way to point out that Guðmundr inn ríki was not truly all that powerful. At the same time, the shared nickname means that King Knútr's stinginess also reflects poorly on Guðmundr. These kinds of moments reveal the full artistry of the *Ljósvetninga saga* C-redactor, rather than constitute any blemish on his skills.

The interpretation of *Ljósvetninga saga* has always focused on issues of origins, with one exception: Barði Guðmundsson. This left-field scholar deserves attention in that he shifts the discussion, though offering us a somewhat disenchanting interpretation of the *Íslendingasögur*, where all the details only have relevance for their parallels to the Sturlungaöld. While admitting the allure of this analysis, its set of assumptions about the authorship of *Njáls saga* and inconsistencies are just cause to dismiss, at least

partially, Barði's main results. Some of the connections he makes—such as the fake Þórhallr name given to Rindill and Þorvarðr Þórarinsson's spy Halldórr skraf—are too striking to be ignored. While the sagas can reflect the historical times in which they were written, the attempt to see the entire saga as a *roman à clef*, where the past is stripped of all meaning, is misguided. The debate of synchronic and diachronic approaches to memory illustrated this point. Barði's interpretation is a synchronic one in which the past is an almost empty vessel, while a diachronic approach to memory offers a more fruitful inter-generational interaction. Synchronic readings offer a model of society that the audience can see itself in. Diachronic readings, however, serve up the past as an, at times, ideal to aspire to, something to learn from. In this way, diachronic readings see more significance in the past than synchronic ones that can strip away the differences and focus on the similarities through the process of keying. The mid-fifteenth-century circumstances surrounding AM 162 c fol., the C-redaction manuscript, offered an illustrative synchronic interpretation. Lundarbrekkumálið serves to showcase a diachronic approach to memory, where Þorkell Guðbjartsson reveals how a character's entire story arc can be a consideration for the choice of a redaction, in its representation of the untrustworthy Hrafn Þorkelsson of Lundarbrekka and the corrupt priest from Laufás, both places associated with Þorkell Guðbjartsson. Another kind of synchronic reading is offered through the similarities between the tenth–eleventh-century Guðmundr inn ríki Eyjólfsson, thirteenth-century Guðmundr inn góði Arason, and fifteenth-century Guðmundr hinn ríki Arason, whose names and behavior interplay with each other, adding layers to a pre-existing (in some form or another) text. Other connections such as Loftur Guttormsson ríki and bishop Jón Vilhjálmsson Craxton also create a plurality of interpretations that is more fruitful and complex than a narrow single interpretation like the one offered by Barði Guðmundsson. Analysing *Ljósvetninga saga's* A-redaction through a hypothesized late fourteenth-century dating for AM 561 4to, while offering a variety of interpretative directions, shows us that, obviously, without a context for a

manuscript, it is hard to get a firm grip on the historical circumstances of its writing. Vague statements about the fourteenth century are possible and connections can still be found, but nothing as rewarding and as firm as those made for fifteenth-century AM 162 c fol.

The focus on the fifteenth century and the historical discussion surrounding it was meant to expand the debate beyond the immediate thirteenth-century context of composition toward the time of its transmission. The fifteenth century has been far too neglected in saga research, which is surprising, considering that it is the century when many of the extant material was produced. This thesis constitutes a step toward amending this gap in research, with the recognition that the sagas had an importance to the people of this period, who transmitted their vernacular literature with the hopes of preserving their ancestors' stories and learning from them. Further research into the post-medieval context of transmission is also needed; the seventeenth-century scribes that kept *Ljósvetninga saga's* C-redaction alive, for example, must have found something in it that spoke to them and their lives.

The reception of *Ljósvetninga saga* also pertains to its generic affiliations. The generic expectations that lead scholars to prefer one redaction over the other influences the way the saga was constructed editorially. Influenced by observations from film genre studies, the thesis provides a pluralistic semantic/syntactic definition that incorporates both themes and structure on the one side, and specific plot elements on the other. This leads to questioning of the concept of 'post-classical' *Íslendingasögur*. The term is a late-Modern invention, not even relevant to the early printings of the *Íslendingasögur* in the eighteenth century. By re-examining the dating of *Gull-Þóris saga* and the significant thematic differences between *Finnboga saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga*, it is shown that no significant basis has been provided to differentiate these two texts from the proper *Íslendingasögur* corpus. The assumption is that, with further research, most, if not all, of the texts commonly referred to as 'post-classical' will be shown to belong to the *Íslendingasögur* corpus without much adjustment.

The focus on the manuscript context advances an understanding about the way these saga texts were grouped. It shows that the medieval Icelanders transmitting the sagas were less inclined to think in the generic conventions scholarly discussions usually attribute to them. Texts seen as ‘classical’ and ‘post-classical’ *Íslendingasögur* and even *riddarasögur* could be easily placed together in one manuscript, which happened more frequently than not. Indeed, in AM 561 4to, a story such as *Gull-Þóris saga* provides significantly more entertainment value than *Reykðæla saga* and *Ljósvetninga saga*, but this is also due more to choices of redaction than anything inherent in the genre or subgenre of the text. The A-redaction of *Ljósvetninga saga* is a much more straightforward tale and, as such, lacks much of the other redaction’s flair. As such, I agree with Hallvard Magerøy that AM 162 c fol. aims to expand the saga’s plot and world, as seems to be case for most of the *Íslendingasögur* incorporated into the manuscript. The AM 162 c fol. scribe or compiler aimed to expand the world of the *Íslendingasögur* incorporated into them, especially in regard to North-eastern politics. Choosing a redaction of *Ljósvetninga saga* that incorporated three or four *þættir* that expand the Mǫðruvellingar’s playing field makes sense with this agenda in mind. Connecting the discussion to the manuscript’s single extant *riddarasaga*, it seems like these texts, *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Vápnfirðinga saga*, *Droplaugarsona saga*, *Finnboga saga*, *Þorsteins þátr stangarhöggs*, and *Sálus saga ok Nikanórs* all feature a discussion of the theme of power, its execution, and its distribution. If the C-redaction *þættir* are interpolations, then they are very fortunate ones, since all four stories contain a discussion of power, its application, exploitation, and its reigning in, alongside further connections that make them fit well with the C-redaction text.

Application of Rick Altman’s concept of generic crossroads showed how similar dilemmas are presented within the narrative of both the AM 561 4to texts and those of AM 162 c fol. Both manuscripts showcase a dialogue between the societal norms of peace and reconciliation versus the generic pleasures of violence and vengeance. The interaction between these two forces unifies the manuscripts’ sagas and their debates of power

use and distribution within Icelandic society. This use of film genre theory is meant to help open up Old Norse research into less explored theoretical avenues that have dealt with dilemmas similar to the ones presented by the saga corpus.

Overall, this thesis wished to reveal how scholarly preconceptions guided the reception of a specific saga, *Ljósvetninga saga*, and to contribute to a wider understanding of how saga, Old Norse, medieval, and general literature are each constantly changing and unstable, both in their preservation, and in the way they are presented to the general public and scholarly community. Instead of aspiring to an unattainable original text, scholarship should seek value in what we have: the traces of two distinct redactions, both in their own internal logic and in the manuscripts in which they were placed. If you are to take anything away from this thesis, it would be that each saga should be looked at in its generic, historical, and manuscript context. We need to always be aware of the building blocks of our thinking. Who decided to call a certain saga ‘post-classical’ and another ‘classical,’ and why? Who deemed one redaction older than another, and what were the theoretical assumptions that enforced this decision? What purpose did the saga serve at the time it was written down, and the time it was copied? Much of our preconceived notions about how sagas work and how they even look can be questioned if we remember to always ask what the manuscript said.

Maybe the real *Ljósvetninga saga* was the editions we made along the way.

Appendix: *Ljósvetninga saga's* Manuscripts

The following list was compiled mostly by Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugson, with a few emendations and additions by me. Some of Guðvarður's comments were expanded and translated by me. Any mistakes found in the list are therefore my own. Special thanks to Katelin Parsons and Ryan Eric Johnson for providing me access to the Western Icelandic manuscript Mss Isl 25, and to Matthew Roby for providing me with scans of Boreal 119 and Bodleian Icelandic ms. 9.

#	Manuscript	Material	Dating	Leaves	Comments	Scribe
1	AM 561 4to	parchment	c. 1400	32v–37r, 38r–41v	Defective manuscript. Guðmundr Þorláksson marked it as: A. Björn Sigfússon marked it as: A.	
2	AM 162 C fol	parchment	c. 1420–1450	1r–3v	Fragments. GÐ:C BS:C	Ólafur Loftsson
3	AM 561 4to	parchment	c. 1600–1700	37v	Post-medieval palimpsest rewriting. GÐ:A BS:A. This thesis refers to this side as “37v.”	
4	AM 514 4to	paper	c. 1650–1700	1r–24r	Last part of the saga (Ey- jólf's bulk) summarized. GÐ:B BS:514	
5	Isl papp 35 fol	paper	1686–87	1v–126v	Guðmundr Þorláksson marked this manuscript as S but had only limited ac- cess to it. BS:35	Helgi Ólafsson
6	AM 485 4to	paper	c. 1675–1700	1v–68v	GÐ:C1 BS:485	Jón Hákonarson
7	AM 554 e 4to	paper	c. 1675–1700	1r–42r	GÐ:C2 BS:554 e	
8	JS 624 4to Látrabók	paper	1695	24r–94v	BS:L	
9	BL ADD 4867 4to	paper	1690–1692		Possible exemplar of JS 624 4to, or copied from same exemplar	Jón Þórðarson
10	NKS 1704 4to	paper	c. 1700	1r–46r	BS:1704	
11	NKS 1714 4to	paper	c. 1715	270r– 309v	GÐ:C5 BS:1714	

#	Manuscript	Material	Dating	Leaves	Comments	Scribe
12	NKS 1704 4to	paper	1728	47r–71r, 72v	Last part of the saga (Eyjólfir's bulk) summarized.	J.J(ons)son
13	Boreal 119	paper	c. 1750	116v– 255v	Phrase book offers partial readings from this and many other sagas.	Jón Þorkelsson
14	Kall 616 4to	paper	c. 1700–1800	68–89	Based on JS 624 4to. Guðmundr Þorláksson marked it as C3 and called it the best C-redaction paper manuscript.	
15	Kall 621 4to	paper	c. 1700–1800	1r–35v	GÐ:C4 BS:621	
16	Lbs 1629 4to	paper	c. 1700–1800	27r–62v	BS:1629	Magnús Einarsson
17	Thott 984 I–III fol	paper	c. 1700–1800	434–489r	AM 485 4to & Kall 616 4to its exemplars. GÐ:C6	Jón Ólafsson
18	AM 395 fol	paper	c. 1764	2r–37r		Þorkell Sigurðsson
19	NKS 1217 fol	paper	c. 1750–1800	1–88	Latin translation, using AM 485 4to as an exemplar.	
20	NKS 1785 4to	paper	c. 1750–1800	1–186	Main exemplar AM 485 4to + variants from AM 162 C 1 fol. & 514 4to	Adeldahl
21	NKS 1798 4to	paper	c. 1750–1800	1–104	e. AM 514 4to	T. Olavius
22	Kall 262 fol	paper	c. 1750–1800	1–78		
23	JS 315 V 4to	paper	c. 1750–1800	96r–107v	Fragmentary. BS:315	
24	Lbs 151 4to	paper	c. 1780	145r – 193v		Halldór Jakobsson
25	ÍB 184 4to	paper	c. 1775–1800	135v– 166v		Ólafur Sveinsson + ?
26	Lbs 1339 4to	paper	c. 1790	106r– 138v		Þorsteinn Sveinbjarnarson?
27	Rask 30	paper	c. 1800	29–87r	Guðmundur Þorláksson said that its exemplar was Kall 616 4to	
28	Lbs 117 1 fol	paper	c. 1800	1r–84v	e. AM 485 4to	
29	Lbs 117 2 fol	paper	c. 1800	1–4	Beginning of the saga.	Þorsteinn Gíslason
30	Lbs 266 fol	paper	c. 1800	52v–73v	Incomplete.	
31	Lbs 3712 4to	paper	c. 1775–1825	229r– 274v		Halldór Hjálmarsson
32	Lbs 1846 4to ^I	paper	1798–1806	64r–111r		Tómas Tómasson
33	Lbs 1846 4to ^{II}	paper	1798–1806	137r– 162v		Tómas Tómasson

#	Manuscript	Material	Dating	Leaves	Comments	Scribe
34	Lbs 1849 8vo	paper	c. 1810	1r–52v		Markús Eyjólfsson
35	Lbs 933 II 4to	paper	c. 1800–1820	47r–93v		
36	Lbs 147 8vo	paper	1812	2r–91v	According to Guðmundur Þorláksson the exemplar is likely the 1830 <i>Ljósveitinga saga</i> edition (based on AM 485 4to)	Sveinn Pétursson
37	Lbs 1489 4to	paper	1810–14	96r–112v	Last part of the saga (Eyjólfur's bulk) summarized.	Jón Jónsson
38	Lbs 1489 4to	paper	1810–14	112v–122r	Adds both summary of last part of the saga (Eyjólfur's bulk) and the full text itself.	Jón Jónsson
39	Lbs 187 fol	paper	c. 1810–1816	158r–203v		
40	Lbs 2139 4to	paper	1812–16	78v–108v		Þorkell Björnsson
41	ÍB 469 4to	paper	c. 1810–1820	1r–26v		Þorsteinn Gíslason
42	ÍBR 3 4to	paper	1816–18	2r–66v	Guðmundur Þorláksson said that its exemplar was AM 514 4to.	Einar Bjarnason
43	JS 437 4to	paper	c. 1820	1r–87v	e. AM 485 4to	
44	Lbs 143 4to	paper	1823	72v–101v		Gísli Konráðsson
45	JS 428 4to	paper	c. 1820–1840	2r–?	Makes emendations to the saga's lacunae. GÐ:C7	Hallgrímur Scheving
46	JS 428 4to	paper	c. 1820–1840	?–27r	End of the saga uses Hallgrím Scheving previous copy as exemplar. GÐ:C7	Hallgrímur Scheving
47	Lbs 1355 IX 4to	paper	1841–42	125r–128v	Only the beginning.	
48	Lbs 748 fol	paper	1871–75	220r–256r		Guðmundur Magnússon
49	Mss Isl 25, Icelandic Collection, U. of Manitoba	paper	Late 19th–early 20th century		seems to clearly be derived from 1830 edition (the end of P.þ indicates)	Guðlaugur Magnússon
50	Bodleian ms Icelandic c. 9	paper	1860		Paper copy of AM 561 4to, incl. reading of 37v legible words	Guðbrandur Vigfússon

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- AM 561 4to
- BL ADD 4867 4to
- Boreal 119
- Isl papp 35 fol
- JS 624 4to (Látrabók)
- Kall 616 4to
- Kall 621 4to
- Lbs 1629 4to
- NKS 1704 4to
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